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# Contents

Umay Oğuzhanoglu <i>What Happened Between Beycesultan XIII and XII? New Answers from Laodikeia-Kandilkırı Early Bronze Age Levels</i> .....	1
Meltem Doğan-Alparslan – K. Serdar Girginer <i>A Hittite Seal and Seal Impressions from Tatarlı Höyük</i> .....	31
Bülent İşler – Ş. Recai Tekoğlu <i>Rock-Cut Tombs and Two Lycian Inscriptions from Karabel-Çamdağı</i> .....	43
Gül Işın <i>The Farewell Dance to the Dead: The Dancers on the Portal of Trysa's Heroon and the Xanthos "Dancers Sarcophagus"</i> .....	61
Gonca Cankardeş-Şenol – Aygün Ekin-Meriç <i>Stamps of Hellenistic Imported Amphorae Found in the Excavations of Nicaea (Iznik) Theater</i> .....	79
Pınar Çağnis <i>Trade Relations between Byzantium and the Black Sea Region in the Hellenistic Period: An Assessment through Recently Found Amphora Stamps</i> .....	101
Burak Arslan <i>The Stylistic Features and Stonework Details of the Prohedriai and Lion's Feet in the Metropolis Theater</i> .....	123
Gürkan Ergin <i>Modes of Viewing the Urban Landscapes and Public Gardens of Early Imperial Rome</i> .....	153
Tuğba Taş Giese <i>Die Waffenreliefs im Versturz des Marktgebäudes von Kapıkaya in Pisidien</i> .....	183
Seçil Tezer Altay <i>A Late Recompose: The Rediscovered Monumental Octagon at Pergamon</i> .....	215
Bahar Oğuş <i>Animal Footprints on Roman Tiles from Perge and Aizanoi</i> .....	229
Burhan Varkıvanç – İsmail Akan Atıla <i>A New Monumental Gate from the Roman Imperial Period on the Attaleia City Walls</i> .....	249
Ceren Ünal – İsmail Özcihan – Merve Toy <i>A Group of Roman and Late Antique Bone Objects Found in Ancient Tralleis</i> .....	269

Emanuela Borgia	
<i>Minima Epigraphica: On Some Roman and Byzantine Inscribed Objects from Elaiussa Sebaste (Cilicia)</i> .....	297
Antonios Vratimos	
<i>Ṭoghrlil Beg and Alp Arslan in the Historia of Michael Attaleiates</i> .....	311
Mustafa Nuri Tatbul	
<i>Abandonment, Continuity, Transformation: Setting Komana into Archaeological Context through the Middle Byzantine and Early Turkish Periods</i> .....	325
İklil Selçuk	
<i>Ottoman Market Regulation and Inspection in the Early Modern Period</i> .....	355
Erdoğan Aslan – L. Ufuk Erdoğan	
<i>The Underwater Recovery Excavation at Kekova Adası: Observations on the Tek Ada Shipwreck and Finds</i> .....	375
Şamil Yırşen	
<i>The Construction Process of a School: The Antalya Kaleiçi Orthodox Christian Girls' School (Dumlupınar Secondary School) in Ottoman Archival Documents</i> .....	395

# Rock-Cut Tombs and Two Lycian Inscriptions from Karabel-Çamdağı

BÜLENT İŞLER – Ş. RECAİ TEKOĞLU\*

## Abstract

A survey-based project on Byzantine settlements around Alacadağ in Lycia has continued since 2014. It has aimed to identify and document late antique and medieval rural settlements located in the northern mountainous area of Demre (Myra), a town in the province of Antalya. A group of building remains were found during our fieldwork in 2020. These remains are located at forested Eşekkırığı in the Karabel district situated 17 km north of the ancient city of Myra. Its ancient ruins are scattered on the slopes and top of the hill to the southwest of the quarry located at the second kilometer of the dirt road from Karabel to Çamdağı. A small Byzantine castle sits at the top at an altitude of 1218 m. A tower and two workshops are located on the southern slope; three rock-cut tombs are on the eastern, western and northern slopes. This article aims to study the rock-cut tombs with their inscriptions. Two of the tombs bear inscriptions in the Lycian language. Both inscriptions can be dated to the second half of the fourth century BC on the basis of paleographic evaluation.

**Keywords:** Lycia, Karabel, burial customs, rock-cut tombs, Lycian inscriptions

## Öz

2014 yılından bu yana sürdürdüğümüz “Likya Bölgesi Alacadağ Çevresindeki Bizans Yerleşimleri” konulu yüzey araştırmasında, Antalya'nın Demre (Myra) ilçesinin kuzeyinde kalan dağlık alandaki Geç Antik ve Orta Çağ kırsal yerleşimlerinin tespiti ve belgelenmesi amaçlanır. 2020 yılı çalışmalarımız sırasında Myra antik kentinin 17 km kadar kuzeyinde yer alan Karabel Mahallesi'nin Eşekkırığı mevkiinde, orman içinde bir grup yapı kalıntısı tespit ettik. Antik kalıntılar, Karabel'den Çamdağı'na doğru giden toprak yolun 2. kilometresinde bulunan taş ocağının güneybatısındaki tepe ve tepenin yamaçlarına yayılmış haldedir. 1218 m rakımlı tepenin doruğunda küçük bir Bizans kalesi, tepenin güney yamacında bir kule ve iki işlik kalıntısı ile tepenin doğu, batı ve kuzey yamacında üç kaya mezarı bulunur. Bu makalenin amacı, yerleşimde bulunan üç kaya mezarını tanıtmak ve bölge içindeki önemlerini değerlendirmektir. Kaya mezarlarından ikisinde Likçe yazıtlar bulunmaktadır. Yazıtların paleografya özellikleri mezarların MÖ 400-330 yıllarına tarihlenmesini mümkün kılmaktadır. Dolayısıyla daha önce yayınlanmamış olan mezar ve yazıtları bölgenin klasik çağ geçmişinin aydınlatılmasında önemli birer veri oluşturdukları görülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Likya, Karabel, ölü gömme gelenekleri, kaya mezarları, Likçe yazıtlar

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## Introduction

The identification and documentation of late antique and medieval rural settlements in the mountainous area north of Demre (Myra), Alacadağ and its surroundings in Lycia have been the main aim of the survey project named “Byzantine Settlements around Alacadağ in Lycia” conducted by Bülent İşler since 2014.<sup>1</sup> The geography of the Alacadağ region is a rugged area of land covered with rocks, dense bush and woodland surrounded by a valley in the east where the Arif Çay (Arykandos) flows and in the west the Demre (Myros) River valley. It was bounded by Myra in the south and the Kasaba plain in the north. Some of Lycia’s important ancient settlements like Limyra to the east, Arykanda to the northeast, Kyaneai to the west, and Myra to the south are located around this mountainous and isolated area. Here a series of small and medium-size settlements were identified during the surveys. Rock-cut tombs, a necropolis and tower houses suggest that the survey area in Alacadağ was inhabited from the classical period to the modern day.

We oriented our survey studies to a place at Eşekkırığı where a shepherd informed us that the remains of a wall and grave monuments were located. This occurred while we were working at Belören village in the Karabel district. The ancient ruins are scattered on the slopes and top of the hill which lies southwest of the quarry located at the second kilometer of the unimproved forest road from Karabel towards Çamdağı. The hill rises to an altitude of 1218 m where the ancient buildings are located. This area is difficult to reach due to the rough terrain, dense forest, and maquis vegetation. A small Byzantine castle sits on the top, while a tower and a workshop were identified on the southern slope along with three rock-cut tombs on the eastern and western slopes. Two of the rock-cut tombs have inscriptions in the Lycian language. The aim of this study is to present an archaeological and philological evaluation of these Lycian tombs.

### Karabel Tomb 1 (figs. 1-5)

This rock-cut tomb is carved directly into the bedrock on the eastern slope of the Eşekkırığı hill. It is a typical example of the house-type tombs commonly seen in Lycia. It is one story and has a flat roof supported by a row of round beams carved like the façade of timber and protruding beams.<sup>2</sup> The façade of the tomb possesses two single-layered vertical rectangular panels. One of the panels - the entrance to the tomb - is sealed with a sliding stone door running sideways along grooves at the bottom and top. It measures 1.88 m high and 0.60 m wide. Every surface of the tomb was plastered with thick clay with lime colored with madder or red ocher. A part of the plastered surface has survived until today, and the tomb appears to have red color in the original building. An inscription in the Lycian language was incised deeply; it includes two lines on the lintel flattened with plaster above the tomb door. Two channels were opened on the upper edges of the tomb to prevent the tomb from being damaged by rainwater and to direct the flowing water to the sides.

The burial chamber shows a very symmetrical and proper workmanship and consists of *klinai* arranged in a U-shape. The *klinai* are arranged on three sides of the shallow pit in the

<sup>1</sup> The survey project, with the permission of the General Directorate of Monuments and Museums, Turkey’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism, has been supported financially by Hacı Bayram Veli University, Ankara, and Koç University AKMED (Suna & İnan Kıraç Research Center for Mediterranean Civilizations).

<sup>2</sup> Korkut and Özdemir 2019, 225 and 236, fig. 2.



center of the floor that measures 2.06 x 1.53 m. It is likely that the other *klinai* in the form of niches were carved under the south and north *klinai* at a latter period. The grooves on their edges indicate that the *klinai* may have been closed with wooden panels. The *klinai* are in good condition, except the one in the north which is partly damaged. The interior of the tomb has a flat ceiling 2.25 m high. A Latin cross, engraved inside the door's right jamb, indicates that the tomb was used also in the Christian period.

An altar area, rising 1.95 m from the floor in four stages and shaped like a rectangular cube, is located on the north side in front of the tomb. A votive pit measuring 0.33 x 0.33 m width and 0.13 m depth was carved over the upper cube. It may have been used as a stele slot too. It is known from examples in Tlos that such altars were used both to sacrifice animals and to leave food as offerings within the scope of funerary cult practices.<sup>3</sup>

The Lycian inscription measures 110 cm high and 24 cm wide. The letter sizes vary from 3.5 to 4 cm. The text was recorded according to the dimensions of the panels. No kind of marks was used to divide words. The letters are continuous without a gap. At the end of line 2 *tideime* is not finished and left as *tid* in abbreviated form. Only in line 2 a small gap exists between *ladi* and *ebbi*. The letters are deeply incised and rounded at the ends. The sigma is formed in the shape of a triangle missing the vertical edge ( > ) and comparable with that in TL 93 from Myra. The delta seems to have a "right triangle" form. The nasalized *ē* sign is similar to those in TL 88 and TL 91 from Myra, but the direction is reverse. The beta *id* is formed with only one boss (b) instead of the common form with two bosses (B) in *ebēñnē* and *ehbi*. It occurs also in TL 35, TL 39, N 308 and N 313b and may represent an early form of the Lycian beta.<sup>4</sup> The inscription has typical funerary content and reads as follows:

ebēñnē χupā meti prñnawatē Trijetezi

[Le]be tideimi hrppi ladi ehbi se-tid<eime>

"Trijetezi, son of Les<sup>(?)</sup>, built this tomb for his wife and children"

The tomb owner's name was recorded as *Trijetezi* at the end of the first line. It is a variant of *Trijētezi* attested in two inscriptions TL 8 and TL 7 from Karmylessos and identified with Τριενδασις.<sup>5</sup> The alternation of the grapheme *ē* with the vowel *e* does not seem an exception in Lycian phonology. It appears before nasal consonants like *m/m̃* and *n/ñ*,<sup>6</sup> and the same phonetic treatment occurs before the dentals as seen in the present attestation.<sup>7</sup> The loss of nasalization before dental points rather to a real sound change that tends to denasalize nasalized vowels.

The beginning of the second line, where the lineage of the builder is expected, has been partly damaged. Four letters can be traced. The last two signs are identified as *b* and *e* as the case ending of the personal name in the genitive singular before *tideimi*.<sup>8</sup> From the previous

<sup>3</sup> Korkut and Özdemir 2019, 229-31. see also Borchhardt and Bleibtreu 2013, 103-4, figs. 98.2-4 and 99.1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Neumann 1979, 31.

<sup>5</sup> Heubeck 1965, 75; Zgusta 1964, 525, §1602 1-2; Schürr 2009, 107, n. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Examples like *ēmu-emu*, *esedēñneue-esedeñneue*, *btēmi-bttemi*, *nēne-nene*, *ñtēmlē-ñtemlē*, *sijēni-sijeni*, *Ddēneuele-Ddeneuele*; see Hajnal 1995, 220; Kloekhorst 2008, 121.

<sup>7</sup> An alternation of nasalized / unnasalized before a dental can be seen also in *tatu* (TL 118, 2; N 317, 3) vs. *tātu* (TL 5, 10; 75, 3; 88, 3; 91, 2; 93, 2; 109, 5; 134, 2).

<sup>8</sup> Melchert 2012, 277; Schürr 2010, 119-20.

two signs only the upper part of the signs has survived, and their suggested reading is *l* and *e*. The reading of the personal name seems to be *Lebe*, which may be identified with Λα, Λαζ or Λης.<sup>9</sup> *Lebe* is a genitive, and the use of a genitive in *-be* accompanying the name of a tomb owner in the nominative is very rare but not exceptional.<sup>10</sup> It is not possible to determine a tomb owner's lineage, since in most cases it cannot be determined whether a Lycian personal name is masculine or feminine. The matrilineal system of Lycian families is a familiar discussion about which many arguments have been advanced both pro and con.<sup>11</sup> The present text does not remove ambiguity on the matter.

### Karabel Tomb 2 (figs. 6-9)

This rock-cut tomb is located on the western slope of the Eşekkırıği hill and carved directly into the bedrock. It exemplifies the house-type tombs frequently seen in Lycia with one story and a flat roof supported by a row of round beams carved like a façade of timber. It has a single vertical rectangular panel and protruding beams. The dimensions of the door are 42 x 100 cm, thus forming a vertical rectangle. The entrance was sealed with a sliding stone door that ran sideways along grooves at the bottom and top.

The tomb has a very simple arrangement because of its façade and is comparable to those in Limyra.<sup>12</sup> The tomb's façade was plastered with madder or red ocher, as seen in the previous tomb. The plastered surface has partly survived to the present day.

The burial chamber consists of *klinai* arranged in a U-shape. The *klinai* are arranged on three sides of the shallow pit in the center of the floor that measures 1.14 x 0.95 m. There are two more *klinai* in the form of a niche. One is above the east *kline* and the other under the north *kline*. It is probable that these were carved at a later period. The *kline* under the north *kline* is smaller and likely made for children. The floor of the tomb is 0.50 m lower than the entrance. The height of the ceiling is 1.75 m.

A workshop for making wine carved directly into the bedrock was identified approximately 20 m south of the tomb. A large cross was engraved on the surface of the workshop. It is evident that the tomb area was reused or settled in the Christian period.

The inscription in the Lycian language consists of eight lines: five lines were incised on the lintel, three lines on the section under the lintel. The inscription was badly damaged in many places since the plastered surface was ruined. Its dimensions are 190 x 30 cm.

The paleography of signs does not seem identical with those in the previous inscription. The sigma is formed in the shape of a triangle missing the vertical edge ( > ). The pi does not have a classical Greek form, and the upper horizontal stroke is oblique. The signs for the nasalized *ā* and *ē* are almost identical. The first line is still legible, but the following line is mostly irrecoverable. The eighth line, where only the alpha is clearly traceable, is erased. Word

<sup>9</sup> Zgusta 1964, § 786-1, 2, § 810. The name can also come from *la-* by metaphony (\**labe* > *lebe*). The male name Λαζ was identified with *Hla* in TL 56 bilingual where Ικτας Λα Αντιφελίτης corresponds to *Ikta Hlab tideimi* (Adiego 2014, 261). *Hla* was attested also in TL 129 and 145. It seems probable that two versions of Λαζ coexisted in Lycian as *Hla* and *La*, including a loss of initial *b*. Λα and Λης are female names.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. TL 2, 2: *Murazabe : tideimi*, TL 32a : *Zzalabe : ladā*, TL 118, 1: *Masasabe : tideimi*. Adiego 2010, 2. An analysis of *Lebe* as an *adesinential* is also possible.

<sup>11</sup> Bryce 1986, 143-58; Laroche 1988; Carruba 1990.

<sup>12</sup> Kuban 2016, 412-13.



In the following lines 4 and 5 only *uwadi*<sup>17</sup> and *ñtewē*<sup>18</sup> remain from the text, but their context is quite uncertain.

Line 6 includes part of a prohibition. It seems that the first stage of the text ends with ]?edi-nabaje, which is a *hapax legomenon*. At the end of the same line the text goes on with *χυῖᾶ: ebeññē:me*. To suggest a reading could only be conjectural since the rest of the text is completely irrecoverable.

### Karabel Tomb 3 (figs. 10-12)

This rock-cut tomb, located on the western slope of the Eşekkırıği hill, is partly underground. Part of the façade was damaged, but the burial chamber is well preserved. It is an example of the so-called “house-type” tombs with a fat roof supported by a row of round beams carved like the façade of timber. It has one story with a single vertical rectangular panel. It may be grouped like the previous one among the Limyra-type tombs because of its façade and burial chamber.

The burial chamber was arranged with *klinai* on three sides in a U-shape. The interior of the tomb, which was formed by carving the bedrock, shows very smooth workmanship. The *klinai* are arranged on three sides of the shallow pit in the center of the floor that measures 1.35 x 1.00 m. The height from the floor to ceiling is 1.80 m. There is a step ladder on the floor in front of the door, and the floor is 0.30 m below the door sill. The lower part of the door is covered by earth, but it can be supposed that it was sealed with a sliding stone door as seen in the previous examples.

### Conclusion

The cultural and geographical diffusion of the Lycians before the Hellenistic period was not well understood as a whole in the areas outside certain cities and especially in the Lycian countryside. Questioning a cultural diffusion may serve to examine the nature of cultural homogeneity of Lycia and the way the Lycian script reached certain cities and country areas. The rock-cut tombs with inscriptions, examined in the present study, may give an answer to this.

These rock-cut tombs are located on the highland road from Myra to Arnaeai. In antiquity there were two roads departing from Myra to the inner regions. One reached Dereazlı along the Myros Potamos (River); the other reached Arnaeai via Belören, Karabel and Çağman.<sup>19</sup> The road to the highland, called “*Gavur Yolu*” today, seems to have been used in the Roman Imperial period and thereafter.<sup>20</sup> It is obvious that this road to the highland also existed between the fifth and fourth centuries BC since the rock-cut tomb with the Lycian inscription at Çağman<sup>21</sup> and the present ones at Karabel prove this.

The political and cultural revival seen in western Lycia was accompanied by that in Myra and Limyra in the east as early as the fifth century BC.<sup>22</sup> These cities are geographically isolated

<sup>17</sup> It means “cow, bovine” in Laroche 1967, 59.

<sup>18</sup> Carruba 1969, 31; Laroche 1979, 90; Melchert 2004, 46; Neumann 2007, 251.

<sup>19</sup> Şahin and Adak 2007, 210-11.

<sup>20</sup> Takmer and Alkan 2013, 107-8.

<sup>21</sup> Neumann 1979, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Kolb 2018, 444-46.

from each other, surrounded and separated by a mountainous headland covered with dense maquis. Myra and Limyra are, as the crow flies, around 20 km apart. In antiquity sea travel would have been a way to connect them, but it was very hard because of the rocky coast and continual rough seas. As seen in the 59th direction of the *Stadiasmus Patarensis* a departure from Myra crossed through Kaklık, Ortasarı and Yalakbaşı to reach Phoinix (Finike) and then Limyra.<sup>23</sup> This road was in use in the Hellenistic period, and some border stations (*peripolion*) from the Roman Imperial period were found between Myra and Limyra.<sup>24</sup> The political and cultural influence of Limyra spread towards to the border of Pamphylia, as seen in the Lycian inscriptions from Gağaz<sup>25</sup> and Asartaş.<sup>26</sup> The influence of Limyra to the north of Myra seems less probable, although its political and military power increased in the middle of fourth century BC. It is obvious that the Karabel rock-cut tombs must have been constructed by the stone masters from Myra and showed its political and cultural influence in the northern territory between the fifth and fourth centuries BC.

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<sup>23</sup> Şahin 2014, 379-87.

<sup>24</sup> Şahin 2014, 386.

<sup>25</sup> Seyer and Tekoğlu 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Tekoğlu 2004.

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FIG. 1 Rock-cut tomb 1, faade.



FIG. 2 Rock-cut tomb 1, inside general view.



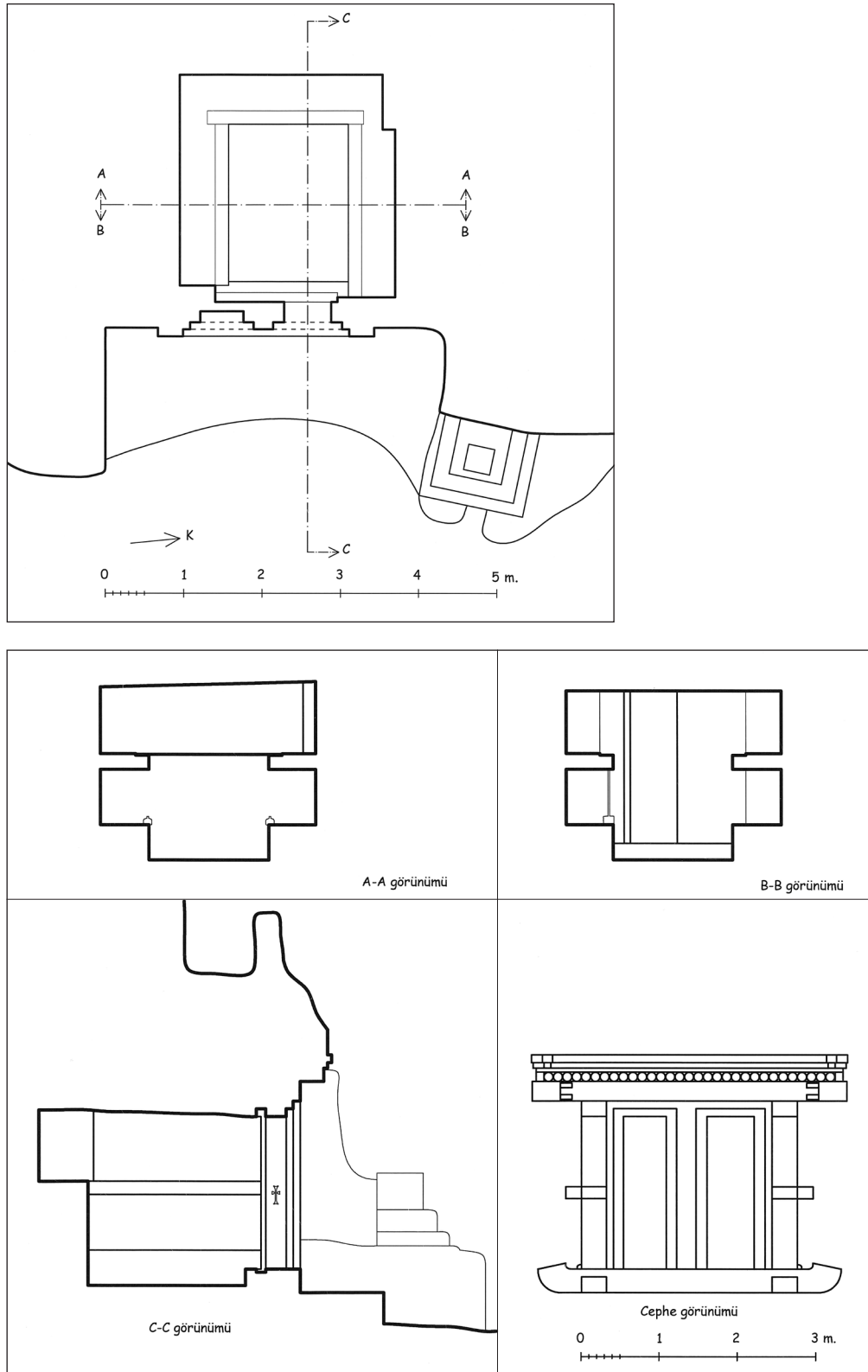


FIG. 3 Rock-cut tomb 1, plan and view drawings.

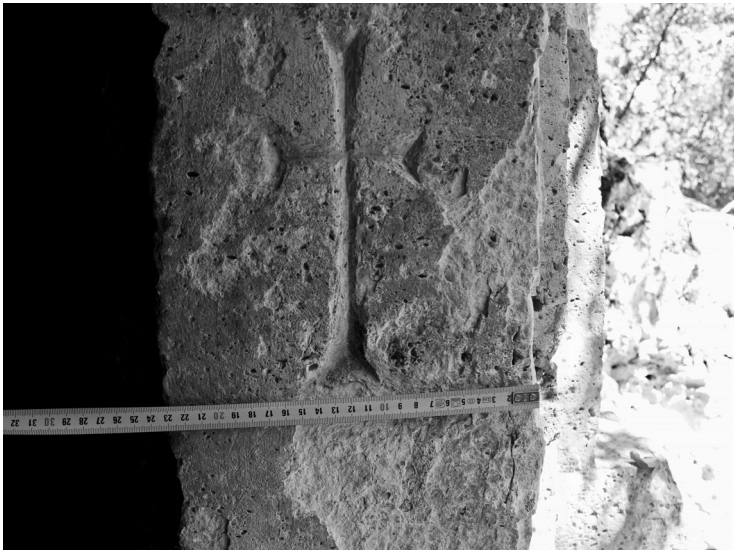


FIG. 4  
Rock-cut tomb 1,  
cross decoration  
on the left edge of  
the door.

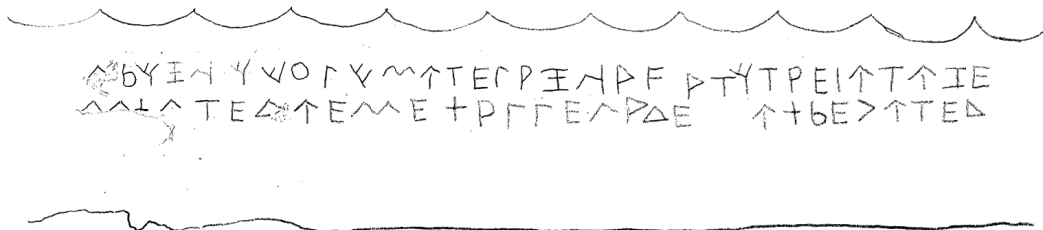


FIG. 5 Rock-cut tomb 1, view and drawing of the inscription.



FIG. 6 Rock-cut tomb 2, façade.



FIG. 7 Rock-cut tomb 2, inside general view.



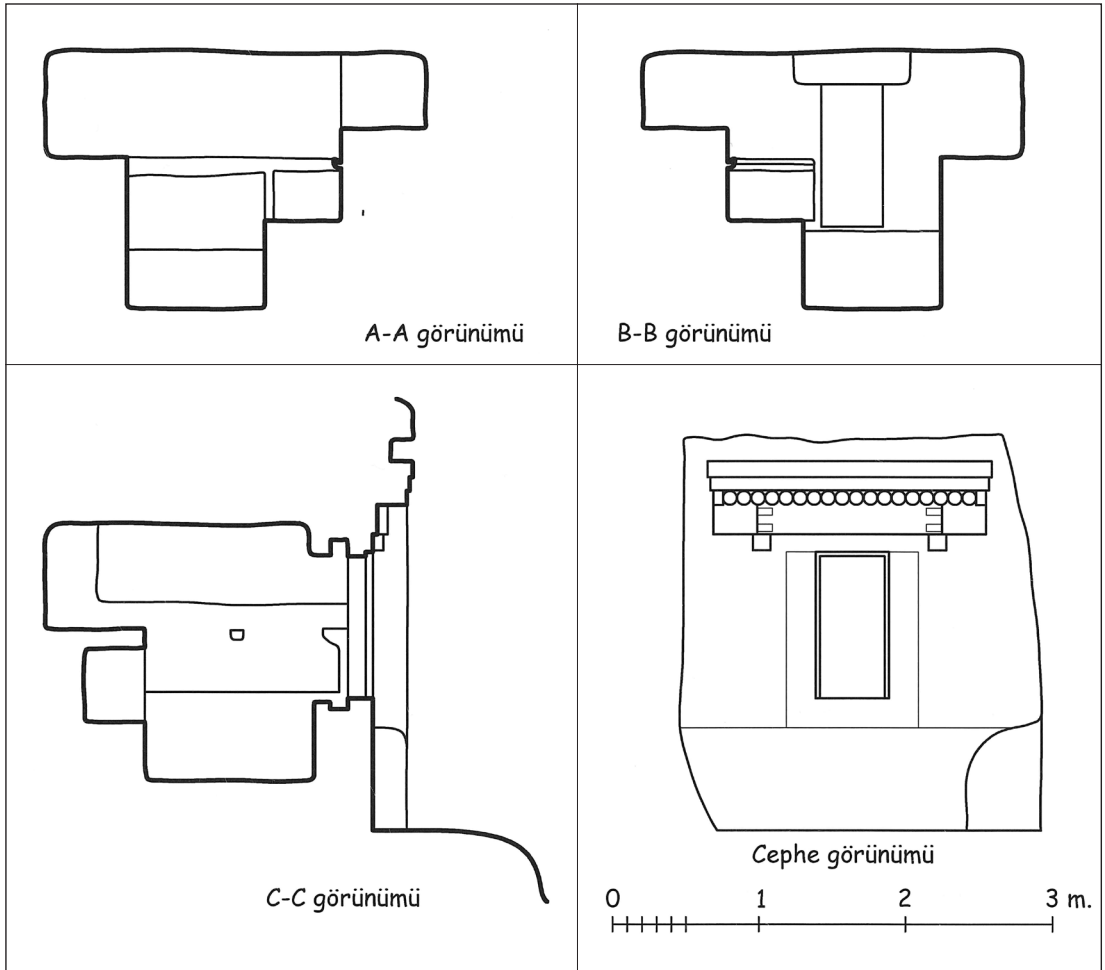
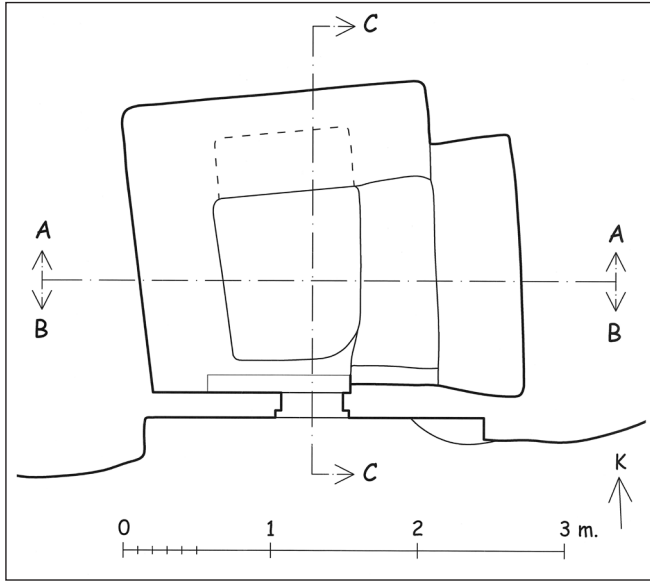


FIG. 8 Rock-cut tomb 2, plan and view drawings.

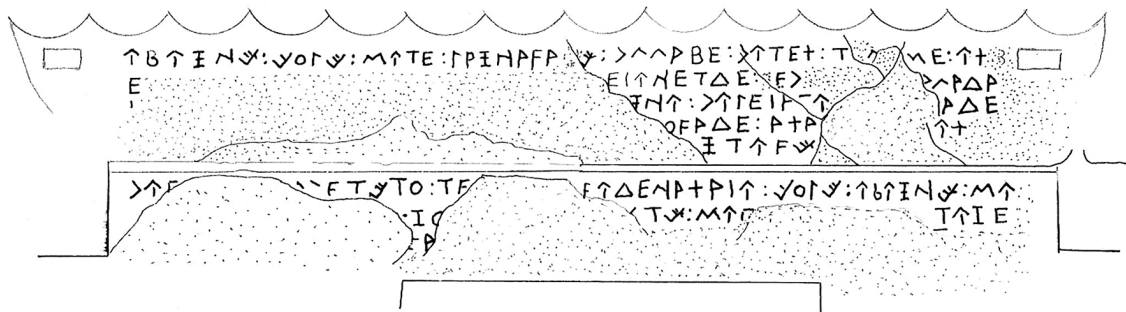


FIG. 9 Rock-cut tomb 2, view and drawing of the inscription.

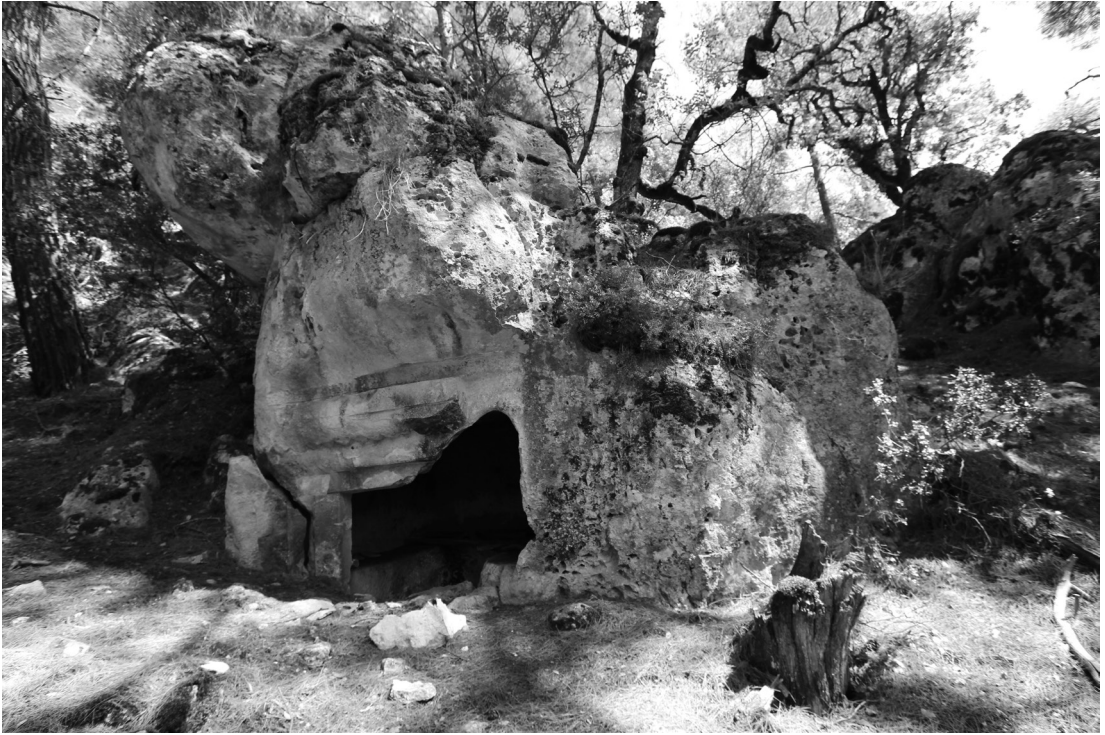


FIG. 10 Rock-cut tomb 3, façade.



FIG. 11 Rock-cut tomb 3, inside general view.

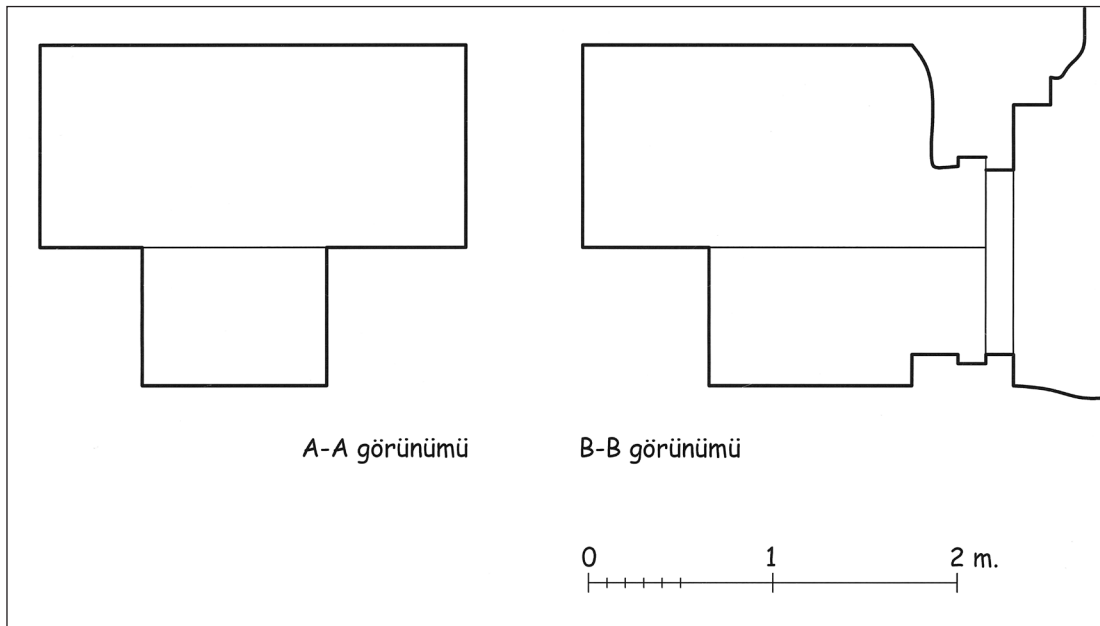
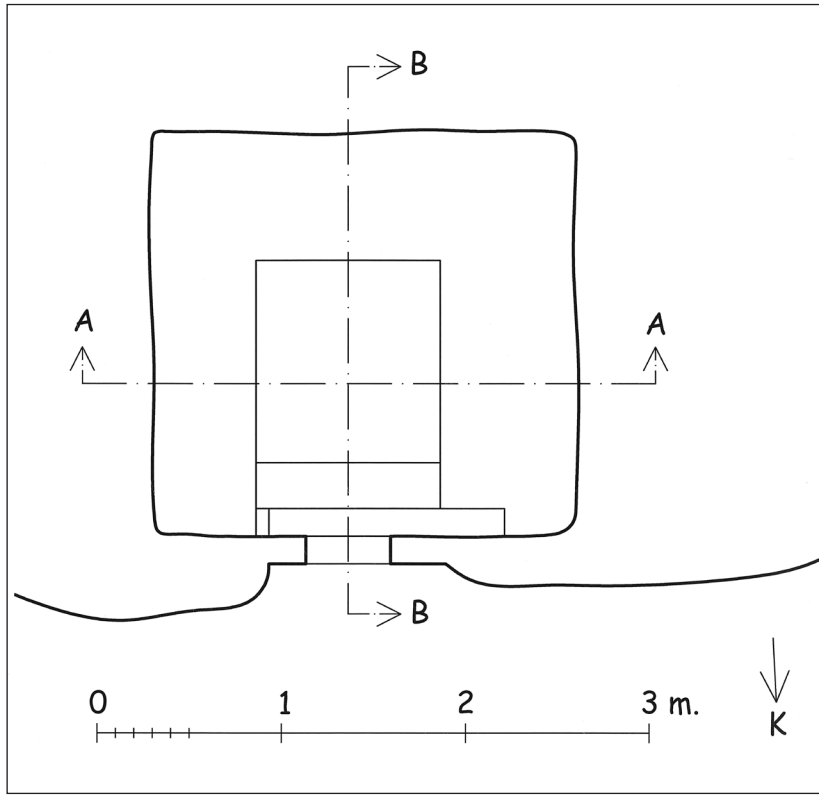


FIG. 12 Rock-cut tomb 3, plan and view drawings.





