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Newly Documented Roman Imperial Rock-Cut Tombs in Tavium

Tavium'da Yeni Belgelenen Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi Kaya Mezarları

Savaş ALTUN *

Abstract: This study examines two rock-cut tombs documented in 2025 on the southwestern slope of Tavium in light of their topographical context, architectural features, and comparative analysis, while also evaluating the associated artifact from the tomb area within this framework. Carved directly into the bedrock and featuring a single-chamber plan, the tombs represent a small-scale chamber-tomb type defined by interior klinai. The tombs are located approximately 1.2 km from the settlement centre on the same rock outcrop. Within the scope of the study, they were documented through on-site observation, measurement, and architectural recording; additionally, their plans, interior arrangements, and states of preservation were analysed in detail. The architectural data were compared first with examples from Yozgat and its surroundings, and subsequently with rock-cut tombs from regions neighbouring Galatia, in order to clarify the position of the Tavium tombs within the surrounding funerary traditions. This comparison was based on plan typology, interior arrangement, and spatial location. Furthermore, an intaglio depicting an eagle, discovered in the tomb area, was examined regarding its technical and iconographic features, and its relationship to the funerary context was evaluated.

Keywords: Tavium • Galatia • Roman Imperial Period • Rock-Cut Tombs • Gem

Öz: Bu çalışma, Tavium'un güneybatı yamacında 2025 yılında belgelenen iki kaya mezarını topoğrafik bağlamı, mimari özellikleri ve karşılaştırmalı değerlendirmeleri ışığında incelemekte, mezar alanıyla ilişkili buluntuyu da bu çerçevede ele almaktadır. Anakaya içine oyulmuş ve tek odalı plan gösteren bu mezarlar, iç mekândaki kline düzenlemeleriyle tanımlanan küçük ölçekli bir oda mezar tipini temsil etmektedir. Mezarlar, yerleşim merkezinden yaklaşık 1,2 km uzaklıkta, aynı kaya uzantısı üzerinde yer almaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında mezarlar yerinde gözlem, ölçüm ve mimari kayıt yöntemleriyle belgelenmiş; plan özellikleri, iç mekân düzeni ve korunma durumları ayrıntılı biçimde incelenmiştir. Elde edilen mimari veriler, Tavium mezarlarının çevre bölgelerdeki kaya mezarı gelenekleri içindeki yerini açıklığa kavuşturmak amacıyla önce Yozgat ve çevresindeki örneklerle, ardından Galatia'ya komşu bölgelerdeki kaya mezarlarıyla karşılaştırılmıştır. Karşılaştırma; plan tipi, iç mekân düzeni ve mekânsal konum ölçütleri üzerinden yürütülmüştür. Mezar alanında tespit edilen kartal betimli gemma da teknik ve ikonografik özellikleri bakımından incelenmiş, mezar bağlamıyla ilişkisi değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tavium • Galatia • Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi • Kaya Mezarları • Gemma

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Introduction

This study examines two rock-cut tombs that were exposed as a result of illicit excavations on the southwestern slope of the ancient city of Tavium in 2025. Preliminary inspections carried out by the Yozgat Museum Directorate showed that the tomb entrances and interior spaces had been partially exposed and that the material was suitable for systematic archaeological evaluation. During the subsequent documentation process, the tombs were examined through direct observation, measurement, and architectural recording methods, and the area was identified as a previously unrecorded part of the Tavium necropolis. For this reason, the data obtained should be evaluated within the existing body of archaeological research on the city.

Located in the northern part of Central Anatolia, Tavium was an important centre known to have been inhabited since the Chalcolithic Period and to have become one of the principal settlements of the Galatian Trocmi in the third century BCE¹. Under Roman rule, the city acquired a more clearly defined urban character in administrative and economic terms, and archaeological research carried out to date has produced important evidence concerning its settlement history and spatial organisation². In particular, the identification of approximately ninety findspots through systematic surveys conducted in and around Tavium clearly demonstrates the density and continuity of the settlement network³.

The necropolis areas and funerary finds around Tavium are concentrated especially in the Salmanlı-Bazlamaç area and in the Karacalar Valley, that is, on the slopes of Hanyeri and Gödek Değirmeni, in valley and slope zones close to settlements. Nevertheless, since these studies have focused primarily on settlement distribution and topography, necropolis areas were generally recorded as findspots associated with settlements, while detailed typological data concerning tomb architecture and necropolis organisation remained limited. The fact that necropoleis were presented on the regional distribution map together with settlements, rather than as a separate category, likewise reflects the methodological limitations of the existing research framework⁴ (Fig. 1).

In this respect, the two rock-cut tombs documented on the southwestern slope of the city are important because they provide direct architectural evidence for funerary practices at Tavium during the Roman Imperial Period. At the same time, these tombs make it possible to assess more concretely the spatial relationship between the settlement area and the necropolis. The scope of the study consists of these two single-chamber rock-cut tombs exposed by illicit excavations, the topographical context of the

¹ Strobel & Gerber 2000a, 169-176.

² Macpherson 1954, 111-112; Strobel & Gerber 1999, 297-313; Darbyshire et al. 2000, 88; Strobel & Gerber 2000b, 215-265; Hiden 2003, 253-322; Strobel & Gerber 2003, 131-195; Gerber 2003, 223-251; Christof et al. 2004a, 187-189; Christof et al. 2004b, 62-63; Christof & Koiner 2005, 271-288; Christof 2006, 25-29; Christof & Koiner 2007, 561-571; Strobel & Gerber 2007, 547-621; Strobel 2008, 281-302; Gerber 2008, 189-234; Strobel 2009, 369-379; Gerber 2009, 61-89; Strobel & Gerber 2010, 291-338; Urban 2016, 133-137; Urban 2019, 200-209.

³ Strobel & Gerber 2010, 300-301.

⁴ Strobel & Gerber 2010, 301-304.

rocky area in which they are located, and the eagle-depicting engraved gem recovered from the tomb area. Both tombs were carved directly into the bedrock, positioned in accordance with the natural slope, and their internal arrangements were shaped in relation to the form of the rock surface.

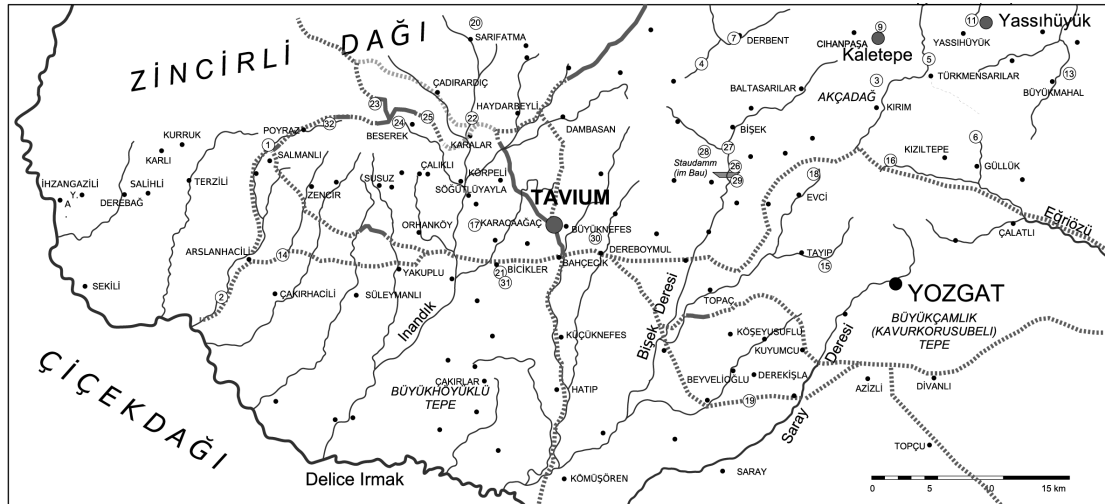


Fig. 1 Map showing the distribution of archaeological findspots identified through surveys in and around Tavium (Strobel – Gerber 2010, Abb. 8)

Within the rock-cut tomb tradition of Anatolia, such structures display striking differences in terms of plan, interior arrangement, and architectural features, despite serving similar funerary functions. These differences are related not only to burial practices but also to local traditions and regional architectural preferences. For this reason, the Tavium examples should be evaluated not only within the context of a local necropolis but also within the broader rock-cut tomb tradition of Galatia and the neighbouring regions. Such a comparison makes it possible to understand more clearly whether these tombs reflect only a local practice or form part of a wider regional funerary tradition.

The engraved gem constitutes an auxiliary find relating to the period of use of the necropolis. Although it does not provide a precise criterion for dating on its own, its technical and iconographic features contribute to the cultural and chronological assessment of the tomb context. For this reason, the object is discussed separately in the relevant section of the article.

The Rock-Cut Tombs and Geographical and Topographical Context of the Necropolis

The rock-cut tombs identified in the southwestern sector of Tavium represent a newly documented group of burials belonging to the city's southern necropolis. The area in which the tombs are located lies on the southwestern outer limit of the hill group forming the settlement core of Tavium, at approximately 39°50'55" N and 34°30'45" E (Fig. 2).

Situated immediately outside the acropolis system composed of Büyük Kale, Küçük Kale, and Zeğrek Tepe, this area forms a threshold zone between the settlement and its extra-urban surroundings⁵ (Fig. 3). The slope into which the tombs were cut constitutes a natural transitional zone descending from the Tavium plateau toward the Delice Basin

⁵ Strobel & Gerber 2010, 293-294.



Fig. 2 Regional location of the ancient city of Tavium and the rock-cut tombs situated on its southwestern slope in Central Anatolia (Google Earth)



Fig. 3 Topographical features of the ancient city of Tavium and the spatial relationship between the urban core areas and the rock-cut tombs on the southwestern slope (Google Earth)



Fig. 5 General view of the rock surface into which the rock-cut tombs were carved on the southwestern slope of the ancient city of Tavium

(Fig. 4). The exposed limestone surfaces provided a suitable geological substrate for rock cutting, and the continuity of the same rock band allowed the tombs to cluster along a defined line (Fig. 5).

Situated immediately outside the acropolis system composed of Büyük Kale, Küçük Kale, and Zeğrek Tepe, this area forms a threshold zone between the settlement and its

extraurban surroundings⁶ (Fig. 3). The slope into which the tombs were cut constitutes a natural transitional zone descending from the Tavium plateau toward the Delice Basin (Fig. 4). The exposed limestone surfaces provided a suitable geological substrate for rock cutting, and the continuity of the same rock band allowed the tombs to cluster along a defined line (Fig. 5).

With an average gradient of approximately 18–22%, the slope both facilitated the carving process and allowed the tombs to command a wide field of view. Their southwestward orientation creates an open visual corridor toward the upper Delice Basin. The area is situated on an elevated limestone threshold overlooking the valley and set at a safe distance from the active watercourse, a position that reduces the risk of flooding while simultaneously forming a natural boundary for the necropolis. The fact that the tombs also correspond to the upper level of Tavium's southwestern terrace system indicates that the limits of the settlement were defined in accordance with the natural topography. The continuation of the rock band along a northwest–southeast axis suggests that the two documented tombs represent only the first identified examples of a more extensive necropolis (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6 View of the soil-covered rocky slope on the southwestern side of Tavium containing the rock-cut tombs

Comparative Architectural Evaluation: Method and Sample Selection

The rock-cut tombs documented on the southwestern slope of Tavium represent two examples of a more extensive necropolis area traced along the same limestone band that have survived with sufficiently preserved architectural data. Although numerous cut marks were identified along the same rock band, illicit excavations exposed only the entrances and interiors of two tombs; accordingly, the only examples that provide reliable architectural evidence are Rock-Cut Tomb No. 1 and Rock-Cut Tomb No. 2. This situation makes it necessary to base the evaluation not on quantitative data, but on

⁶ Strobel & Gerber 2010, 293-294.

legible architectural features. In addition, these two tombs appear to form part of a deliberate necropolis arrangement in terms of both site selection and internal organisation. The comparison, therefore, must be based not only on the formal characteristics of the individual tombs, but also on the way in which they were positioned within the necropolis. The variables taken into account here are the tomb's single- or multi-chambered plan, the form of the entrance opening, the degree of architectural investment in the façade, the arrangement of architectural elements such as klinai, arcosolium, and chamosorion within the interior, the organisation of circulation space, the form of the ceiling, and the tomb's level of outward representational emphasis. Accordingly, the comparison has been designed not merely to identify examples from the same region, but to determine which architectural tradition the Tavium tombs genuinely correspond to and from which traditions they clearly diverge. It should be particularly emphasised that, in the typological evaluation of rock-cut tombs, the plan scheme alone is insufficient. Façade articulation, the placement of burial elements within the interior, and the spatial threshold between the entrance and the tomb chamber all play roles that are at least as diagnostic as the plan itself in determining the architectural tradition to which a tomb belongs. For this reason, the comparative criteria employed in this study have been considered together not in order to produce a superficial typology based merely on formal resemblance, but to analyse the relationship between the degree of external representation and the organisation of burial within the interior.

The sample was constructed on two scales. In the first stage, the tombs of Yozgat and its surroundings, that is, the immediate vicinity of Tavium, were examined, since tombs that developed within the same topographical zone, the same funerary geography, and comparable geological conditions provide the strongest body of evidence for determining the local typological position of Tavium⁷. In the second stage, the neighbouring regions of Galatia were taken into consideration⁸, because Tavium was not merely a local centre but an inland city situated between Pontos, Paphlagonia, Cappadocia, Phrygia, and Lykaonia. These comparative examples were employed not in order to identify direct typological equivalents for Tavium, but rather to demonstrate the architectural limits of façade-oriented, interior-oriented, and mixed tomb types in the border zones of these regions. This selection is based not on assembling every available example from each region, but on choosing those examples that render visible the variables defining the architectural character of the Tavium tombs. Even if additional examples were to be included, it is clear that the principal conclusions would remain essentially unchanged with regard to the relationship between façade and representation, the single-chamber plan, the kline arrangement, and the simplicity of the interior. This two-stage comparative model is intended not to force the Tavium tombs into a single regional tradition, but to distinguish the examples with which they converge at a structural level from those with which they share only a technical commonality. In other words, what matters here is not the geographical proximity of parallels, but their architectural weight. Being located within the same geographical area was not considered sufficient to establish typological similarity; by contrast,

⁷ Polat 2018, 347-358; Sancaktar & Sezgin 2020, 325-349; Sancaktar 2022, 64-65.

⁸ Karauğuz, Kunt & Doğanay 2004, 7-17; Baytak 2008, 61, 80; Dökü 2008, 19, 49; Kortanoğlu 2008a, 29, 65; 2008b, 735-740; Keleş & Çelikbaş 2019, 187-212; Tekin 2020, 136-145.

examples from different regions that embody a comparable spatial logic were regarded as potentially more instructive.

Within this framework, the method followed here is not a descriptive catalogue that merely lists examples one by one, but an analytical differentiation designed to determine the architectural line to which the Tavium rock-cut tombs stand closest. To this end, the analysis seeks to clarify which features correspond between Tavium and each comparative example, which features diverge, what these correspondences and divergences signify typologically, and to what extent they are chronologically meaningful. In this way, an evaluative model has been established that weighs the comparative significance of architectural elements. This method also makes it possible to distinguish those features that are typologically constitutive from those that are merely complementary. For example, while the single-chamber plan and the kline arrangement produce core typological data, the irregular or semi-rounded form of the ceiling is, in most cases, of secondary significance. Accordingly, not every similarity identified in the comparisons below has been treated as equally important; priority has instead been given to those elements that directly affect the tomb's type and architectural identity. Moreover, the construction of the comparison on both micro-regional and macro-regional levels is intended first to determine Tavium's position within the local typology and then to define its architectural place within the geo-cultural interaction zone of Galatia. For this reason, the sequence followed here has been organised according to geographical directions, namely Paphlagonia to the north, Pontos-Cappadocia to the east, Kilikia-Lykaonia to the south, and Phrygia to the west. The aim is not simply to accumulate parallels, but to trace spatially the lines of architectural continuity and divergence. Accordingly, in each of the following comparisons, similarity and divergence will not merely be described; it will also be specified which typological classification they support and to what extent they are meaningful in chronological terms.

Comparison of the Rock-Cut Tombs in Tavium and Its Immediate Surroundings

Tavium Rock-Cut Tomb No. 1 is distinguished primarily by its single-chamber plan, its irregular yet functional entrance opening, its clearly unworked façade, its internal arrangement with two klinai placed along the rear and side walls, and a spatial organisation that does not create a marked change in level between the klinai and the circulation area (Fig. 11). In both tombs, the pronounced simplicity of the entrance openings, together with the absence of architectural elements such as jambs, a lintel, or a door frame, suggests that the entrances were conceived from the outset as purely functional voids. This indicates that representational concerns on the façade were deliberately restricted and that the tombs were integrated into the natural rock surface in a manner that reduced their visibility from the exterior. Indeed, the way in which the entrances merge with the natural texture of the surrounding rock points to a more inward-oriented design approach, one that does not immediately disclose the funerary function of the tomb from outside. In this tomb, architectural emphasis lies not on the façade, but on the organisation of the interior according to the requirements of burial (Fig. 12). The entrance opening lacks jambs, a lintel, a door frame, and any form of decoration. Accordingly, the tomb's external appearance is not representational, but rather almost concealed in character. The irregularly horizontal form of the ceiling, which largely preserves the natural rock mass, further reinforces this simplicity. Considered together, these features indicate that Rock-Cut Tomb No. 1 should be

defined as a single-chamber kline tomb, created without any attempt at monumental display and shaped through limited intervention within the interior. Typologically, therefore, it belongs not to the category of columned, pedimented, or forechambered tombs, but to the group of plain chamber tombs defined primarily by their internal arrangement (Fig. 14).



Fig. 11 General view of the entrance of Rock-Cut Tomb No. 1 on the southwestern slope of the ancient city of Tavium



Fig. 12 Interior view of Rock-Cut Tomb No. 1 at Tavium, showing the kline arranged along the side walls



Fig. 13 View of the entrance of Rock-Cut Tomb No. 1 from the interior

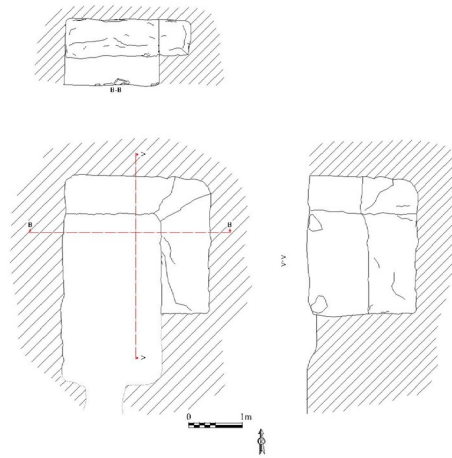


Fig. 14 Scaled plan and sections (A-A and B-B) of Rock-Cut Tomb No. 1 at Tavium

Moreover, the chisel marks visible in places on the wall surfaces show that, although the interior faces were levelled, they were not shaped through refined stoneworking, but through technical interventions aimed at transforming the rock into a functional burial space. The generally vertical treatment of the interior walls, the levelled appearance of the floor, and the absence of a pronounced difference in level between the klinai and the circulation area likewise support this functional approach. The absence of any intermediate arrangement between the entrance and the burial area, such as a fore-space, transition niche, or ritual threshold, indicates that the spatial design was focused on burial rather than on visitation and display. In this respect, the tomb is closer to examples defined by an internal logic of use than by external display

(Fig. 13). The architectural character of Tomb No. 1 should therefore be understood not merely as simple, but as that of a chamber tomb shaped through limited intervention, in which architectural elements not transferred to the façade were deliberately concentrated within the interior. This definition is important, because in all analogies to be established for Tavium, the fundamental unit of comparison is constituted not by a monumental façade or a ritual threshold, but by the combination of a single-chamber plan and a functional kline arrangement.



Fig. 15 General view of the entrance of Rock-Cut Tomb No. 2 on the southwestern slope of the ancient city of Tavium



Fig. 16 General view of the interior of Rock-Cut Tomb No. 2 at Tavium

Rock-Cut Tomb No. 2, while preserving the same single-chamber planning principle, displays a more simplified internal arrangement than Tomb No. 1, with its single kline extending along the rear wall, its more rounded ceiling profile resembling a half-dome, and its floor, which appears to have been levelled originally (Fig. 15). Although the more rounded appearance of the entrance opening and the disturbance caused by the concentration of soil and stone fill around the entrance indicate that the tomb in its present state has been partially damaged, the similarly undeveloped character of the doorway architecture clearly shows that architectural representation on the façade was also kept to a minimum here. While the interior wall surfaces appear irregular, they were worked so as to produce a single integrated space, and the raised kline running along the rear wall became the principal architectural element defining the burial arrangement (Figs. 16–17). The ceiling profile, which resembles a half-dome, should likewise be understood not as the result of a decorative preference, but rather as a mode of interior formation adapted to the natural structure of the rock mass. Here too, the entrance opening is functional, and no representational architectural role was assigned to the façade (Fig. 18).

What differs from Tomb No. 1 is not only the number of klinai, but also their arrangement, since in Tomb No. 2 the burial organisation is structured around a single principal kline. This difference suggests that the two tombs do not belong to different types, but rather represent two variants of the same architectural conception. In other words, in the Tavium tombs the typological constant is the plain single-chamber plan and the simple façade arrangement, whereas the variable element is the number of klinai and the manner in which they are distributed within the interior (Fig. 19).



Fig. 17 Kline along the rear wall inside Rock-Cut Tomb No. 2



Fig. 18 View towards the entrance opening from the interior of Rock-Cut Tomb No. 2

Examples in which single-kline and double-kline arrangements vary within the same

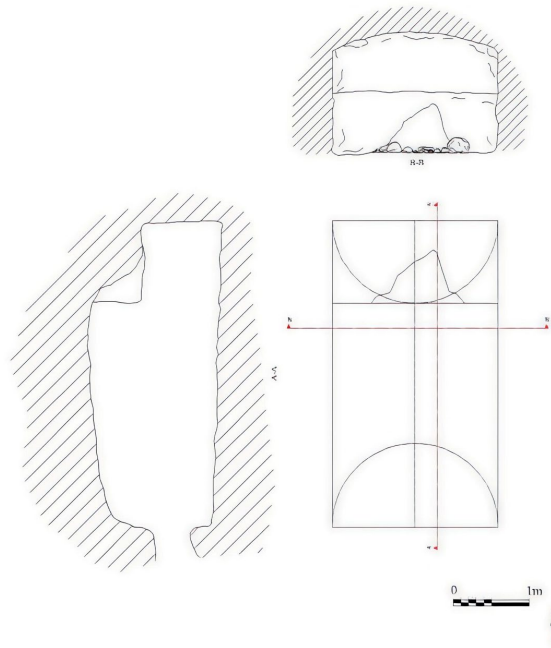


Fig. 19 Scaled plan and sections (A-A) of Rock-Cut Tomb No. 2 at Tavium

core plan scheme are also known from different necropoleis in Anatolia. For this reason, the numerical difference in the klinai should here be interpreted not as defining a new type in itself, but as a variation in the internal use of the same architectural formula. Accordingly, the difference between Tomb No. 1 and Tomb No. 2 indicates not a typological break, but a limited variation in burial capacity and in the mode of interior use. The comparison between the Tavium examples themselves thus shows that the determining typological factor is not the number of klinai, but the combination of a plain single - chamber plan and a low degree of representation; chronologically, this internal variation does not possess any independent dating value.

This architectural line becomes clearer when compared with the Yozgat examples in the vicinity of Tavium⁹. Recent research in Yozgat and its surroundings has shown that rock-cut tombs are concentrated particularly in the northern parts of the region, where arcosolium and chamosorion types predominate numerically, whereas different tomb types are attested in the southern zones. This distribution demonstrates that, within the northern belt to which Tavium also belongs, the rock-cut tomb was preferred as the principal funerary form. For this reason, the Yozgat and surrounding data set constitutes an indispensable first field of comparison in evaluating the Tavium tombs, not merely because of geographical proximity, but because it shares the same system of

⁹ Polat 2018, 347-358; Sancaktar & Sezgin 2020, 329-346.

tomb types. This point is important, because the first issue to be considered in understanding Tavium is not whether all tombs in the region belong to the same type, but how sub-forms such as the plain chamber tomb and the arcosolium tomb are distributed within the same necropolis belt. Tavium's position within this distribution places it on a central yet more reduced sub-line of the regional funerary tradition.

The rock-cut tombs of Çandır and Karataş establish the first strong parallel with Tavium in terms of façade conception. At both sites, the architectural identity of the tomb is expressed primarily through the internal arrangement. The façades are generally undecorated, the entrances are mostly reduced to functional openings, and the degree of representation is low. The principal difference from Tavium, however, lies in the clearer development of arcosolium niches and triple-kline arrangements in the Çandır and Karataş examples. This distinction is typologically significant: although the Tavium tombs belong to the same plain funerary tradition attested in northern Yozgat, they are not aligned with the group of arcosolium tombs, but rather with a more reduced chamber-tomb line. In other words, the shared feature is the secondary role of the façade and the definition of the interior through burial function. The divergent feature, by contrast, is the absence of arcosolium arches at Tavium. For this reason, Tavium should be regarded not as a repetition of the arcosolium tradition within the Yozgat region, but as a plainer sub-variant of the same broader tradition, involving fewer architectural elaborations. Chronologically, this similarity does not in itself provide a narrow date, since the Çandır and Karataş examples point to a broad tradition in use throughout the Roman and Late Antique Periods, and Tavium, by virtue of its architectural simplicity, also falls within this wide temporal range.

It has also been noted that in the arcosolium chamber tombs of Çandır and Karataş the circulation space remained limited, the klinai structured the interior, and the frequent absence of pivot-socket holes may suggest that the entrances were closed with blocking stones. This observation is also important for Tavium, in that it shows that closing systems could vary in tombs with limited entrance architecture. Put differently, Tavium's local resemblance derives from its participation in the same funerary geography as the arcosolium examples, but its typological proximity points toward earlier or plainer interior solutions in which the arcosolium had not yet become a constitutive feature. Accordingly, what carries typological weight in this comparison is the simplicity of the façade and the definition of the interior through burial function. Chronologically, the commonality is strong, whereas its differentiating value is weak.

The Karabacak rock-cut tombs constitute a group that can be compared even more closely with Tavium. At Karabacak, tombs carved into low rock masses have been documented with single-chamber plans, extremely simple façade architecture, and, in most cases, an arrangement defined by a single arcosolium. The similarity to Tavium lies in the fact that the tomb consists not of an architecturally elaborated exterior, but of a single chamber functioning as a burial space, while the façade was not monumentalised. The difference, however, is that in the Karabacak examples the arcosolium became a typologically constitutive element, whereas at Tavium the klinai were placed more directly against the chamber walls, without arches. Chronologically, the Roman Imperial Period proposed for the Karabacak tombs provides a noteworthy parallel for Tavium as well; yet since Tavium lacks epigraphic or find-based evidence, this resemblance should be used not as a basis for precise dating, but only as an indication of possible architectural affinity. The fact that the Karabacak tombs were

carved in a row into low rock masses, preserve the single-chamber plan, and leave the exterior surface extremely plain makes the regional logic shared with Tavium more clearly visible. Moreover, while the presence of pivot-socket holes in some of the Karabacak tombs points to a door system, their absence in others suggests the use of blocking stones. This demonstrates that even among tombs that are typologically close, closure arrangements could vary according to local practices¹⁰. For this reason, the relationship between Karabacak and Tavium should be understood not as one of direct sub-type identity, but as one established between two neighbouring solutions within the same plain chamber-tomb tradition, one with arcosolium and the other with klinai. Along this axis, Tavium represents the less architecturally defined end of the spectrum. The principal strength of the analogy lies in the shared combination of a plain single-chamber plan and a low degree of façade articulation. The divergence, by contrast, is clearly marked at the typological level by the presence of the arcosolium. Karabacak should therefore be regarded as one of the closest local parallels for Tavium, chronologically supportive, yet not typologically identical.

By contrast, the two-columned, forechambered, and vaulted tomb at Taşlıtarla Kalesi represents an opposite architectural pole, even though it belongs to the same regional environment as Tavium. Whereas at Tavium the entrance consists of a plain opening cut into the rock, at Taşlıtarla the façade was transformed into a deliberately designed zone of architectural display. Whereas the burial space at Tavium is small and inward-oriented, at Taşlıtarla a distinct ritual threshold was established between the forechamber and the burial chamber. For this reason, the only similarity lies in the fact that both groups were carved into the bedrock. By contrast, the façade arrangement, spatial depth, and degree of representation are entirely different. Typologically, the Tavium tombs cannot be placed in the same category as Taşlıtarla and comparable columned tombs. Chronologically as well, the Paphlagonia-influenced tradition represented by Taşlıtarla within the Late Hellenistic–Roman trajectory is not directly determinative for Tavium, because the absence of a façade at Tavium clearly shows that it stands outside this monumental line¹¹. Indeed, in the great majority of the tombs in the Yozgat region, the absence of inscriptions and decoration, the reduction of façades to roughly levelled surfaces, and the treatment of entrances as simple openings show that a low degree of representation was not an exceptional condition, but a widespread local preference. Within this framework, the columned tomb at Taşlıtarla represents not the dominant line within the region, but an exceptional and monumental category. The fact that Tavium does not correspond to this line places it more firmly within the prevailing local tradition. The principal conclusion to be drawn from this is that, although Tavium shares the broader category of rock-cut tombs within the regional funerary repertory, it should not be considered within the same social and visual language of burial as those examples that developed representational façade architecture. Accordingly, rather than providing an analogy that allows a direct parallel to be drawn with Tavium, Taşlıtarla offers a distinctive comparative example that helps to define typological boundaries. For this reason, it does not establish a chronological affinity.

The outcome of these local comparisons is clear. At the local scale, the group to which

¹⁰ Polat 2018, 354.

¹¹ Sancaktar & Sezgin 2020, 332-346.

the Tavium rock-cut tombs stand closest consists of the plain rock-cut tombs of northern Yozgat characterised by limited investment in the façade, a single-chamber plan, and an interior organisation based on klinai and/or arcosolium. What distinguishes Tavium even from these, however, is the further reduction of the interior and the fact that even the arcosolium did not develop to the point of determining the typology. The Tavium rock-cut tombs should therefore be defined, within the local typology, not as members of the “monumental” or “arcosolium” group, but as among the plainest examples of the inward-oriented, low-representation, single-chamber chamber-tomb line. This observation does not place Tavium outside the local tradition; on the contrary, it situates it among the most reduced expressions of the same tradition in terms of architectural investment, and thus among those examples closest to its typological core. For this reason, the conclusion reached at the local level is consistent in both typological and chronological terms. Typologically, Tavium belongs to the line of the plainest single-chamber chamber tombs with klinai. Chronologically, however, although this line is particularly concentrated in the Roman Imperial Period, it does not in itself provide a precise date¹².

A Comparison of the Tavium Rock-Cut Tombs with Examples from the Neighbouring Regions

Paphlagonia, the northern neighbour of Galatia, is distinguished in the rock-cut tomb tradition particularly by its façade architecture¹³. Columned, pilastered, pedimented, and in some cases temple-fronted arrangements carved into high rock faces establish the architectural identity of the tomb primarily through its exterior appearance. For this reason, the principal commonality that can be identified between the Paphlagonian examples and Tavium is simply that both groups consist of tombs cut into the bedrock; this, however, is only a very general similarity. The decisive difference lies in the façade. In Paphlagonia, the façade is the principal element through which the representational value of the tomb is constructed, whereas at Tavium the façade is virtually absent. This distinction is of critical typological importance, because it positions Tavium not as a peripheral variant of the columned or monumental façade tombs of the Paphlagonian type, but as part of a different architectural line lying outside that tradition. When dating the Tavium tombs, the elaborate and monumental rock-cut tomb façades of Paphlagonia cannot be taken as a criterion, because the Tavium tombs do not belong to that group. The distinguishing feature of Tavium is not the monumentality of the façade, but rather its plain and single-chambered character. Tavium must therefore be evaluated not according to the developmental trajectory of monumental façade tombs, but within the broader and longer-lived tradition of more modest chamber tombs. In Paphlagonia, the columned, pilastered, and pedimented façades carved into high rock surfaces constitute not merely an entrance face, but the principal architectural zone through which the tomb’s public visibility and representational character are established¹⁴. For this reason, the common ground between Tavium and Paphlagonia remains limited to a general technical shared feature, namely the logic of a single-chamber tomb cut into the rock mass, whereas the decisive distinction emerges in the architectural identity presented by the tomb to the exterior. In other words, the element shared here is a

¹² Polat 2018, 347-358; Sancaktar 2022, 55-70.

¹³ Dökü 2008, 19-49.

¹⁴ Dökü 2008, 95.

technical commonality, namely the carving of the tomb into the bedrock, whereas the principal architectural language determining the tomb's social visibility is entirely different. Moreover, one of the reasons for this difference appears to be related to topography. In Paphlagonia, steep and extensive rock faces permitted the façade to become almost a visual stage, whereas at Tavium the lower and more restricted rock masses may not have offered the same opportunity for façade investment. The issue, however, is not solely one of topography. It also appears that, whereas in Paphlagonia a funerary language producing status and visibility was developed, at Tavium priority was given to the privacy of the burial space and to its functional organisation. For this reason, the analogy established with Paphlagonia demonstrates typological divergence rather than typological proximity. Its chronological value is only indirect, since the shared technical feature alone is insufficient for dating.

The Hadrianoupolis tombs provide a more mixed example of this northern line. Within the same necropolis system, one encounters simple single-chamber rock-cut tombs, single-chamber tombs with klinai, tombs with three arcosolium, stepped single-chamber rock-cut tombs, simple rock-cut tombs with forechambers, and forechambered chamosorion tombs. The closest parallel with Tavium emerges in the single-chamber simple rock-cut tombs with klinai at Hadrianoupolis, because there too the type of the tomb is defined less by the façade than by the burial arrangement within the interior. By contrast, the presence of arcosolium, stepped, and forechambered subgroups indicates that the typological diversity is much more developed than at Tavium. The similarity, therefore, lies in the presence of a single-chamber burial space organised around klinai, whereas the difference lies in the existence of a far more developed repertoire of sub-types within the same broader tradition. Typologically, Tavium approaches the line of simple single-chamber tombs at Hadrianoupolis, yet the multiplicity of sub-types attested at that centre makes clear that Tavium represents a more limited and more reduced application. Chronologically, the Roman Period necropolis repertory of Hadrianoupolis provides a broad comparative framework for Tavium; however, the simplicity of the two Tavium examples suggests not a specific earlier or later phase within that repertory, but rather a plain local application within the broader Roman Period¹⁵. For this reason, Hadrianoupolis should be regarded not so much as a direct equivalent of Tavium, but as a repertory showing how single-chamber tombs with klinai could develop into richer sub-types, thereby making visible how restricted an architectural programme Tavium actually displays. Here, the typological analogy is strong, whereas the chronological analogy is only moderate, because the shared funerary logic is clear, yet no detailed sub-typological indicators are present that would allow Tavium to be reduced to a specific phase.

The examples from Gaziura and Zela in the inner parts of Pontos establish a stronger analogy with Tavium in terms of planning logic¹⁶. In the Pontic examples, one encounters a single-chamber plan, vaulted or semi-vaulted ceilings, arrangements of one to three klinai, and, in general, limited architectural intervention on the façade. The shared feature lies in the fact that the architectural identity of the tomb is read primarily through its internal arrangement rather than through the façade. In this respect, Tavium—particularly through the two-kline arrangement of Tomb No. 1 and the single-

¹⁵ Keleş & Çelikbaş 2019, 187-212.

¹⁶ Tekin 2020, 131-147.

kline arrangement of Tomb No. 2—shares a common spatial logic with the single-chamber kline tombs of Pontos. The presence in Pontos of temple-fronted or more monumental examples, however, shows that this regional tradition possessed a broader spectrum of representation than Tavium. The Tavium tombs thus resemble not the more developed, elaborate, and monumental tomb types attested in Pontos, but rather the plainer, smaller-scale, and single-chamber examples. From a chronological perspective, this comparison is more meaningful, because the use of single-chamber, kline-based, and vaulted examples in Pontos throughout the Hellenistic–Roman continuum indicates that the plain internal organisation observed at Tavium can likewise be placed within a broad Late Hellenistic–Roman chronology. Even so, the simplicity of the façade and the kline arrangement are not in themselves decisive. They do not provide a firm date, but only architectural indicators that narrow the field of chronological possibility. In the Pontic examples, single-chamber tombs with rectangular plans, vaulted ceilings, and one to three klinai are common in the region. In some cases, arrangements resembling a triclinium have also been interpreted as possibly indicating family burial¹⁷. This evidence further reinforces the structural similarity between the two-kline and single-kline arrangements at Tavium and the broader repertory of single-chamber kline tombs attested in Pontos. In particular, the Pontic examples offer one of the most illuminating analogies for Tavium among the neighbouring regions, because the similarity lies not merely at the technical level, but directly in the spatial configuration, especially in the way the single-chamber plan is defined internally through the arrangement of klinai while the façade remains secondary. At the same time, the presence in Pontos of outward-oriented elements such as platforms, steps, and monumental façades indicates that the degree of representation in the region could vary across a much wider spectrum than at Tavium. This diversity may also be related to shifts in the balance between representation and use, particularly after the establishment of Roman rule. The more restrained and inward-oriented architectural character of Tavium may therefore be interpreted as a more limited reflection of this transformation in a peripheral setting. Accordingly, the Pontic line offers one of the strongest analogies for Tavium in both typological and chronological terms. The similarity is structural, whereas the divergence lies in the degree of representation.

The comparison with Cappadocia is important in explaining why Tavium did not develop in a monumental direction. Although single-chamber rock-cut tombs are also attested in Cappadocia, in certain examples the use of stelae, inscriptions, or imitations of monumental architecture on the façade increases the degree of external representation. The similarity between Tavium and Cappadocia lies in the carving of the bedrock and in the resolution of the burial space as a single chamber within the interior; the difference, however, is that at Tavium this interior space is not supported by any external architectural arrangement. Tavium therefore remains within the same basic technical tradition as Cappadocia, but does not share the same degree of representational emphasis. Typologically, it remains within the line of the plain chamber tomb.

The examples from the Yahyalı area in particular show that some rock-cut tombs in Cappadocia display façade arrangements imitating temple tombs or vaulted

¹⁷ Tekin 2020, 136.

monumental structures, together with more explicit architectural features reinforced by the use of stelae and inscriptions. This indicates that the typological diversity of the region extends from examples with plain façades to designs marked by a pronounced degree of monumentality. Accordingly, the common ground between Tavium and Cappadocia remains limited to the single-chamber interior arrangement and its largely undecorated character, whereas two important features distinguish Tavium from this tradition: some Cappadocian examples can be dated more directly through inscriptions or stelae, and they employ more explicit forms of architectural imitation on the façade. Here too, what is decisive is not so much the similarity of plan as the difference in representation, because the architectural language of Tavium seeks not to present the tomb outwardly, but to keep it as inconspicuous as possible within the rocky surface. For this reason, the comparison with Cappadocia clarifies the typological distinction. Chronologically, although the region offers a more reliable basis for dating because of its inscribed and stelai-bearing examples, this possibility is not available in the case of Tavium.

The examples from Küçük Muhsine in Lykaonia are likewise of a supportive nature for the Tavium rock-cut tombs¹⁸. At Küçük Muhsine, the great majority of the tombs are single-chambered. The façades are, in most cases, plain and without pretension. The entrance openings may be square, rectangular, or deep tunnel-like in form. The internal arrangement is generally organised around klinai raised above the floor, and in some tombs spatial modifications related to later phases of use can be clearly observed. The similarity with Tavium lies in the secondary role of the façade and in the fact that the principal architectural identity of the tomb is read through the internal layout. The feature that distinguishes Tavium, however, is the more systematic occurrence at Küçük Muhsine of triple burial places and of door-pivot or bolt arrangements. This difference is typologically significant. The Tavium tombs stand at a plainer level than a spatial programme such as that of Küçük Muhsine, which was more open to reuse and multiple burial. Chronologically, the traces of later use at Küçük Muhsine, including crosses and arrangements belonging to secondary and tertiary phases of use, show that plain single-chamber tombs continued to be used in the Late Roman Period and thereafter. The simplicity observed at Tavium, therefore, does not automatically indicate an early date. On the contrary, because it shows that the plain façade and single-chamber plan were long-lived forms, its chronological value on its own is weak. The Lykaonian evidence is particularly instructive at this point, because the plan arrangement at Küçük Muhsine, in which a ritual area and klinai raised above the floor were conceived together, demonstrates that the tomb chamber was intended not only for burial, but also for funerary rites¹⁹. The coexistence of sub-types such as chamossorium, arcosolium, and chamber tombs clearly demonstrates that the funerary tradition of the region cannot be reduced to a single model²⁰. The principal affinity between Tavium and Lykaonia lies in the fact that the architectural identity of the tomb is established less through the façade than through the chamber plan and internal arrangement. A further parallel may also be drawn in the placement of necropoleis at a certain distance from the settlement

¹⁸ Karağuz, Kunt & Doğanay 2004, 7-16.

¹⁹ Baytak 2008, 73-74.

²⁰ Baytak 2008, 61-78.

centre, in areas selected according to topographical considerations²¹. By contrast, in the Lykaonian examples, ritual space, multiple burial places, and more complex interior arrangements make the spatialisation of ritual more visible. At Tavium, however, this programme is more limited. For this reason, although Tavium shares with Lykaonia the same interior-oriented architectural logic, it should be regarded as a plainer variant in terms of the visibility of ritual space and the complexity of the plan. These examples reinforce an important methodological caution for Tavium. Architectural simplicity should not be treated as a reliable criterion that by itself indicates an early date; rather, in many cases it should be understood as reflecting a local funerary tradition that remained in use over a long period. For this reason, the analogy established with Lykaonia is meaningful primarily at the typological level rather than the chronological one. Whereas the similarity between the two regions emerges in the organisation of the interior, the principal divergence becomes evident in the degree of ritual spatialisation.

The comparison with Mountainous Phrygia leads to a similar conclusion. In Phrygia, there exists a diversified repertory in which arcosolium, chamosorion, and chamber tombs were used together. In addition, façades with arches, pediments, pilasters, or relief decoration are frequently encountered²². The feature shared with Tavium lies in the fact that, in chamber tombs, the internal arrangement is read through the kline and the burial space. The principal difference, however, is that in Phrygia both the façade repertory and the range of interior arrangements are much more highly developed. For this reason, Tavium's relationship with Phrygia should be understood as one situated within a subsidiary branch of the same broader funerary tradition. In other words, Tavium may be regarded as a simplified variant of the highly developed chamber-tomb tradition of Phrygia, one in which the degree of representation was reduced and the number of internal elements was limited. Chronologically, the concentration of the Phrygian examples in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods provides a general parallel for Tavium, but the simplicity observed at Tavium reflects not a specific century, but a broader chronological tendency²³. In Mountainous Phrygia, the systematic coexistence of three principal types (chamosorion, arcosolium, and chamber tombs) demonstrates that multiple architectural solutions were employed in the planning of burial spaces²⁴. Tavium, by contrast, presents a more modest architectural scheme, with its single-chamber plan and more limited burial arrangements. Even so, the fact that in both regions the architectural identity of the tomb is read primarily through the internal layout preserves a basic structural affinity. In terms of façade architecture, however, the difference is marked. Whereas arched or triangular-pedimented façades, pilasters, and relief-decorated arrangements determine the externally perceived identity of the tomb in Phrygia, at Tavium the emphasis was placed not on outward appearance, but on the functional organisation of the burial chamber itself²⁵. Accordingly, the relationship established with Phrygia is illuminating not so much because it provides a direct typological match, but because, within a developed funerary repertory, it shows which architectural elements are absent from plain forms such as those at Tavium. For this

²¹ Baldiran & Pehlivan 2021, 114-122; 2022, 153-155.

²² Kortanoğlu 2008a, 64.

²³ Kortanoğlu 2008a, 92.

²⁴ Kortanoğlu 2008a, 30-32.

²⁵ Ramsay 1882, 260-263; Haspels 1971, I, 305.

reason, the comparison with Phrygia makes it possible to define Tavium's typological position as the simplified end of a more developed chamber-tomb repertory. Its chronological contribution, however, remains at the level of general tendency and is not chronologically restrictive.

From this comparison with the neighbouring regions, it becomes clear that the Tavium rock-cut tombs correspond fully neither to the monumental façade tradition of Paphlagonia, nor to the expansive interior programmes with multiple burial places in Lykaonia, nor to the developed façade architecture and rich sub-type diversity of Phrygia. The groups to which they stand closest are the plain single-chamber tombs with klinai in Pontos and the simple single-chamber rock-cut tombs of Hadrianoupolis. In other words, the typological position of Tavium belongs not to the monumental chamber-tomb tradition attested in the neighbouring regions, but to the line of plain single-chamber rock-cut tombs with klinai. This conclusion further demonstrates that, within the context of the neighbouring regions, Tavium should be understood not as a secondary or marginal form, but as a coherent, though low-representation, example of a particular inland funerary logic. Put differently, the comparison with the neighbouring regions shows not only which traditions Tavium does not belong to, but also along which architectural axis it can be interpreted most meaningfully. That axis is defined not by façade monumentality, but by an interior arrangement based on a single chamber and klinai.

The Gem Associated with Rock-Cut Tomb No. 1: Description and Iconographic Evaluation



Fig. 7 Oval-shaped gem identified in the soil of Rock-Cut Tomb No. 1

The gem was identified within the soil removed during illicit excavations carried out around the entrance of the tomb, and its spatial proximity suggests that it may be associated with Tomb No. 1. It should therefore be regarded as a find related to the burial context of the tomb. The gem is oval in shape, measuring approximately 1 × 1.3 cm, and its semi-translucent orange-red colour indicates that the stone belongs to the carnelian group²⁶. The regular and controlled carving marks observed on the surface indicate that the iconography was executed in the intaglio technique rather than in relief²⁷. At the centre of the composition is a depiction of an eagle standing on a cylindrical altar; the eagle is shown in profile, with its head slightly raised and its wings held close to the body. The wreath held in the bird's beak can be interpreted, on the basis of its formal characteristics, as a victory wreath. The vegetal element rising upward to the left of the eagle, rendered schematically in its leaf form, may be associated with either a palm or a laurel branch. Despite its small scale, the balanced arrangement of the composition demonstrates that the iconographic elements were brought together through a deliberate selection²⁸.

The gem was identified within the soil removed during illicit excavations carried out

²⁶ Cooney 1968, 113–119; Plantzos 1996, 115–132.

²⁷ Cravinho 2017, 173–245.

²⁸ Almirall 2021, 25; Achim 2021, 16; Biernacki & Klenina 2021, 29–30; Chernenko 2021, 32.

around the entrance of the tomb, and its spatial proximity suggests that it may be associated with Tomb No. 1. It should therefore be regarded as a find related to the burial context of the tomb. The gem is oval in shape, measuring approximately 1 × 1.3 cm, and its semi-translucent orange-red colour indicates that the stone belongs to the carnelian group²⁹. The regular and controlled carving marks observed on the surface indicate that the iconography was executed in the intaglio technique rather than in relief³⁰. At the centre of the composition is a depiction of an eagle standing on a cylindrical altar; the eagle is shown in profile, with its head slightly raised and its wings held close to the body. The wreath held in the bird's beak can be interpreted, on the basis of its formal characteristics, as a victory wreath. The vegetal element rising upward to the left of the eagle, rendered schematically in its leaf form, may be associated with either a palm or a laurel branch. Despite its small scale, the balanced arrangement of the composition demonstrates that the iconographic elements were brought together through a deliberate selection³¹.

The depiction of the eagle together with an altar and wreath corresponds to a well-established iconographic scheme in Roman visual culture associated with concepts of divine authority, consecration, and victory, as evidenced by numerous parallels. This motif began to be employed within a more systematic ideological framework from the Augustan Period onward and subsequently remained widespread throughout the Imperial era³². Although the Tavium gem accords with this repertory, the long-term use of the motif means that it should not be regarded as a precise chronological indicator.



Fig. 8 (Lippold 1922, Taf. XCV, 3)



Fig. 9 (Vermeule 1966, 32, fig. 19)



Fig. 10 (Henig 2017, 18, fig. 4)

When considered together with the wreath and vegetal branch, the symbolic association of the eagle with Jupiter reinforces the composition's connotations of honour and victory. In a funerary context, the gem was more likely used not as a practical sealing device but as a personal object carrying protective and representational meanings within burial practice.

The iconography of the eagle, altar, and wreath constitutes an established visual formula employed in various contexts within Roman visual culture, and the Tavium gem

²⁹ Cooney 1968, 113–119; Plantzos 1996, 115–132.

³⁰ Cravinho 2017, 173–245.

³¹ Almirall 2021, 25; Achim 2021, 16; Biernacki & Klenina 2021, 29–30; Chernenko 2021, 32.

³² Greet 2015, 108–165.

represents a simplified variant of this scheme. Comparative examples clarify the semantic range of the composition more clearly. Instances in which the eagle is depicted standing on an altar while carrying a wreath and enriched with additional figurative elements form more elaborate variants of the motif that emphasise its associations with victory and consecration³³ (Fig. 8). Compositions that juxtapose a portrait with the depiction of an eagle standing on an altar demonstrate the use of this iconography in connection with political affiliation and imperial ideology³⁴ (Fig. 9). Military types depicted together with legionary standards reveal the meaning of the eagle within the context of army identity and institutional affiliation³⁵ (Fig. 10). The absence of these additional elements on the Tavium gem suggests that the composition was stripped of explicit military or political connotations and reduced to a more general meaning centred on consecration and honour.

These comparisons demonstrate that the Tavium gem is consistent with the iconographic tradition of the Roman Imperial Period not only typologically but also in terms of meaning. While the depiction of the eagle standing on an altar together with a wreath represents the conjunction of victory and consecration, the vegetal branch functions as a complementary element reinforcing this semantic field. In terms of both material choice and compositional scheme, the Tavium example may be regarded as a local-scale application of an established iconographic tradition. Considered within its funerary context, the object assumes the character of a symbolic item associated with individual identity, status, and protective beliefs, and in this respect constitutes an important piece of archaeological evidence that complements the architectural data documented in the necropolis.

Conclusion

The two rock-cut tombs documented on the southwestern slope of Tavium constitute the first architecturally legible evidence for a previously unidentified burial sector belonging to the city's southern necropolis. Their location along the same continuous limestone band outside the settlement core, together with their small scale, single-chamber plans, and internal arrangements adapted to the natural form of the bedrock, demonstrates that these tombs should be understood not as isolated features, but as elements indicating the deliberate use of the slope as part of the necropolis. In this respect, the study not only introduces new funerary data for Tavium, but also provides direct architectural evidence that makes it possible to evaluate the spatial relationship between the settlement and the necropolis.

From a typological perspective, the Tavium tombs are best defined as plain single-chamber rock-cut tombs with klinai. Their principal characteristics include a single-space plan, a functional and non-monumental entrance opening, extremely limited investment in façade articulation, and an internal burial arrangement structured directly through klinai rather than through developed arcosolium systems. Accordingly, their closest parallels should be sought not among the monumentally articulated rock-cut tomb traditions of neighbouring regions, but rather among the more modest and interior-oriented tombs documented in Yozgat and its surroundings, Hadrianoupolis, and the inner parts of Pontos. Conversely, the absence of columns, pilasters, pediments,

³³ Lippold 1922, Taf. XCV, 3.

³⁴ Vermeule 1966, 32, fig. 19.

³⁵ Henig 2017, 18, fig. 4.

forechambers, inscriptions, relief decoration, and a systematic arcosolium repertoire clearly distinguishes the Tavium examples from the more representational funerary traditions attested in regions such as Paphlagonia, Cappadocia, and Phrygia. This distinction is important, because it shows that the Tavium tombs are not unfinished or reduced monumental tombs, but coherent examples of a different funerary conception in which architectural emphasis was directed not toward the façade, but toward the burial chamber itself.

Nevertheless, a precise chronological attribution cannot be established. Although the plain façade, single-chamber plan, and kline-based internal arrangement are typologically meaningful indicators, they do not in themselves permit a narrow date. Comparative data show that similar forms could remain in use over long periods in different regions and that architectural simplicity alone cannot be regarded as a reliable criterion for identifying an early phase. The most defensible conclusion, therefore, is that the Tavium tombs should be placed within the Late Hellenistic–Roman funerary continuum and, most plausibly, within the context of the Roman Imperial Period; however, a more precise date cannot be proposed on the basis of architectural evidence alone. At this point, the gem associated with Rock-Cut Tomb No. 1 assumes particular significance. Although the eagle–altar–wreath composition does not provide a precise chronological marker, it is consistent with the iconographic repertory of the Roman Imperial Period and thus constitutes a complementary find supporting the chronological and cultural framework indicated by the architectural evidence.

Taken together, these observations demonstrate that the scientific importance of the Tavium tombs lies not in their monumental appearance, but in their typologically legible simplicity. These tombs reflect a local, interior-oriented funerary tradition in which burial function takes precedence over external representation. In this respect, the study makes a twofold contribution: first, it identifies and documents a new necropolis area on the southwestern slope of Tavium; second, it situates these tombs within the rock-cut tomb traditions of Galatia and neighbouring regions through a comparative framework that distinguishes structural similarity from mere regional proximity. The Tavium examples should therefore be regarded as coherent representatives of a modest yet meaningful architectural line within the funerary architecture of inland Central Anatolia during the Roman Imperial Period.

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