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Death and Burial: In the Light of the Graves Recovered from the Ancient City of Idyma - Akyaka Castle and its Surroundings (Muğla, Turkey)

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we delve into the intricate cultural perceptions of "death" through the lens of the ancient city of Idyma, nestled within the Ancient Caria Region and tracing its origins back to the 7th century BC. The diverse ways in which different societies have historically approached the concept of death find symbolic expression in their burial traditions, a poignant reflection of their reverence and devotion to the departed. Our study sets out to analyze the burial practices of the denizens of the ancient city of Idyma, shedding light on their unique perspectives on mortality in a comprehensive historical and cultural context. The focal point of our investigation comprises the unearthed Graves within and surrounding the Idyma-Akyaka Castle area, all dating from the Hellenistic Period to the Byzantine Period, excavated during the 2020-2021 season. Unveiling the burial traditions entails a comprehensive anthropological assessment encompassing grave typologies, chronological categorization, distinct burial methods, architectural nuances of the Graves, and the demographic distribution of these resting places. Simultaneously, gleaned insights from these burial sites concerning funeral customs offer glimpses into the social status and economic strata of the individuals interred within. We anticipate that this research will pave the way for renewed archaeological and anthropological endeavors centered on the captivating domain of the Idyma Ancient City. As these findings accrue, we aspire for them to enrich the existing corpus of knowledge concerning the historical and cultural tapestry of Idyma, thereby augmenting our understanding of the broader Carian Region.

Keywords: Idyma, Caria, death, burial traditions, intramural-extramural, inhumation-cremation, single-multiple burial practices, grave architecture, funerary offerings

Introduction

Throughout the annals of history, death—a concept often perceived as the definitive culmination of life—has engendered a tapestry of diverse behaviors across cultures (Uhri, 2010, pp. 21-54). This enigmatic threshold has been interpreted not just as an end, but as a transition, a gateway to the elusive "afterlife". This belief in a continuum beyond death has been a wellspring for an array of burial rituals since ancient epochs (Civelek, 2007, p. 71). Ritualistic interments and the bestowal of offerings upon the departed have been intertwined with the belief in facilitating their journey into the realms beyond (Uhri, 2010, pp. 24-25). These rituals, as manifestations of esteem and affection, encapsulated a tangible connection with the deceased (Civelek, 2007, p. 71).

This article delves into the nuances of the "death" concept, elucidating it through the prism of burial traditions in the ancient city of Idyma. Nestled within the Ancient Caria Region in the southwestern cradle of Turkey, this discourse commences with an introduction to the historical tapestry of the Carian Region—a canvas that houses the traces of Idyma's legacy, and the variegated settlements embellishing this landscape. Pivotal epochs in Caria's chronicle and the sway of diverse dominions are narrated, paving the backdrop for the ensuing exploration. The evolution and topography of the ancient city of Idyma are scrutinized with precision, notably, its historical trajectory entwined with the ebb and flow of different powers, particularly its intricate dance with Rhodes. Recent archaeological revelations, stemming from the 2020-2021 excavations, have illuminated Idyma's lineage, tracing its lineage back to the 7th century BC (Baran, 2023; Tekkök Karaöz et al., 2022). Anticipations are set upon forthcoming studies that might uncover even earlier vestiges of the city's genesis.

Within this study's ambit, the sepulchers unveiled during the 2020-2021 excavations unfurl as windows into antiquity, offering glimpses into the burial traditions and rituals spanning epochs, from antiquity to the Byzantine era. Through anthropological scrutiny of the skeletal remnants contained within these Graves, demographic insights emerge, and pivotal cues concerning burial conventions come to light. Continuing on this trajectory, diverse facets—ranging from Grave typologies, and interment postures, to the preservation status of these hallowed grounds—are meticulously dissected. Architectural traits and configurations of these funereal enclaves are also parsed with precision.

In summation, the meticulous analysis of the sepulchers within Idyma's ancient precincts and the bastion of Akyaka Castle yields a trove of insights that enrich the annals chronicling the city and its cultural tapestry, as well as the broader regional milieu. Furthermore, it is envisaged that the corpus of extant data could catalyze fresh excavations, yielding deeper insights into the intricacies of burial traditions.

Caria Region

The Caria Region, where the ancient city of Idyma is located, is situated in the southwest of Turkey. To the north are important city-states such as Miletus and Ephesus and the Ionia region. Inland is the Lydia Region, which was ruled from Sardis by an autonomous kingdom until the Persian conquest. Caria is also separated from Lycia by the mountain ranges in the east (Reger, 2020, pp. 2-3.). The Carians, who constituted the local people of the Caria region, continued their lives mostly in the villages in the interior regions (Sevin, 2001, p. 106).

The limited information about the region before the 7th century BC reveals the existence of some Carian kingdoms (Sevin, 2001, pp.106-107).[1] It is estimated that the Lydians were the first to bring the region completely under the protection of a single state, and they took it under their sovereignty in the early 6th century BC during the Croesus Period (Umar, 1999, p. 5). In 546 BC, the lands of Caria and Lydia came under Persian rule after the defeat of the Lydian King Croesus to the Persians. Later, they joined the Attica - Delos Union in 480 BC. In 397 BC, it again came under Persian rule (Aksan, 2007, pp. 6-7). In 395 BC, the Caria Region completely became a satrapy. After the death of Alexander the Great, Caria was left to Rhodes with the Apameia Peace Treaty between Rome, Rhodes, Pergamon, and Antiochus III in 190 BC. The region regained its autonomy with the Roman request in 167 BC (Sevin, 2001, pp. 107-108). With the beginning of the Tetrarchy Period in 293 AD in the Roman Empire, a new dominance was established in the Mediterranean. In this period, the province of Caria, whose capital was Aphrodisias, was formed by dividing the previous province into two, Caria and Phrygia, in 250 AD. Although the belief in paganism started to attract attention again during the quadruple government period, one year after Maximianus Daia's visit to Caria, the "Edict of Milan" was signed, and religious freedom was granted to everyone. Later, Constantine, who ruled the Roman Empire in 324 AD, favored Christianity more than paganism (Sitz, 2020, pp. 69-70).

These historical and cultural changes in the region also affected the burial traditions. It is stated that the funerary architecture in Caria had a rich variety in the Hellenistic Period, but in the Byzantine Period, boat-plate type burials were widely used instead of diversity. On the other hand, it has been reported that in the Byzantine Period, gifts for the dead such as gold diadems, fibula, coins (gold, bronze, silver), oil lamps, pendants, rings, etc. were very rare (Doğan, 2021).

Ancient City of Idyma

The ancient city of Idyma is one of the cities established in the Caria Region, located south of the Büyük Menderes River (Serin, 2013). The city is located on the slopes of the hill

1 It is estimated that the region referred to as "Karkisa" or "Karkiya" in the written works of the Hittites in the 2nd millennium BC and as "Karka" in Persian written sources is "Caria" (Aksan, 2007, p. 3). It is known that the name "Karka" in the Luwian (Levi) dialect means tip, head, tip of the land projection, nose or mountain head (ibid.).

known as Küçük Asartepe (Baran, 2023; Iren & Gürbüzer, 2005; Tekkök Karaöz et al., 2022), north of the village of Kozlukuyu (today's Gökova), within the borders of the Ula district of the present-day Muğla province, and resembles the appearance of a mountain settlement like many other cities in the Caria Region (Iren & Gürbüzer, 2005:9).

It is known that the city was one of the member cities of the Delian League in Rhodian Peraea in antiquity and was ruled by Paktyes, who minted coins in its name (Bean, 2022, p. 178). It is stated that Idyma was one of only a few cities[2] that had a mint in the 5th century BC (Thompson, 1981, pp. 95-97). The city was annexed to Rhodes in 200 BC but then lost its sovereignty. Later, it was again taken under control by General Nikagoras of Rhodes (Bean, 2022, p. 178). In 167 BC, Rhodes started to lose territory. However, an inscription unearthed in Idyma shows that Rhodes still dominated the city until the 1st century BC (Iren & Gürbüzer, 2005, p. 10). Studies show that the local population of the ancient city of Idyma left the city in the Late Hellenistic Period and migrated to flatter areas (Baran, 2023, p. 11). The fact that the city was close to Çaydere (Idymos) in the south and the sea enabled it to dominate the region (Iren & Gürbüzer, 2005). This can be shown as a reason for the city to be drawn to the flat areas.

Idyma Castle and its surroundings were first documented in 2004 by Kaan Iren and his team. In terms of architectural features of the buildings and cultural finds, Idyma Castle and the Graves around the chapel are associated with the Byzantine Period (Iren & Gürbüzer, 2005). Bean mentions this castle; "At a lower level of the slope, there is a larger castle of the Middle Ages, from which the road descending to the plain continues eastwards beside a short but abundant stream, probably the ancient Idymos." (Bean, 2022, p.177).

The rescue works that started under the presidency of Abdulkadir Baran in 2020- 2021 and the subsequent comprehensive excavations in and around the ancient city of Idyma-Akyaka Castle and its surroundings have revealed new findings. According to current studies, the discovery of 7th century BC ceramics in the existing archaeological finds and the presence of walls similar to the Archaic Period fortification wall line indicate that the history of the city goes back to the early periods (Baran, 2022; Tekkök Karaöz et al., 2022).

According to the artifacts recovered, it was observed that the settlement in the fortress was inhabited continuously from the 7th century BC to the 7th century AD (Baran, 2022, pp. 19-20). In the light of archaeological finds, it is suggested that the settlement was interrupted from the 7th century AD to the 11th century AD (Tekkök Karaöz et al., 2022). It is stated that the castle[3] was built as a garrison in the 12th century AD and then inhabited by the Principalities as of the 13th century AD and some areas were restored and continued to be used during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods (Baran, 2022; Tekkök Karaöz et al., 2022).

2 This is also supported by the mention of the city and Tyrant Paktyes in the Athenian tax lists of the 5th century BC and the mention that he paid 1 talent twice (Baran, 2022, p. 19).

3 Idyma Ancient City/Akyaka Castle is located in the Akyaka neighborhood of Ula district, which is considered in the category of "calm cities" called "Cittaslow" (Ada & Yener, 2017; Özmen et al., 2016; Sürücü et al., 2015; Tayfun & Acuner, 2014).

Graves

A small number of chamber Graves were opened during the early rescue excavations in the Ancient City of Idyma. In the studies related to these Graves, it is stated that archaeological finds were recovered from a chamber Grave dated to 166 BC, which was allegedly built for Menias, indicating that the Grave was used for about 500 years (Gürbüzer, 2006; 2016). In addition, during the first rescue excavations carried out by the Muğla Archaeological Museum, which lasted for two seasons, limited findings were presented regarding some Graves around a Basilica located in the teritorium of the ancient city of Idyma (Özyurt, 2013a; 2013b).

In the research conducted by Gürbüzer in and around Idyma, 5 grave types such as a rock Grave, a cist grave, a chamasorium, an underground chamber Grave, and an arcosolium were reported about the burial traditions (Gürbüzer, 2019, pp. 63-72). It has been reported that rock Graves, which are the type of grave seen from the beginning of the 4th-3rd century BC until the Late Antique Period (Byzantine), can be seen in the necropolis of the ancient city of Idyma (ibid.). However, excavations were not carried out in the graves in this known necropolis area of the city during the 2020-2021 excavation seasons. Therefore, the only source for the rock Grave typology for this study was the İnişdibi Rock Graves.

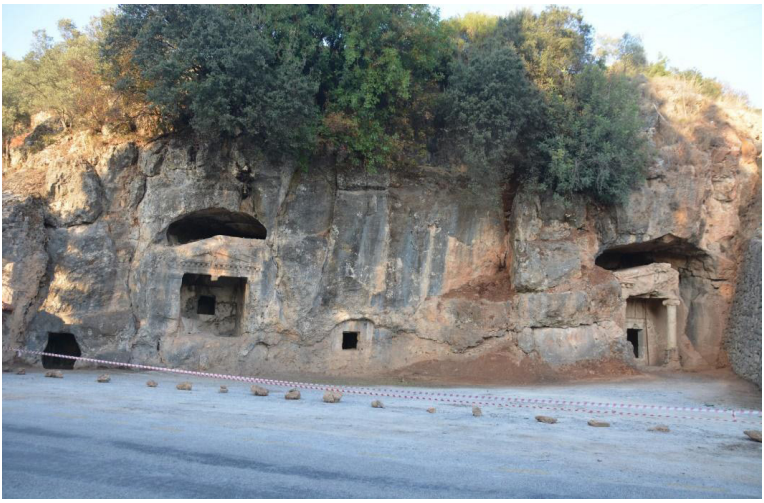
Podium Grave

Alpaslan, in his study regarding the dating and evolution of graves with podiums (2005), characterizes these graves as structures adorned with monuments on elevated platforms. Such graves were employed as symbolic tools to accentuate the social standing of individuals. According to Alpaslan (2005; 2020), Anatolia witnessed the emergence of podium graves as early as the 6th century BC. Notably, during the onset of the Hellenistic period, particularly in the 4th century BC, the prevalence of podium graves surged, and their construction grew more grandiose as a result of interaction between Ancient Greece and Persia. This interaction offers insights into Anatolia's intricate cultural fabric. The podium grave uncovered during the rescue excavations of Idyma Ancient City (Photograph 1.) likely dates back to the Hellenistic Period. In this grave, which embodies the multiple burial tradition, the minimum count of individuals was identified as two, with the human remains indicating signs of disturbance. It is inferred that one of these individuals was a young adult woman, while the sex of the other, an adult, remains undetermined. Additionally, bone material indicative of cremation tradition was retrieved from the grave, suggesting that this individual was a young adult female.

Photograph 1. Podium Grave (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

İnişdibi Rock Graves

Ünver and Yaman reported that two of the stelae unearthed at İnişdibi have Greek grave inscriptions (Ünver & Yaman, 2013). Bean (2022, p. 178) further elaborates on the rock-cut graves, describing a group of them situated before veering right to traverse the plain (today's Akyaka). Three of these graves were unadorned, while two adhered to the temple (apterous plan) grave type, showcasing Ionian features. One of them featured two columns, albeit one being damaged, and the other surprisingly showcased a solitary column positioned centrally. The perimeter of the grave was meticulously carved, allowing passage between it and the rock. These graves were most likely dated to the 4th century BC. Doğan (2021) provided insights into the structure of temple-form graves. According to Doğan, the western side of these graves encompassed an ante-chamber designated for offerings and the main burial chamber. The facade mimicked a temple with a triangular pediment, with a portion of the column forming the façade still preserved (pp. 449 - 450). Previous publications alluded to the presence of five graves; however, the ongoing excavations led to the discovery of only four rock graves. The current archaeological investigation indicated that the fifth grave, assumed to have a straightforward door structure, might remain situated beneath the highway (Baran, 2022, p. 10). Among the rock graves located in Akyaka İnişdibi (Photograph 2.), only graves 2 and 3 yielded human remains. Grave 2 yielded very few bone materials (diaphyseal fragments and vertebral fragments) belonging to adult individuals. Grave 2 was not analyzed due to insufficient data. The morphological analyses on the bones recovered from rock grave number 3 suggest that this grave was used for a minimum of 6 individuals. Very limited material related to the cranium and pelvic region was recovered. Based on the analyses made on the other postcranial bones, it is estimated that there may be 2 adult males, 2 adult females, and 2 children.



Photograph 2. İnişdibi Rock Graves (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020–2021).

Grave 1

The grave called "Grave 1" (Photograph 3.), which is located to the north of the North Wall Line of Akyaka Fortress, has the form of a chamber grave, and according to the materials recovered, it was dated to the 5th century BC. It is understood that it was used between the 5th century BC and the 3rd century AD (Baran, 2022, p. 11). Skeletal remains from this grave, which was used during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, were evaluated. The skeletal group in this grave consists of mixed and fragmented bones. The bones are quite broken and poorly preserved due to various damage and natural factors. When the bones were sorted, long bones, skull fragments, and other bones were separated. This situation made it very difficult to analyze the bones. To understand the minimum number of individuals, teeth were utilized in the study. The classified teeth include maxillary right first premolar, mandibular left first premolar, and mandibular left first incisive teeth. Six pieces of teeth were found. Burnt bones exposed to cremation were also found in the grave. There were no tooth fragments exposed to high temperature among the teeth. Considering the teeth and burnt bone fragments, the minimum number of individuals recovered from this grave is 7. It was found that two maxillary right first molars had not yet completed their development. When the root development of one of these teeth was analyzed according to the stages of tooth development established by Ubelaker (1989), it is seen that the individual was still between 5-6 years of age. The root of the other tooth was damaged, but considering the tubercle development, it is estimated that this individual was between 5-7 years old. Although the age ranges of the other four individuals whose teeth were recovered and the cremated individual are not known, it is understood that these individuals were adults.

There is a structure at the head of a grave at the lowest level in the centerline of the grave, which is thought to have been used as an infant-child grave. Bone material belonging to 2 separate infant-children recovered from the grave supports this hypothesis.

Photograph 3. Grave 1 in chamber grave form (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Grave 2

Grave 2 (Photograph 4.), which is located on the border of Idyma Castle, dated to the Byzantine Period and exhibits a multiple burial tradition, was built in a circular form reminiscent of a small well grave. Demographic analyses were made in this grave based on the cranial bones. Accordingly, it can be said that this grave was used for 3 adult individuals: 1 young adult male, 1 older adult (50+) male (?), and 1 adult whose sex was not determined. In addition, 1 fetus and 1 child were found in this grave and it is thought that there were at least 5 individuals in this grave.

Photograph 4. Grave 2 was designed in a circular form (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Grave 3

Grave 3, located in the east-west direction in the corridor between the chapel and the south wall body of the north tower 5 in Idyma Akyaka Castle, exhibits a multiple burial tradition. Although it is not as distinct as Grave 2, it has a partial circular form (Photograph 5.). Bone fragments were found intensively in the southeast section of the 0.20 m deep grave. In grave 3, all bone material was collected at a depth of 0.56 m and the level of the earth was made uniform in depth.

Based on the postcranial bones (ulna and humerus), this grave was used for 2 adult male (?) individuals. One mandible recovered from the grave is thought to belong to a young adult male. A very small number of bones (vertebrae, costa, and coxae fragments) belonging to fetus-infant and child individuals were also recovered from the grave. The minimum number of individuals in this grave was determined to be 2 and the bone material belonging to the other individuals was isolated, labeled, and removed to be compared with the bones of infants and children recovered from other graves adjacent to this grave (Grave 5). Light osteophyte formations were observed on the bones. Mild decay was observed on the mandibular teeth.

Photograph 5. Grave 3 exhibits a semi-circular form in an east-west direction (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Grave 4

In grave 4 (Photograph 6.), the cranium of an adult individual (Individual 3) was recognized at the first level associated with the bone material. In the following stages, two more skulls (cranium) were exposed to the east of the first cranium. At a depth of 0.25 m, it was thought that the grave may have been used in the east-west direction and the skulls were named as Individual 1, Individual 2, and Individual 3 from east to west. Afterward, the cranium and mandible of Individual 3, located 0.32 m below the surface in the centerline of the grave, were labeled and removed. At this level, mixed body bones (postcranial) belonging to the individuals were found. From this stage onwards, the west-east-orientated (head-feet)

and continuous spinal bones (columna vertebralis) associated with Individual 2 were exposed. Forearm bones (radius-ulna) placed on the abdomen were found. At the same level, upper leg bones (femur) belonging to a child were unearthed on the southeast border of the grave.

After the dorsally buried and continuous body bones of Individual 2 were exposed, the in-grave length was determined to be 1.83 m (meters) and the in-grave width was 0.36 m. This grave seems to have been built on top of grave 7 which was partially destroyed from the north. The boundaries of the grave were found to be 0.70 m further east than the initially exposed boundary. While these boundaries were exposed, a metal ring, which may be a piece of jewelry, was found on the eastern surface (Baran 2020; 2021). In this grave, which exhibits a cist form, a regular lid form could not be reached due to possible natural disasters and/or human interventions. Glazed ceramics and sherds were recovered from the surface up to the level where the bone material was found. It is assumed that this grave, in which skeletal material was found in a very mixed state, was used as an adult grave in its first use.

The length of the right femur and the length of the right humerus of Individual 2, the only individual found in situ in the grave, were measured as 0.41 m and 0.30 m, respectively. Sacral indicators suggest that this individual was female and epiphyseal fusions suggest that it was a young adult.

Photograph 6. Grave 4, individual 2 (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Grave 5

In Grave 5 (Photograph 7.), situated to the south of Grave 3 and exhibiting a tradition of multiple burials, we encountered dispersed bones at a depth of 0.14 meters. Upon reaching a depth of 0.67 m, all of the bones were carefully gathered and collected. Based on the partially in situ bones, it is presumed that the individuals within this grave might have been interred in a dorsal position.

Upon analyzing the bones retrieved from the south corridor of North Tower 5, the location of Grave 5, we definitively matched them to the individuals interred within this grave. This meticulous matching process illuminated the presence of a minimum of four individuals in Grave 5. Despite the bones being found in a complex mixture, the distinct age-related differences among the individuals who utilized this grave allowed for a comprehensive individual skeletal classification.

By employing sutural and spongiosal aging methodologies, we have estimated that one of the interred individuals was a middle-aged female. This conclusion is drawn from the overall appearance of the skeletal structure, which exhibits characteristic traits associated with a female. Notably, this individual displays a significant loss of bone density. Alongside her, we have identified another individual, whose bone fusion points (notably on the humerus, coxae, vertebrae, and femur) point towards an adolescent age estimation. Furthermore, this individual's mandibular characteristics suggest a male identity. Additionally, our observations indicate the presence of a child, approximately 8 years old (with an estimated margin of +-2 years), based on dental aging. Intriguingly, a metal trace was detected on the frontal bone of this child. Lastly, we managed to retrieve bone fragments attributed to an infant from the same grave.

Photograph 7. Skull unearthed in Grave 5 (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Grave 6

The skeletal material belonging to three individuals in situ was unearthed from this grave (Baran, 2022, p. 11), which dates to the 3rd century BC and exhibits a simple cist type. The partially damaged cranium (skull) and nearly complete postcranial bones (torso bones) belonging to the west-east oriented (head-feet) Individual 1, who was recognized at the first level and was the last to be buried in the grave, were recovered. The symphysis pubis preserved on the coxae of Individual 1 (Photograph 8.) gives an age estimate of 50+ years. The general appearance of the skeleton, cranial, mandibular, and pelvic features suggest that the biological sex of the individual is male. There is a significant degree of AMTL

(antemortem tooth loss) in the mandible of the individual. Severe bone density loss was noticed in the trunk bones of the individual.

The skull of the individual labeled as Individual 2 (Photograph 9.), who was buried in an east-west direction (head-feet), was removed from Individual 1. After the removal of Individual 1, the almost complete postcranial bones of the individual were reached. The unguentarium recovered at the same level as this individual at the level of the distal epiphysis of the right femur of the individual seems to have been left as a death gift for this individual.

Individual 2 is estimated to be a young adult individual aged 22-24 years, based on the general appearance of the skeleton and the symphysis pubis. Grave 6 was made for Individual 3 which was reached at the lowest level. Three coins were recovered from the bone material belonging to the individual (Baran 2020; 2021). While the skull of Individual 3 (Photograph 10.) could not be reached, the mandible and postcranial bones were found fragmented and burnt. We consider that the individual's soft tissues and skull, whose postcranial bones were positioned in an east-west direction (head to feet) and dorsally, might have undergone partial cremation before burial in this grave. Alternatively, they could have been cremated after placement. However, definitive proof of cremation in this grave requires diverse chemical analyses. Based on these results, a change in burial tradition within this grave can be inferred following the presence of this individual. To accurately confirm the occurrence of cremation in this grave, a variety of chemical analyses are necessary.

Individual 3 has the same mandibular AMTL (antemortem tooth loss) as Individual 1. Extremity measurements of this individual are similar to the other individuals. The mandible bone of Individual 3 indicates that characteristic form to be a male. The general appearance of the skeleton and the symphysis pubis suggest that Individual 3 is elderly (50+). Although Individual 2 and Individual 3 were buried in an east-west direction, it is remarkable that Individual 1 was buried in the west-east direction. This cultural practice may have been intended to emphasize that Individual 1 was the last burial in this grave.

Photograph 8. Grave 6, Individual 1, and cranium of Individual 2 (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Photograph 9. Grave 6, Individual 2 (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Photograph 10. Grave 6, Individual 3 (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Grave 7

When Grave 4 was opened, a grave exhibiting a simple cist type, which was noticed at the western end of Grave 4, was named Grave 7 (Photograph 11.). It is thought that Grave 7 was partially destroyed to construct Grave 4 on the eastern line. The grave contained the skeletal material of 1 individual buried in a west-east direction (head-feet), facing slightly south and in situ. The grave was extended in the southeast direction to reach the lower extremities of

the individual and to reveal the boundaries of the grave. Five stones were removed from this 0.50 m area.

A fragment of a glass bracelet, which does not constitute continuity, was found at the level of the lid of the western boundary. A small number of ceramic sherds were recovered from the surface down to the level where the bone material was found. It was observed that this grave was seated on the bedrock and there is a single burial tradition. The length of the grave was recorded as 1.80 m and the width as 0.45 m.

The cranium and postcranial bones, although marked by postmortem fractures, were found scattered yet nearly complete. The individual's in-grave length was documented at 176 cm, with measurements of 38 cm for the left tibia, 44 cm for the right femur, and 32 cm for the right humerus. Analyzing the epiphyseal fusion points of the radius, ulna, and fibula bones, in addition to considering tooth eruption age, conclusively suggested that the individual's age fell within the range of 16 to 18 years, indicative of an adolescent to young adult stage. Furthermore, the male sex is inferred from observations of robustness in the iliac crest of the mandible, long bones, coxa bone, and cranial morphological structure.

Photograph 11. Grave 7, individual 1 (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Grave 8

Grave 8 (Photograph 12.) was uncovered on the border of the ancient blocks called "Building 1" located on the south of the outer wall line at Idyma Akyaka Fortress. Bone material was observed at a level of 0.25 m below the surface and the in-grave works were terminated at a depth of 0.60 m.

The grave exhibits a simple earth grave form and a single burial tradition. The skeletal material belonging to 1 adult individual was unearthed in situ in this grave. It is understood that the individual was buried in a half-hocker position, in the west-east direction (head-feet), facing to the right. It was also observed that the left arm was placed on the abdomen and the right arm was placed towards the face. No grave goods were recovered and considering the type of burial, it can be said that the grave was used for an individual with a relatively low socio-economic status.

Considering the state of preservation of the skeleton, it can be said that a significant part of the cranial bones are absent, while the postcranial bones are moderately preserved. The absence of the cranial vertex point and the half-hocker position of the individual made it difficult to measure the grave length of the individual. From the mandibular and pelvic features (coxae-sacrum), it is estimated that this individual was a male, and from the symphysis pubis, an older individual (50+).

Paleopathological evaluations revealed an age-related decrease in bone density and traces of nonspecific infection in the diaphyses of the right clavicle and humerus. Extra ossification and osteoarthritic lesions were present in the tarsal bones. In terms of dental lesions, antemortem tooth loss (AMTL), periodontal disease (alveolar loss), and caries were found in the mandible. Remarkably, dental abrasion was also found in addition to these lesions. This situation reflects the diversity in the diet of the individual.

Photograph 12. Half-hocker buried individual found in Grave 8 (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Grave 9

The grave located in front of the boundary stones in the south of Grave 4, which was previously reached within the borders of Idyma Akyaka Fortress, is labeled as Grave 9 (Photograph 13.). A single burial tradition was observed in this grave which was damaged from the south. Although the type of the grave cannot be understood due to the destruction, it is thought that this grave may have been built in the form of a simple cist or simple earth grave like the adjacent graves. Bones were exposed at a depth of 0.10 meters from the grave surface and all bones were removed at a depth of approximately 0.30 meters. A bronze ring was found on the sacrum of the individual. It is thought that this find (at least for this grave) was not a death gift. The find may have been recovered here due to the damages in the area. Considering the burial type, it is thought that this grave was used for an individual who lived in low socioeconomic conditions like the other graves in the vicinity (G4 and 7). Bone material belonging to 1 individual buried dorsally in west-east direction (head-feet) and in situ was unearthed. Due to the destruction in the grave, the cranial bones of the individual could not be reached. For this reason, a rational measurement of the in-grave length of the individual could not be made. Morphological analyses were performed on the moderately poorly preserved postcranial bones. According to the age estimation method (Lovejoy et al., 1985) obtained from the left coxae facies auricularis of the individual, the individual is thought to be a middle adult between 25-40 years of age. In terms of the features in the pelvic region, the individual is estimated to be a female.

Photograph 13. Dorsally buried individual recovered from Grave 9 (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Grave 10

In grave 10 (Photograph 14), located to the northwest of grave 2 and in front of the northern city wall, the first bones were encountered at depths of 0.5 to 0.10 meters. Upon

reaching a depth of 0.40 meters, the bone material was systematically collected, and the ground was leveled to create an even surface. The surface level of grave 10 was found close to the floor level of grave 2. The mortar fill noticed here suggests that Grave 10 was built earlier than Grave 2.

Skeletal material belonging to 1 individual was unearthed in situ in the grave. The individual was buried in a west-east direction (head-feet), facing to the left and dorsally. Bone material belonging to another individual was found mixed on top of the individual and towards the south. Based on this, it is thought that the grave may be a multiple burial tradition. The grave type could not be determined due to destruction. An ivory cross was discovered within the grave situated at a depth of approximately 0.14 meters on its southeast side (Baran, 2020; 2021). This finding aligns with the proximity of the grave to the chapel, implying a potential Byzantine Period origin (Baran, 2023, p. 10). The in-grave measurement showed that the individual was approximately 166 (centimeters) in height. The fact that the mastoid structure of the skull of Individual 1 is developed and rough, the coxa in the pelvic region has sharp edges and robust features, and the mandible has narrow angles and robust shape indicates that the sex of this individual is male. According to the age estimation method obtained from the auricular surface of the coxa (Lovejoy et al., 1985), tissue thickness in the proximal femur, and cranium sutural aging, the individual is estimated to be between 45-55 years old. Antemortem tooth loss (AMTL) was found in the mandible of the individual, which is highly prevalent in Idyma people. In addition, alveolar loss is also present.

The postcranial bones and mandible of Individual 2 were recovered fragmentarily but nearly complete. According to the morphological analyses performed on the bone material, it is thought that Individual 2 is male in terms of biological sex characteristics on the mandibular and pelvic bones. The general appearance of the skeleton also strengthens this assumption. According to age estimation methods derived from the auricular surface of the coxa (ibid.) and sutural aging, Individual 2 is estimated to be a middle adult between 40-50 years of age. Antemortem tooth loss in the mandible of the individual is remarkable. Significant bone density loss was detected in the individual.

Photograph 14. Dorsally buried individual recovered from Grave 10 (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Grave 11

Grave 11 (Photograph 15), positioned north of the chapel within Idyma Akyaka Fortress and situated at the lower levels of Grave 5, exhibited initial bone visibility commencing at a depth of 0.5 meters below the surface. Subsequently, bones became fully exposed at a depth of 0.20 meters. After the bones were completely collected, the depth reached was recorded as 0.30 meters. The number of individuals in the grave was determined as 1 based on the west-east orientated (head-feet) bones. In the grave where a single burial tradition was used, skeletal material was found partly in situ and partly mixed. It is understood that the bones were pushed from north to south inside the grave. It is thought that the grave may have been vandalized by the ancient treasure hunters and/or for the subsequent use of the area.

According to the skeletal material recovered from the grave, the individual is presumed to be a male in terms of the sex characteristics of the mandible. Considering the costal aging and the general appearance of the skeleton, it can be said that the individual is middle-aged. In the mandible of the individual, antemortem tooth loss starting from P1 (premolar tooth) and alveolar loss were found. Furthermore, within the same grave, fragments of vertebrae and costa were discovered, presumed to have been displaced from other graves. Additionally, a minute quantity of bone material attributed to a separate adult individual was retrieved, including clavicle, humerus trochlea humeri, caput humeri, and symphysis pubis from a young male individual. These distinct bones were designated as “Grave 11 isolated” and have been set aside for subsequent comparison with bone fragments from neighboring graves.

Photograph 15. An individual found in Grave 11, was buried dorsally but with partially mixed bones (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Demographic Analyses and Methods

In this study, the skeletal material recovered from 12 graves unearthed from the Ancient City of Idyma - Akyaka Castle and its surroundings during the 2020-2021 excavation seasons by the excavation team of the Ancient City of Idyma was examined anthropologically. The laboratory analyses of the material were carried out in the Laboratory of the Anthropology Department of Istanbul University with the permission of the Excavation Directorate of the Ancient City of Idyma and the Directorate of the Muğla Archaeological Museum during the 2020-2021 excavation seasons.

Analyses of demographic distribution in graves are based on bioarchaeological and anthropological methods. These methods allow reliable information to be obtained in determining age and sex by evaluating the morphological characteristics and bone development of skeletons (Buikstra & Ubelaker, 1994; Lovejoy et al., 1985; Ubelaker, 1989; White et al., 2012). Age estimates can be made using bone structure, epiphyseal fusion, and other features (Bass, 1987; Buikstra & Beck, 2006). In addition, important data on tooth wear, root length, and other morphological features can be used to estimate the age and duration of tooth use (İzmirli, 2011; Roberts & Manchester, 2005; Smith, 2007). The most reliable data for sex determination are obtained from the cranium and pelvis, and the methods provided by İşcan and Steyn (2013) are frequently used in this field. For sex determination, methodologies established by experts such as Acsadi and Nemeskeri (1970), Brothwell (1981), Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994), cranial and pelvic bones morphological differences. Estimating the age at death of the skeletal remains of an adult individual is one of the most critical elements defining the characteristics of the individual; however, it is also considered one of the most complex determinations. Variations exist between physiological age and chronological aging due to differences caused by growth, development, and deformations. In addition to this, sex and interpopulation differences must be added. These differences may result from socioeconomic status, cultural diversity, genetic variations, behavioral factors, environmental influences, dietary habits, and diseases. Despite such difficulties, different methods exist for estimating the age at death of skeletons from adult individuals. However, these methods usually have high margins of error and are mostly based on techniques to assess degenerative changes in the skeleton (Prince & Köningsberg, 2008). In this study, different age-determination methods were applied to the skeletons analyzed. These methods include the examination of changes in the auricular surface of the skull (facies auricularis) (Lovejoy et al., 1985), techniques for age determination of the pelvic symphysis (Brooks & Suchey, 1990), and age determination methods based on tooth wear (Brothwell, 1981; Buikstra& Ubelaker,1994). In particular, dental age determination methods based on teething processes in infants and children (Brothwell, 1981; Krogman and Iscan,1986; Ubelaker, 1978) and age determination techniques based on factors such as fusion processes in bone epiphyses and root development of permanent teeth during adolescence are used. In addition to these methods, some metric measurements are also used for age estimation of infants and children. For example, measurements such as the maximum length of long bones and inter-epicondylar

width (Acsadi & Nemeskeri, 1970; Baker et al., 2005; Bass, 1987; McKern & Steward, 1957; Scheuer & Black, 2000) are among the metric methods used in age estimation of infants and children. In this study, dental aging and morphometric methods compiled by Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994) and Scheuer and Black (2000) were used to analyze age estimation in the infant and child age groups.

Age Determinations and Demographic Distributions in The Graves

Of the 41 individuals recovered from the graves, 30 were adults, while there was a minimum of 11 individuals of pre-adult age (Table 1.). To measure the homogeneity of the age-related demographic distribution in the graves, it is important to date the graves. Approximately half of the individuals in the graves were found in graves associated with the Byzantine Period. There are at least 22 individuals including 5 fetuses, infants and children, 2 adolescents, and 15 adults recovered from Byzantine Period graves (Graves 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 11) which exhibit single and multiple burial traditions. At least 19 individuals were found in the early graves (Podium Grave, Rock Grave 3, Chamber formed Grave, Grave 6, and 8). Of these individuals, 4 were infants and children, also 15 were adults (Table 1.). The most crowded early-period grave is Rock Grave 3, while the most crowded Byzantine-period grave is Grave 4.

Table 1. Demographic Distributions in The Graves (Age-based)

GRAVES	Fetus	Infant, Child	Juvenile	Young Adult	Middle Adult	Undetermined Adult	Old Adult	Total
Podium Grave	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Rock-Cut Grave 3	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	6
Grave 1	0	2	0	1	0	2	2	7
Grave 2	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	5
Grave 3	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Grave 4	0	1	1	1	3	0	0	6
Grave 5	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	4
Grave 6	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
Grave 7	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Grave 8	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Grave 9	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Grave 10	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Grave 11	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	1	8	2	7	14	2	7	41

Sex Determinations and Demographic Distributions in The Graves

In the Byzantine Period graves associated with the castle chapel, the demographic distribution shows that the frequency of (adult) male individuals buried in this area is relatively high. In the graves associated with the Hellenistic Period of the city before the Byzantine Period, it is observed that the number of adult individuals is higher than the number of pre-adult individuals. Although a relatively homogenous distribution is observed for adult

individuals according to sex-based demographic data, the number of male individuals is higher (Table 2.).

Table 2. Demographic Distributions in The Graves (Sex-based)

GRAVES	Female	Male	Undetermined Adult	Fetus, Infant, Child, and Juvenile	Total
Podium Grave	1	0	1	0	2
Rock-Cut Grave 3	2	2	0	2	6
Grave 1	0	0	5	2	7
Grave 2	0	2	1	2	5
Grave 3	0	2	0	0	2
Grave 4	1	0	3	2	6
Grave 5	1	1	0	2	4
Grave 6	0	3	0	0	3
Grave 7	0	1	0	0	1
Grave 8	0	1	0	0	1
Grave 9	1	0	0	0	1
Grave 10	0	2	0	0	2
Grave 11	0	1	0	0	1
Total	7	17	5	10	41

Findings

Dating and Architectural Features of the Graves

According to Doğan (2021), who emphasizes the rich diversity of funerary architecture in Caria, in the 5th-4th centuries BC, mainly boat-type burials, stone-built boat Graves, Graves carved into the bedrock and carved Grave types were common, and in the 3rd-1st centuries BC, chamber Graves with dromos and cell-type Graves were added to the funerary architecture. In the Byzantine Period, boat-plate type burials were widely used (ibid., pp. 445-446).

The podium grave featuring rock formations dating back to the Hellenistic Period is situated outside the city walls (Table 3). Baran highlighted the possibility of the area north of the castle serving as a necropolis (Baran, 2022). Nevertheless, only two independent graves (Graves 1 and 6) have been uncovered thus far that can be linked to this vicinity. Given their dating and proximity to the settlement, these graves (Graves 1 and 6) are believed to be within the city walls (Table 3). One of these graves, Grave 1, demonstrates a chamber grave structure. While chamber graves were generally regarded as intramural burials, owing to their prevalence from Ancient Greece to the Roman Period, there are exceptions. The graves affiliated with the castle chapel (Graves 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 11) along with Grave 8 on the southern slope of the castle are within the city walls.

Mostly cist forms were observed in the graves showing architectural diversity (Table 3.). While 4 of the graves exhibit rock grave form, 1 grave form with a podium is one of the

examples of the diversity in grave architecture. There are two graves in circular and partial circular forms around the chapel. The only grave sample thought to be in simple earth form is Grave 8.

Table 3. Dating and Architectural Features

GRAVES	Proximity to Habitat	Grave Architecture	Dating
Podium Grave	Extramural	Podium Grave	Hellenistic Period?
Rock-Cut Grave 1	Extramural	Rock-Cut Grave	4th-3rd cen. BC
Rock-Cut Grave 2	Extramural	Rock-Cut Grave	4th-3rd cen. BC
Rock-Cut Grave 3	Extramural	Rock-Cut Grave	4th-3rd cen. BC
Rock-Cut Grave 4	Extramural	Rock-Cut Grave	4th-3rd cen. BC
Grave 1	Intramural?	Chamber Grave	5th cen. BC - Roman Period
Grave 2	Intramural	Shaft, Circular Grave	Byzantion Period
Grave 3	Intramural	Circular Grave (Half)	Byzantion Period
Grave 4	Intramural	Cist	Byzantion Period
Grave 5	Intramural	Cist?	Byzantion Period
Grave 6	Intramural?	Cist	3rd Cen. BC
Grave 7	Intramural	Cist	Byzantion Period
Grave 8	Intramural	Simple Grave	Pre-Byzantine
Grave 9	Intramural	Cist?	Byzantion Period
Grave 10	Intramural	Cist?	Byzantion Period
Grave 11	Intramural	Cist?	Byzantion Period

Cremation in the Graves

Burial practices of inhumation are widespread among the graves. However, some graves also present evidence of both inhumation and cremation (Table 4.). Graves with signs of cremation exhibit diversity in terms of burial types. Chamber graves (Photograph 16.), rock graves, and podium graves (Photograph 17.) serve as examples of these burial types. Traditionally, these classifications are often associated with inhumation burial practices in the literature. Nevertheless, our study's findings challenge this prevailing perspective. In his research on Caria, Doğan (2021) highlighted that, in alignment with our viewpoint, certain graves from the Hellenistic Period, a time known for prevalent inhumation burials, displayed traces of cremation. The ashes of these individuals with cremation evidence were either directly placed within the grave or placed within terracotta vessels before interment.

Table 4. Cremation Status in Graves

GRAVES	With Cremation	Non-Cremation
Podium Grave	+	
Rock-Cut Grave 3	+	
Grave 1	+	
Grave 2		+
Grave 3		+
Grave 4		+
Grave 5		+

Grave 6		+
Grave 7		+
Grave 8		+
Grave 9		+
Grave 10		+
Total	3	9

Photograph 16. From the Grave 1, Cremation (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Photograph 17. From the Podium Grave, Cremation (Idyma Archaeological Field Surveys and Excavations Photography Archive 2020-2021).

Conservation Status of the Graves

In the Hellenistic Period graves of Caria, skeletal remains were discovered in modest quantities. Following the rise of Christianity, Byzantine Period graves, which primarily displayed characteristics of single burials post-conversion, were reported to undergo secondary or tertiary use. In instances of multiple use, skeletal remains from earlier burials were often cleared to accommodate new interments (Doğan, 2021).

Table 5 presents the preservation status of Idyma graves. Podium graves, chamber graves, and rock graves with monumental typology display poor preservation, yielding limited and fragmented bone material, possibly due to human interference attracted by grave goods. Among cist graves, only Grave 6 is relatively well-preserved, attributed to its flatter location. Grave 8, reflecting a simple earth burial tradition on the southern slope of the castle within early fortification walls, may have suffered more from natural disasters due to its positioning. Similar damage seen in Byzantine-period graves near the chapel could also be due to natural causes. Moreover, the destruction of chapel-surrounding graves, especially along the northern tower wall, may result from both clearance methods and recurrent use. Though Grave 6 (dated 3rd century BC) portrays multiple burials, it contains three in-situ interments (Table 5). Conversely, near the castle, Byzantine Period graves with multiple burials show only the latest interred individuals in situ, implying cultural variations in executing this practice.

Tablo 5. Conservation Status of Graves

GRAVES	Grave Architecture	Conservation Degree	Conservation Status
Podium Grave	Podium Grave	Bad	No data in situ
Rock-Cut Grave 1	Rock-cut Grave	Very Bad	No data material
Rock-Cut Grave 2	Rock-cut Grave	Very Bad	Hardly any material
Rock-Cut Grave 3	Rock-cut Grave	Bad	No data in situ
Rock-Cut Grave 4	Rock-Cut Grave	Very Bad	No data material
Grave 1	Chamber Grave	Bad	No data in situ
Grave 2	Circular Grave	Bad	No data in situ
Grave 3	Circular Grave (Partially)	Bad	No data in situ
Grave 4	Cist	Middle-Bad	1 individual in situ
Grave 5	Cist	Middle-Bad	1 individual in situ
Grave 6	Cist	Good-Middle	3 individual in-situ
Grave 7	Cist	Middle	In situ
Grave 8	Simple Grave	Middle	In situ
Grave 9	Cist	Middle	In situ
Grave 10	Cist	Middle-Bad	1 individual in situ
Grave 11	Cist	Middle-Bad	In situ

Grave Orientation and Burial Direction

While the dating and cultural attributes of the examined graves in this study exhibit variation, the orientation of all graves (both cist and simple earthenware) remains consistent (Table 6). Based on the in-situ individuals, the prevailing orientation for these graves is west-

east (head-feet). An exception is observed in Grave 6, where the first two burials adhere to the west-east orientation, while the final interment positions the head to the east and feet to the west. This directional discrepancy in the last burial within this repeatedly used grave might symbolically indicate that this individual was the final one interred.

Literature notes that dorsal burials are commonly found in early Carian graves (Doğan, 2021). In Idyma, dorsal interments were noted in graves from both the early and Byzantine Periods. Notably, only the individual in Grave 8, believed to predate the Byzantine Period, was interred in a half-hocker form.

Table 6. Grave Orientation and Burial Direction

GRAVES	Grave Orientation	Burial Direction/Location (Skull/ Feet)	Lying Position
Grave 4	West-East	West-East (last burial)	Dorsal
Grave 5	West-East	?	Dorsal
Grave 6	West-East	1- West-East (last burial) 2-East- West (first and second burials	Dorsal
Grave 7	West-East	West-East (single burial)	Dorsal
Grave 8	West-East	West-East (single burial)	Half-Hocker
Grave 9	West-East	West-East (single burial)	Dorsal
Grave 10	West-East	West-East (last burial)	Dorsal
Grave 11	West-East	West-East (single burial)	?

Burial Type in terms of Face Orientation and Hand-Arm Position

In the few graves that provide information about the direction of the face and the position of the hands and arms of the buried individuals, there are different practices regarding the direction of the face, but the position of the hands and arms is similar. It was observed that the hands and arms were commonly positioned on the abdomen, and only in Grave 8 were they positioned on the chest and face (Table 7.).

Table 7. Burial Type in terms of Face Orientation and Hand-Arm Position

GRAVES	Face Orientation	Hand-Arm Position
Grave 4	-	On the abdomen
Grave 6	Oriented upwards face	On the abdomen
Grave 7	Slightly south facing	Placed towards the abdomen and face
Grave 8	South facing	Folded over the chest and face
Grave 9	-	On the abdomen
Grave 10	North facing	On the abdomen
Grave 11	-	On the abdomen

Burial Tradition by Number of Individuals

An interesting contrast in the demographic distribution of graves around the chapel becomes evident when comparing Grave 11 to those recovered from the upper levels within the same area. As indicated in Table 8, Grave 11, constructed during the early phases of area use, adheres to a single burial tradition. Conversely, Grave 2, Grave 3, and Grave 5, linked to the later stages of area utilization, embody a multiple burial tradition (Table 8). Notably, it is surmised that while the chapel area likely saw single burials in its initial period, the later phases of area use witnessed a prevalence of multiple burials, possibly motivated by the need for space optimization.

Supporting these conjectures, existing literature underscores that early Byzantine Period burials in Caria were primarily solitary, with multiple burials becoming more prominent in later stages (Doğan, 2021). In these multiple burial contexts, it can be inferred that bone material from previously interred individuals was displaced to accommodate the latest inhumation. Taking into account the construction methods and cultural artifacts found within these graves, it's reasonable to speculate that they were intended for individuals of relatively modest socio-economic backgrounds.

Table 8. Burial Tradition by Number of Individuals

GRAVES	Number of Individuals
Podium Grave	Multiple Burial Tradition
Rock Grave 3	Multiple Burial Tradition
Grave 1	Multiple Burial Tradition
Grave 2	Multiple Burial Tradition
Grave 3	Multiple Burial Tradition
Grave 4	Multiple Burial Tradition
Grave 5	Multiple Burial Tradition
Grave 6	Multiple Burial Tradition
Grave 7	Single Burial Tradition
Grave 8	Single Burial Tradition
Grave 9	Single Burial Tradition
Grave 10	Multiple Burial Tradition
Grave 11	Single Burial Tradition

Evaluations and Results

The graves located at lower levels within the chapel area tend to have single burials, suggesting a lower number of individuals. On the contrary, the graves associated with the later use of the area reflect a tradition of multiple burials. We observed a shift from single burials prevalent in the early chapel area graves to a more pronounced practice of multiple burials in the later stages, possibly due to spatial considerations. A comprehensive evaluation of the reasons behind these changes in burial practices concerning health and environmental factors will be a focal point in our future research. When examining the investigated graves,

we observed a notable contrast between the Byzantine and Hellenistic Period cist-form graves with multiple burials. In the former, only the last interred individual was found in situ, typically at the lowest level of the grave, while in the latter, we reached all individuals in situ, typically at the top level. This divergence can be attributed to the practice of moving skeletal remains towards the edges in the Byzantine Period, contributing to this disparity.

Within the context of the castle chapel, we observed a relatively high frequency of (adult) male burials, suggesting a burial tradition that emphasizes male identity within this sacred area. Architecturally assessing the podium graves, chamber graves, and rock graves identified in our study reveals their connection to a distinct social status.

Interestingly, the early graves, including those exemplified by the podium graves, chamber graves, and rock graves, display a sex-based demographic distribution akin to the later graves around the chapel, which are associated with the Byzantine Period. The concept that the deceased continue to exist in their graves and might influence the living, though not definitively proven before the 1st century BC, is common (Civelek, 2007). This notion aligns with the regular practice of leaving gifts at graves, as mentioned in the literature (Adkins & Adkins, 2004, p. 393). However, it is emphasized that socioeconomic class differences have historically influenced the quality of burial styles, grave architecture, and funerary offerings.

The prevalence of cremation graves until the 2nd century AD gave way to inhumation burials after the 3rd century AD, with Roman Period grave architecture significantly influenced by Ancient Greek traditions (Civelek, 2007). Conversely (Yılmaz, 2020, pp. 310-311), the Byzantines continued their burial traditions largely by Christian teachings. The literature emphasizes that the parallels between the burial rituals of the ancient period continued into the Byzantine period. These include practices such as the preparation of the dead, anointing, dressing, blindfolding, and covering the mouth (ibid.). These insights underscore the dynamic nature of burial practices across historical periods and how they interact with complex cultural and social dynamics.

Based on our research findings, it is apparent that beliefs within the ancient city of Idyma transformed over time. However, remnants of cultural influences from the Hellenistic Period endure to some extent into the Byzantine Period. Notably, there are observable similarities in burial traditions, particularly in aspects of social status, gender, and identity relations. These conclusions, derived from limited data amassed during the 2020-2021 excavations and evaluated alongside prevailing scholarly perspectives, are poised to stimulate further excavations within the graves of the ancient city of Idyma. We hope that these new excavations will provide insights and clarification to guide the outcomes of our research.

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