

EXCAVATION OF A LYCIAN PAINTED TOMB NEAR ELMALI, KIZILBEL

Machteld J. MELLINK

From October 19 to November 15, 1969, a joint team from the Museum at Antalya and the Bryn Mawr College expedition to Semayük-Karataş undertook the cleaning and conservation of a painted tomb chamber near Kızılbel, c. 3 km. to the southwest of the town of Elmalı. The tomb had been disturbed by villagers in the spring of 1969; there apparently also had been earlier damage. We are most grateful to Under Secretary of Public Education Bay Mehmet Önder and Director General of Antiquities Bay Hikmet Gürçay for their prompt action in authorizing the rescue work described below.

The tomb consists of a built chamber set in the top of a natural ridge. The chamber is rectangular, measuring about 2.45 m. E-W and 2.00 m. N-S. It is constructed of limestone masonry which is rough on the outside and finished carefully on the interior in a pseudo-polygonal technique. The roof is gabled and is formed of four long slabs laid parallel to the ridge, with a maximum interior height of 2.30 m. A small doorway (1.00 × 0.80 m.) with a portcullis doorslab gave access to the SE corner. Retaining walls on either side of the doorway held back the rubble and earth which had been piled up to cover the tombchamber. Fig. 1 shows the entrance to the tomb as found after the disturbance by villagers, fig. 2 shows the entrance after excavation).

The interior of the chamber had been prepared with a smooth finish and covered with a lime plaster. The strokes of the blunt plastering knife are still visible in

the surface which is slightly corrugated as a result. The prepared plaster surface of the entire interior of the tomb had been decorated with painted designs. The vertical walls have, on the average, three superposed friezebands. The roofslabs were covered with geometric checkerboard patterns. The surviving paintings were found encrusted with lime and dirt; some have been lost through natural damage or human interference; about half of the designs can still be recognized and salvaged.

A study of the technique of the paintings and the possibility of their conservation was made by Signorina Franca Callori di Vignale of Rome, an expert in the cleaning and preservation of Etruscan and Minoan wall paintings. Signorina Callori kindly consented to spend two weeks on the problems at hand in Elmalı. She found that the paintings and plaster are basically solid; both adhere firmly to the stone and cannot be taken off the blocks of the tomb chamber. As a sample of technical treatment, one block of the South wall and part of a block of the West wall were cleaned and consolidated in November 1969. Fig. 3 shows the Southwest corner of the tomb after this preliminary operation.

The colors of the paintings are red (in three different shades), light blue, black, and white. Preliminary contours are in red, final contours in black. The block on the South wall has the remains of a scene with two running Gorgons and the decapitated Medusa from whose neck rise an unwinged Pegasus and a youthful nude Chrysaor (figs. 4 and 5).

The latter is a typical East Greek kouros; his body is in ocher red, the hair light red. The height of this block is 0.50 - 0.40 m.

The adjoining frieze on the West block begins with the departure of a warrior by chariot (figs. 6 and 7). A female figure at the left side is almost entirely lost. The helmeted, cuirassed warrior looks back at her, his companion leans forward as the charioteer. The scene iconographically is related to the departure of Amphiaraios as depicted on many Greek vases and the chest of Kypselos, but it is not yet clear which, if any, myth the Elmalı scene represents.

The style of the paintings is East Greek of the late 6th century B. C. The tomb is designed in a manner typical of Anatolian Greek art, with a number of superposed friezes executed to various scales. The subject matter, as far as it can be discerned, includes processions or warriors and horses, dancers, presentation scenes in front of enthroned figures, a boar hunt by boat in the marshes, and a sea voyage.

Anatolian wall painting of this type is also known from the fragments preserved of an archaic heroon at Gordion (cf. *American Journal of Archaeology* 59, 1955, pp. 9-10; 60, 1956, pp. 255-256).

The Elmalı tomb will for the first time allow us to study such painting and its system of decoration in situ. It will also illuminate the dependence of Etruscan wall paintings on East Greek originals. The hunting scene with three young boys in a small boat on the E wall of the Elmalı tomb, shown here in its pre-cleaned condition (fig. 8), is among the prototypes of that in the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing in Tarquinia.

The continuation of the work of cleaning and consolidation of the Elmalı tomb is planned for the summer of 1970; the region of the tomb ridge will also be examined in order to investigate if more built and possibly painted tombs exist in this area, which is the necropolis of an archaic predecessor of Elmalı. Not far to the East of the tomb is the mound of Beydeğirmen, which has prehistoric and Iron Age remains; Elmalı itself also has a mound in the center of town which was inhabited in the archaic and classical periods. The cultural orbit is Lycian, as is also attested by the iconography of the tomb, with a topical reference to Pegasos, and with an illustration of a sea voyage worthy of the coastal Lycians. The date of the tomb is the second half of the sixth century B. C. when the Persians had established a nominal control over the Lycian lands.

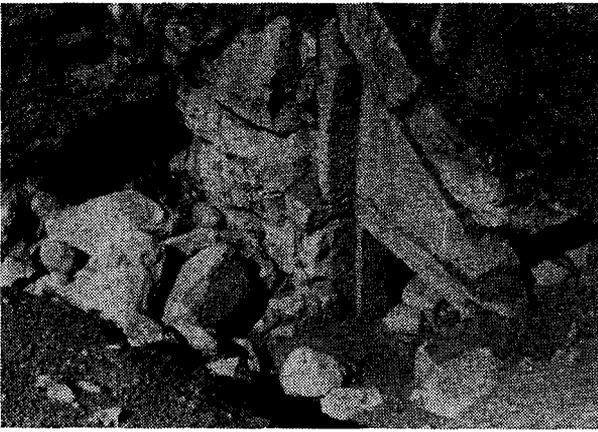


fig. 1. Façade of the tomb as found after robbing.



fig. 2. Façade of the tomb after excavation.

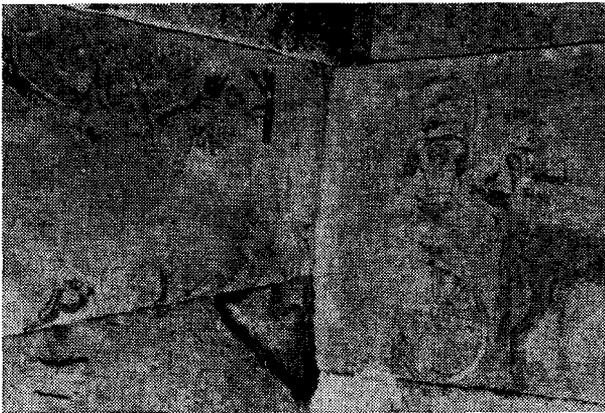


fig. 3. Southwest corner of the tomb, after partial cleaning.



fig. 4. South side, Gorgon and Medusa.



fig. 5. Detail South side, Pegasus and Chrysaor.

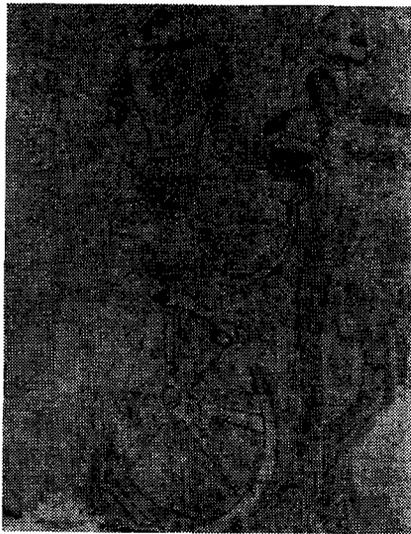


fig. 6. West side, charioteers.



fig. 7. -West side, detail warriors.

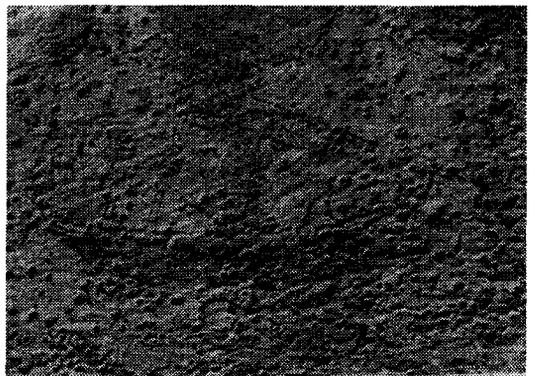


fig. 8. East side, detail of scene of hunting in marshes.