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Stéphane Verger, Yusuf Sezgin, Rossella Pace

The Necropolis of Aigai. Archaeology of an Exceptional Funerary Landscape

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Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Zentrale, Podbielskiallee 69–71, 14195 Berlin, Tel: +49 30 187711-0
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II Case Studies from the Aeolis and Beyond

The Necropolis of Aigai. Archaeology of an Exceptional Funerary Landscape

Stéphane Verger – Yusuf Sezgin – Rossella Pace

Aigai is one of the main cities of southern Aeolia mentioned by Herodotus. It dominates the course of the Kocaçay – or Güzelhisar river – about twenty kilometres from its mouth, which lies at the foot of the hills of the city of Myrina, whose necropolis was excavated by Edmond Pottier and Salomon Reinach (fig. 1). Its historical interest derives from its being in an inter-

mediate position throughout its existence: between the Greek Aeolia and Lydia in the Archaic and Classical period and between the old Greek cities and the new kingdom of Pergamon in the Hellenistic and Roman period. Thus, one can detect, particularly in the necropolis, the manifestations of cultural mixtures and transfers which are interesting to study in detail.

History of Research

The necropolis of Aigai was not the object of large regular excavations, even if it was identified shortly after that of Myrina, whose excavation by Edmond Pottier and Salomon Reinach for the French School of Athens had taken place from 1880 to 1883¹. Reinach took advantage of his stay to explore the region, with Démosthène Baltazzi as his guide. In February 1881, protected by a heavily armed escort, they ventured inland to explore an ancient fortification, Nemrud Kalesi, which turned out to be the ancient Aeolian city of Aigai².

Michel Armand Clerc later explored the remains and gave an account of his visit in the «Bulletin de correspondance hellénique» of 1886³. He was particularly interested in the necropolis, which extends over two hills and the narrow valley that separates them, following a road that ran from Perga-

mon, via Elaia, to Magnesia ad Sipylum. He carried out a campaign of excavation in the necropolis there in June 1882. It is not known exactly how much time he devoted to this exploration, which is documented only by an article of the «Bulletin de correspondance hellénique» of 1891⁴. He excavated 450 tombs in total and transcribed in the publication the notes of three days (from 28 to 30 June 1882) during which he opened 45 tombs; we can therefore assume that he stayed on site for about a month.

Michel Clerc gives only a very brief description of the topography of the necropolis, which is located at the foot of the acropolis, on two hills. He hypothesises that it developed from the city towards the second hill, without having absolute proof of it, but only by noting that the tombs of the second hill are poorer and

¹ Pottier – Reinach 1887.

² Reinach 1881.

³ Clerc 1886.

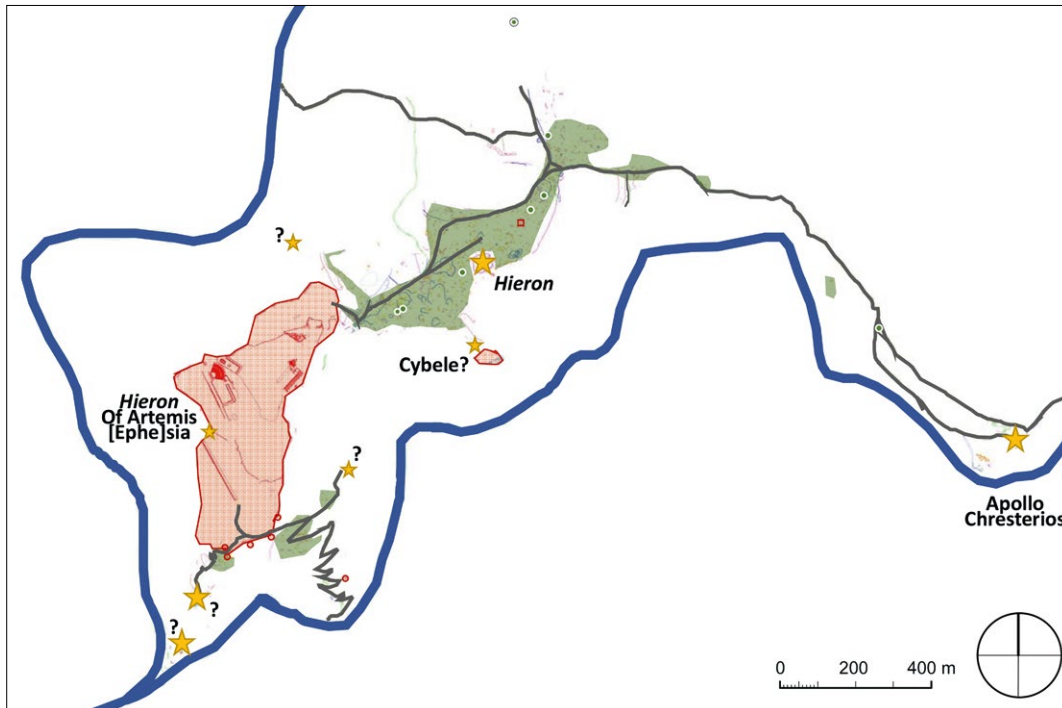
⁴ Clerc 1891.



1 The citadel of Aigai (left) and its necropolis (centre) with the Kocaçay valley, seen from the northeast



2 The burial enclosures excavated in 2005 near the main burial road



3 Simplified reconstruction of the topography of the necropolises of Aigai according to the results of the 2015–2019 survey. In pink, the city; in green, the necropolises; stars: extra-urban sanctuaries

do not contain the object types, like the terracotta statuettes, which characterise the necropolis of Myrina. He estimates the total number of tombs by extrapolating from the number found in the excavated site to the entire identified area and comparing it with the density of the tombs in the necropolis of Myrina: he arrives at a total of between 10,000 to 20,000 tombs.

The necropolis of Aigai has been the object of looting and numerous clandestine excavations since antiquity, with the first certain archaeological traces dating from the Byzantine period. Michel Clerc himself points out that unauthorised excavations were carried out shortly before his visit, probably in the 1870s. It is very likely that these unauthorised explorations did not cease after his visit, which would explain the existence of many excavation holes, associated with piles of rubble, whose number greatly exceeds the 450 explored tombs mentioned by Michel Clerc.

The city itself – but not the necropolis – was then explored and surveyed by the German architects and archaeologists of the archaeological mission of Pergamon, at the end of the 19th century⁵. The site remained entirely uncultivated and was covered by abundant vegetation until the beginning of the 2000s.

In 2004, Prof. Dr. Ersin Doğer of the Ege Üniversitesi in Izmir set up a Turkish archaeological mission that carried out considerable work in the city⁶. Beginning with the 2005 campaign, Şükrü Tül, a member of the mission, excavated two burial enclosures immediately north-west of the main road, between the site entrance and the upper end of the road (fig. 2)⁷.

Since 2015, the international programme led by a French-Turkish and international team within the framework of the Turkish archaeological mission⁸ has a triple interest: scientific on the one hand, because it is one of the most extensive, dense and

⁵ Schuchhardt – Bohn 1889.

⁶ Doğer 2021.

⁷ Tül 2021.

⁸ The Aigai archaeological mission of the Manisa Celal Bayar Üniversitesi and Izmir Ege Üniversitesi hosts an international team for the necropolis study programme, which is supported by the Ministère des Affaires Européennes et Étrangères, the École Pratique des Hautes Études and the «Archéologie et Philologie d'Orient et d'Occident» laboratory (UMR 8546-AOrOc, Université

PSL-CNRS-ENS-EPHE). Until 2017, the research was conducted within the framework of a programme of the Agence Nationale de la Recherche and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft: NekroPergeol – «From Monumental Grave Mounds to Urban Necropolises. The Archaeology of Death in the Hellenistic period – Modern Methodology, Social Relations and Local Identities in Pergamon and the Aeolian Cities» ANR-13-FRAL-0015, (<<http://www.nekropergeol.org>>).



4 Cult structure cut into the bedrock in a probable area of an extra-urban sanctuary

well-preserved necropolises in western Anatolia; patrimonial on the other hand, because it has been the object of massive looting since the Byzantine period, which has multiplied since the second half of the 19th century; and finally touristic, because it will be part of a route that will include the city itself, its necropolis and its main extra-urban sanctuary.

The first five years of work of the team at Aigai enabled the completion of a first phase of research on the necropolises of the city and, more generally, on the structuring and transformation of peri-urban spaces over a millennium (from the 7th century BC to the 3rd century AD), while also documenting modern and contemporary structures in order to carry out a complete diachronic archaeology of the landscape. The aim was to carry out a general topographical survey, an exhaustive inventory of visible monuments and structures, and the excavation of certain monuments and strategic sectors, both from a topographical and chronological point of view.

The overall topographical study comprises three complementary components. The first consist of an extensive exploration of the entire area surrounding the ancient city in order to identify all the funerary sectors. From 2015 to 2018, the focus was on the very large north-eastern necropolis, which extends

over more than 15 hectares and was used during the entire period of occupation of the city, from the end of the Geometric period to the beginning of the Late Roman Empire. Approximately 2,600 structures have been located, surveyed, described and documented. The more limited south-eastern necropolis was explored in 2018 and 2019, with nearly 300 previously unknown structures identified. To these one must add all the isolated monuments along the road axes, up to the limits of the peri-urban territory (about 100).

The necropolises are organised according to the urban network (fig. 3) and are concentrated above all on the routes that lead to the extra-urban sanctuaries, whose number has been significantly increased (in addition to the temple of Apollo Chresterios, a *hieron* of Artemis [Ephesia?], a probable sanctuary of Meter-Kybele (fig. 4) and three anonymous places of worship, one of which dates back to the Archaic period). An important discovery was a large megalithic enclosure in the centre of the north-eastern necropolis, mentioned as a *hieron* in a previously unknown Hellenistic parietal inscription. Ancient settlements and terraced cultivation areas were also recognised, as well as various military buildings (forts, control towers along the roads and on the hilltops) and some



5 A tumulus from the Orientalising period that was reused in the late Archaic and late Hellenistic periods

traces of artisanal activities (concentrations of ceramic firing scraps).

A general scenario for the development of the Aigai necropolises over a millennium can now be proposed, leading to an initial study of an Anatolian burial landscape. Within this scenario, we can recognise both the general trends in the evolution of ancient sepulchral spaces in Eastern Greece and a great originality in the arrangement of the different elements that comprise these spaces – an originality that can be connected to the intermediate position of Aigai between Aeolia and Lydia, at first, and between the old world of the Greek cities and the young Attalid kingdom afterwards⁹. The issue is very important, because the necropolis of Aigai is one of the most extensive and best preserved in the region, with an occupation period spanning almost a millennium. A great variety of funerary monuments can be ob-

served, organised according to two interlocking architectural approaches: an ancient structure, dating to the Orientalising or Archaic periods, which follows the crest of the hill on which it is installed, and a recent late Hellenistic and Imperial Roman structure, which develops on both sides of a funerary road running below on the western slope of the hill.

The inventory of the listed structures takes the form of a database developed from the model used by the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul and the Pergamon Excavation (iDAI.field), which has been enriched year after year and was completely finished in 2019. This database is combined with a topographical atlas of the Aigai necropolises, consisting of a general plan of the location of the visible remains, firstly measured with a tacheometer, then with high-precision GPS. It is currently organised according to the 26 survey zones.

⁹ Sezgin 2012.

In order to visualise the complexity of the topography of the funerary space, with its slope breaks, terraces and circulation spaces, photographic documentation was carried out by drone, to obtain a 3D digital model of the ancient city and its surroundings, of the large north-eastern necropolis, with a focus on some important public monuments – such as the commercial agora and the temple of Athena – and on the megalithic enclosure. In addition, the results of the geophysical surveys carried out by the University of Kiel (NekroPergEol programme 2016–2017) in the central part of the necropolis are being added.

The exploration of the necropolis and the study of the material of the already excavated tombs allowed the identification of monuments suitable for excavation. In five years, the following monuments have been excavated: a large tumulus from the Orientalising period (fig. 5), which became a memorial site and was considered as such until the Imperial period (2015 and 2019); a circular honorary monument with its dedication (2015) and a large Hellenistic funerary building (2017); a simple funerary enclosure and a few Classical and Hellenistic cist tombs (2018–2019). In addition, the sector excavated by the Turkish team in 2005, which includes two Hellenistic enclosures

along the main funerary road and about twenty tombs from the 5th–2nd centuries BC, was studied.

The study of the tombs was completed by a programme of neutron activation analysis of the Aigai ceramics carried out in collaboration with the University of Bonn and the Austrian Archaeological Institute. It has enabled the characterisation of the early production of the city in relation to that of the centres of Coastal Aeolia, highlighted an exceptional diversity of clay supply sources and identified the origin of important products (notably from Smyrna and Coastal Aeolia).

The 2019 campaign completed the survey around the ancient city, inventoried and surveyed the structures visible in the south-eastern necropolis (two groups associated with the southern and south-eastern gates), and followed, surveyed and studied the main road axes that run from the three large urban gates to the river courses. The latter included the road that crosses the large north-eastern necropolis and extends for 4 km to the sanctuary of Apollo Chresterios and continues towards Magnesia of Sipylus; the paved road that goes towards Gryneion and the sea; the road winding on the south-eastern slope of the mountain that goes towards Temnos and Myrina.

Archaeology of a Funerary Landscape

When a traveller, in the Hellenistic period, arrived at Aigai from the Eleaitic Gulf, he or she saw in the distance on the right the high fortified citadel and closer, on the left, the necropolis which extended over the top of a long hill that started from the city (fig. 6).

The main necropolis lies below the rocky outcrop of the city, on the top of the slopes of an elongated rocky ridge running south-west to north-east and overlooking the valley of the Kocaçay to the east and the Seklik Çayı to the west. It begins immediately outside the north-eastern city gate and extends over the top and upper part of the hillside for about one kilometre. A longitudinal axis structures the space. The specificity of the Aigai necropolis, which also makes its topographic study difficult, lies in the fact that this axis is twofold: on the one hand, it is the crest line of the rocky ridge, which forms the real longitudinal axis of the necropolis, and on the other hand, a road that roughly follows this axis, but which in reality runs along the upper part of its western slope and is therefore significantly offset towards the west. These two axes are organised in different ways: the first is

somewhat multipolar, as it seems to be organised according to a series of slope breaks that are distributed all along the top of the rocky ridge (there is one in the first half and four in the second half of the necropolis); the second is linear, as it is structured by the continuous path constituted by the sepulchral way on either side of which the monuments are arranged, with, however, privileged points where the important monuments are concentrated.

The area of the necropolis was barely smaller than that of the urban fortification (fig. 3). It included both the large north-eastern necropolis of about 15 hectares and several grave groups on the southern slopes of the citadel. The necropolis of Aigai has been in use since at least the beginning of the 7th century BC. It was abandoned, like the city, around the middle of the 3rd century AD.

The topography of the necropolis is determined throughout the period by the transformation of networks of relations that the city maintained with its powerful neighbours. The necropolises are located outside the main gates of the city, on the paths leading



6 The city (right) and the great necropolis (centre and left) seen from the road to Gryneion

to the coast and inland: towards Myrina, Kyme and Temnos to the south; towards Gryneion and Pergamon to the northwest; to Magnesia ad Sipylum in the northeast.

The road from Gryneion to Magnesia passed one kilometre north of Aigai. This road was connected to the north gate of the city by a path on top of the elongated hill which descended regularly from the citadel. From the very beginning, the urban necropolis occupied the whole of this elongated hill, on both sides of the track.

The funerary landscape of Aigai was determined by this particular topographical situation. From whatever side one arrived, the necropolis was visible at the same time as the citadel. Thus, for example, when a traveller came from Magnesia ad Sipylum, he first passed near the sanctuary of Apollo Chresterios, which was already in the territory of Aigai. Then he went up the paved road to the city and found a burial mound that marked the beginning of the necropolis. It was exactly there that he began to see the citadel behind a hill on his left. It dominated the necropolis which extended on the top of the hill which appeared also lower.

The development of the necropolis was also determined by the location of the main extra-urban shrines: that of Apollon Chresterios¹⁰; a small sanctuary perhaps dedicated to Cybele, to the east; and especially a large enclosure which was in the centre of the eastern slope of the necropolis hill.

The survey made it possible to recognise the remains of a large megalithic structure located on the eastern slope of the hill on which the necropolis developed (fig. 7). It has a more or less trapezoidal shape with rounded corners and reaches a length of about sixty metres. It is delimited by a double row of rough blocks arranged in orthostats, of very varied sizes. The monument is sited on the south-eastern slope of the hill. The lower part presents a terrace system composed of a pile of large rough blocks. A monumental entrance opens to the northeast, towards the start of the road that leads to the sanctuary of Apollo Chresterios. The entrance is bordered by two rough stone walls that lead to a sort of esplanade that gives access to a large circular cistern with dry stone walls.

This exceptional megalithic monument is not dated. The cistern, which is still filled with water, could be modern or could be a refurbished ancient structure. The only dating element available is the horizontal stratigraphy. Indeed, the interior of the enclosure contains no visible trace of a grave or funerary structure. The same is true for a strip 5 to 10 m wide around the boundary wall. Beyond this line, however, the density of enclosure graves and isolated cist graves is very high. It seems that they come up against an important structure that already existed at the time of their installation.

During the survey in the area of the megalithic monument, we noted the presence, south of the enclosure, at the limit of the band left free around the up-

¹⁰ Sezgin 2022.



7 Photogrammetric view of the ›megalithic‹ monument of the necropolis of Aigai

right stone surround, of a large rough block in place that was part of the bedrock (fig. 8). This type of outcrop is particularly common in and around the enclosure. Some structure the space, such as the alignment that divides the internal space at about its centre.

The block bears the traces of two human interventions. The most visible is a long vertical notch of varying depth, which appears to be the preparation of a block cutting, perhaps in the Hellenistic or Imperial Roman period. It is located in the left half of the block, on the side facing northeast, i. e., on the side of the empty area of graves and the enclosure.

Immediately to the right of this notch begins a Greek inscription carved into the stone. It consists of four clearly visible letters – thanks in part to the photogrammetric survey that was carried out: IPON. It is difficult to propose a date, although the shape of the N, with the two vertical bars of approximately the same length, suggests that it is later than the Archaic period. IPON is a well attested contraction of *hieron*,

which designates a sacred object or space and more specifically a sanctuary.

We are therefore most probably dealing with a boundary marker – a *horos* – marking the limit of a sacred space. Marking the boundary of a space, of a territory, by a short inscription on a rough block belonging to the bedrock is a common practice in Aeolia in the Hellenistic period. Ersin Doğer and Giuseppe Ragone have identified an important series of such markers indicating the boundaries of the territories of the cities, with very short forms and a similar spelling.

The discovery of the IPON inscription is important for the understanding of the topographical and chronological organisation of the necropolis of Aigai, because it confirms the importance of the megalithic enclosure in the structuring of space, perhaps from the origin of the city and ensures its sacred function, at least at the time when the word was engraved, that is, perhaps in the Hellenistic period. Beyond the case



8 The inscription associated with the megalithic monument

of Aigai, it will undoubtedly play an important role in the study of the definition of sacred spaces in the Greek world and their place within the funerary space.

The necropolis developed on both slopes of the hill. There is a shift in the centre of gravity of the burial space between the Archaic and Classical period and the Hellenistic and Roman period: it's located mainly on the south-eastern slope during the Archaic period, on the side of the sanctuary of Apollo Chresteros, of Magnesia ad Sipylum and Lydia; then on the north-western slope, towards the sanctuary of Grynian Apollo, Aeolia and Pergamon, during the Hellenistic period.

We can propose, as a hypothesis, a development scheme of the urban necropolis of Aigai. At first, the funerary monuments are located on the south-eastern slope around the megalithic complex, as well as on the hill overlooking the road to the sanctuary of Apollo Chresteros and near the sanctuary attributed to Meter-Kybele.

From the beginning of the 7th century BC, a series of tumuli were installed along the top of the hill, in conspicuous locations visible from the citadel and from the road that comes from Lydia. One of these tumuli was excavated in 2015 (fig. 5). Three major phases of occupation were recognised.

The monument was built around the beginning of the 7th century. It contained a group of incinerations with local Greek ceramics and small Greek and Phrygian ornaments. These are clearly reference sets for the whole of Aeolia, because of the combination of

fine ceramic vessels and metal objects of clothing and adornment of more or less original local types. It did not yield a central tomb, but a series of burials scattered in the pile of stones at different levels of its thickness and more or less far from its centre. All the burials of this first phase are incinerations accompanied by vases or small metal objects. In fact, in most cases they are heaps of burnt bone fragments scattered in the interstices between the stones over an area sometimes reaching 1 m².

The monument was erected at one time to receive secondary cremations that were contemporary with each other and perhaps grouped together for a second time in the monument, after having been stored elsewhere. This would explain the disorganised nature of the deposits and the absence of traces of digging for the placement of the burials. The date of construction of the monument is probably in the first quarter of the 7th century BC. This makes it the oldest funerary monument properly excavated in continental Aeolia. In the material associated with the tombs, a specifically Greek ceramic series can be observed, but characteristic of Orientalising Aeolia, with the privileged association of grey ceramics and band-painted ware. Most types of vases are represented, as if the whole of the tumulus had delivered a single service composed of a crater, an oenochoe, a hydria, a large kotyle and two goblets. The metal objects include Greek types (spiral earrings), more specifically local North Ionian and Aeolian types (globular arch fibulae), local imitations of Anatolian types (the Phrygian type fibulae) and



9 Hellenistic terracotta votive head from the orientalising mound excavated in 2015

probable foreign productions rare in Anatolia (the Macedonian beads). The series of Phrygian type fibulae is interesting because it combines characteristic examples of Ionian production and a variant without equivalent, perhaps made locally. The ensemble thus gives a precise picture of the cultural identity of a homogeneous group in the Inner Aeolian at the beginning of the Orientalising period.

At the beginning of the 5th century BC, a sarcophagus was installed on the side of the tumulus. In the western quarter of the mound, near the surface, was the lower part of this sarcophagus that had been extensively damaged by erosion of the mound and by looting of undetermined date. It was an adult tomb that yielded several fragmentary vases: a large black-glazed kylix, a large and a small lekythos with late black figures. The ensemble can be dated to the first two decades of the 5th century BC. Associated with it are two short-socketed arrowheads and three triangular fins from the first half of the 5th century BC. The tomb was looted, and various fragments of Late Archaic vases scattered on the surface of the western quarter of the tumulus may have come from its looted furnishings.

Then, several large vases were placed around the mound, against the outer wall. These may be children's graves in *enchytrismos*, whose bones have not been preserved. In particular, a Chiote amphora from the 4th century BC can be identified. Subsequently, the tumulus no longer seems to be used as a funerary monument.

But, in the 2nd century BC, a small votive deposit is buried at its centre, at a shallow depth. It consists of some ceramic vessels from the Late Hellenistic period: an achrome amphora, a mould-made relief bowl, a bowl on a ring foot, a small jug made of common (or kitchen) ceramics and two jugs, associated with a sheep astragal. This is a small service perhaps linked to a rite of commemoration or evocation of the dead (perhaps linked to a necromantic practice if we take into account the presence of an astragalus in this sense).

Finally, a wall, probably from the Hellenistic period, was built on the surface of the mound. It damaged the late Archaic tomb and the stone surround in its south-western part. Near this wall, fragments of a Hellenistic terracotta male head (fig. 9) were found, perhaps also related to ritual activities carried out at the same time.

The funerary monument, which dates back to the early days of Aigai, thus becomes a theatre of commemorative rites at a time of great transformations of the city, towards the middle of the 2nd century. From the 4th century, the main part of the necropolis is transferred to the north-western slope. It is dominated by the ancient monuments that are on the top of the hill. Some of them become non-funerary places of remembrance. Others may be transformed in the Hellenistic period. New enclosures are added to complete the line of funerary monuments that mark the top of the hill.

In the centre of the funerary space, at the top of the hill, there is a big square tower, probably built in the Hellenistic period. It has a strategic position to control the entire territory and the road from Gryneion to Magnesia. It was perfectly visible from the agora of the city. It is also integrated into the necropolis, with, for example, a contemporary funeral enclosure that is located less than 5 metres from its south-western corner.

In the Hellenistic period, a major transformation is the installation of a paved funerary road that connects the north gate of the city and the Gryneion-Magnesia road (fig. 10). This road is on the north-western slope of the hill. It bypasses the entire area of the ancient archaic necropolis, which is still used to install tombs, but seems to become at this time a great place of remembrance for the city. To the south, another sec-



10 View of the great necropolis of Aigai with the Hellenistic and Roman funerary road in the centre

ondary road connects the north gate and the sanctuary of Meter-Kybele. It separates the necropolis from a newly terraced area of settlement or cultivation that covers the southern slope of the hill. The necropolis is now organised along these two paths, and especially along the main paved road, which crosses the entire funerary space, and which turns towards the north-west, towards the coast and towards Pergamon.

The excavation of 2005 and the later survey allow us to reconstitute the organisation of the necropolis at this time (fig. 3). The paved path is lined with funerary terraces that form more or less continuous lines separated by secondary traffic lanes. Gradually, these secondary roads were themselves filled with simple graves that clustered around the enclosures. One or two rows of funerary terraces can usually be identified on either side of the road, more rarely three or four where the north-western slope of the hill is wider.

The vast majority of the enclosures from the Hellenistic period are quadrangular. There are, however, a small number of circular funerary monuments, which seem to mark important points of the new fu-

nerary space. The two main circular monuments are in effect at both ends of the necropolis: the first near the north gate, at the beginning of the flagstone funerary road; the other near the junction between the paved road and the Gryneion-Magnesia road.

The excavation of the circular monument near the northern gate has found remains of its architectural decoration. It is thus possible to reconstruct a triangular elevation with three exedras with benches. The upper part was perhaps comparable to that of the monuments of the port of lions at Miletus. The dedication inscription refers to one of the greatest families of Aigai in the 2nd century BC, which is documented by the great inscription of the *bouleuterion*¹¹.

In the 2nd century BC, the great necropolis of Aigai was a complex memorial space that showed the successive layers of the history of the city and its elites. Walking along the main road, a passer-by would have seen the funerary terraces of the great families of the time on either side. Their relative importance was manifested by the position of their enclosure in relation to the track: in which line was it? Did it dominate the road or was it lower down? Was it placed near the

11 Sezgin – Malay 2017.

gate or near a major intersection? What dimension did it have? Was there a concentration of single graves of lower status dependents around it? It was the social body in action, which changed over the short time of family history.

When visitors looked up the hill, they saw the stratification of the monuments of the elite of the city since its origins. The Orientalising tumuli of the ancestral groups were mixed with the major monuments of the more recent families. They were dominated by the tower, which controlled the whole territory and created a visual link between the necropolis and the agora of the city.

This linear itinerary through the ancient and recent history of the city's elite now avoided the area of sanctuaries, on the north-eastern slope which had been at the origin of the topographical structuring of

the ancient funerary space. This whole area had become a great *lieu de mémoire* organised around a very old *hieron*. Ritual acts of commemoration were performed on the oldest monuments of the necropolis. There were still burials there, but away from the new heart of the necropolis. Important funerary monuments were still installed along the path that led to the area of the sanctuary of Meter-Kybele, which dominated the valley.

The short time of families, the long time of the civic continuity of the polis, the very long time of the ancestral cults: the Hellenistic necropolis of Aigai displayed the different strata of the memory of a community and the changing relations which it maintained with the large cultural and political entities that surrounded it.

Abstract

The Aeolian city of Aigai is surrounded by necropolises that were used throughout its history, from the 7th century BC to the 3rd century AD. The largest of these is the north-eastern necropolis, which covers almost 20 hectares. Since 2015, this necropolis has been the subject of an international research programme in the framework of the Aigai Archaeological Mission. Systematic surveys, new excavations and the study of previous excavations allow us to give an initial assessment of the topographical evolution of this exceptional funerary landscape. Several phases of development can be distinguished, during which the centre

of the necropolis progressively moves from the south-eastern slopes of the hill, which look towards Lydia, to the north-western slopes, which overlook the road to Gryneion and Pergamon. We can also propose a typology of funerary monuments, from the Orientalising tumuli to the Hellenistic and Roman funerary terraces. Finally, the funerary space is structured by a network of roads and extra-urban sanctuaries that determine its organisation.

Keywords: necropolis, Aigai, funerary landscape, tomb monuments, survey

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Figs. 1-10: Aigai Excavation Archive