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# DIVINE KINGSHIP AT THE CITY CENTRE

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## Abstract

When the Persian dynast and Karian King Maussollos died in 352/351 BC he was interred in the most incredible dynastic monument the world had ever seen, the eponymous ruler's tomb to be, the Maussoleion at Halikarnassos. The Maussoleion was placed in the city centre of the newly planned residential city and capital of Hekatomnid Karia, and it was staged as the biggest of the sanctuaries of Halikarnassos. Surely, neither discretion nor modesty was involved in this endeavour. It was soon counted as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was included as one of the canonical yet quite mysterious monuments of Classical Antiquity.

This contribution focuses on the Maussoleion as both a dynastic tomb and as a sanctuary celebrating the Hekatomnid dynasty in an Ancient Near Eastern tradition of Divine Kingship. It explores local, regional and supra-regional contexts of similar phenomena in Antiquity. Furthermore, it also focuses on the Maussoleion as a building type, forming a vital part of aristocratic culture by offering a phenomenological view of rulers' tombs and their role in urban planning.

## Ancestors, aristocracy, and the importance of dying well

It was important to die well. For the sovereign a good death, a proper funeral and an everlasting monument form the fundamental ingredients in keeping the

position of the house, their territorial rights to the land, and the security of the people<sup>1</sup>.

The handling of the death of a sovereign is a vital part of the social memory of a society. Social memory may be described as a means by which information of who we were and are is transmitted among individuals and groups and from one generation to another. Not necessarily aware that they are doing so, individuals pass on their behaviors and attitudes to others especially through emotional and practical ties and in relationships among generations<sup>2</sup>. These ties are especially vibrant and fundamental, and they structure the self-representation and self-sense of aristocratic culture.

There is a special link between aristocracy and ancestors. Aristocrats bridge the gap between past and present, and between this world and the divine. This mediating capability is what forms the core or the backbone of what enables us to define a diachronic, universal notion of aristocratic culture.

Origins and age are denoting legitimacy to power and prevalence. And ancient origin is vital for maintaining the indisputable status of the aristocracy. A successful (and well attested) method of establishing a dynasty was to build monumental royal tombs, which worked both by asserting territorial rights – the royal tomb overlooking the plain – and through claims of ancestry: We were always here<sup>3</sup>.

When the Persian dynast and Karian King Mausollos died in 352/351 BC he was interred in the most incredible dynastic monument the world had ever seen, the eponymous ruler's tomb, the Mausolleion at Halikarnassos.

The Mausolleion was placed directly at the city centre of the newly planned residential city and capital of Hekatomnid Karia, and it was staged as the biggest of the sanctuaries of Halikarnassos. Surely, neither discretion nor modesty was involved in this endeavour. This was the result of a fascinating political programme, an iconography of ideology, to copy the words of Margaret Cool Root in describing the Achaemenid programmatic state art<sup>4</sup>.

Thus, the Mausolleion, the foundation of Halikarnassos as the dynastic capital, and the Hekatomnid endeavours in Karia – and perhaps even beyond –, were in my view results of political propaganda: a carefully planned and well-performed act of creating a dynasty (fig 1)<sup>5</sup>. Following an Ancient Near Eastern tradition of Divine Kingship, yet in new garments, now also making sense to a Hellenic – or even an *internationally inclined* –, proto-Hellenistic audience. Written in a new language, so to speak<sup>6</sup>.

## The Mausolleion and the city plan of Halikarnassos

When Mausollos sometime in the 370s BC decided to move the residential centre of Karia from inland Mylasa to coastal Halikarnassos, the number of inhabitants was increased by means of *synoikism*, where several minor towns in the hinterlands of Halikarnassos were abandoned and the people moved to the new capital<sup>7</sup>. Here, there was an overwhelming need for a labour force to build the modern city, an impressive masterpiece of planning



Fig. 1 : The so-called Ada from Priene, perhaps a part of large scaled Hekatomnid patronage in the Karian/Ionian borderland. © Trustees of the British Museum.

1 Carstens 2009, 37-38.

2 Crumley 2002, 39 *et passim*.

3 On aristocratic culture and the importance of ancestry, Helms 1998.

4 Root 1979.

5 On Hekatomnid patronage in Karia and abroad, Carstens 2009, 111-119.

6 I have elsewhere argued that this new language may be successfully read as a conscious creolization process, Carstens 2009, 121-126; Carstens forthcoming a.

7 Flønsted-Jensen/Carstens 2004, with further references.

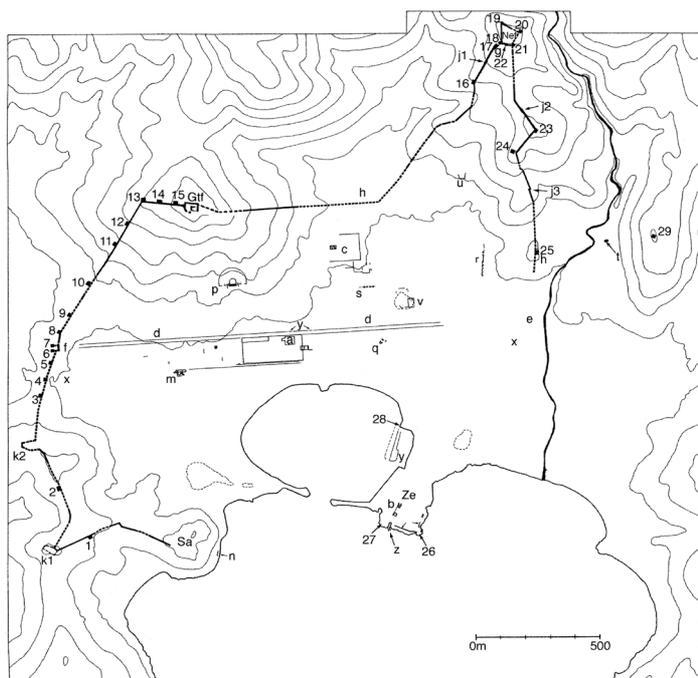


Fig. 2 : City plan of Halikarnassos (Pedersen 2010, fig. 1). a) Maussoleion. b) Palace of Mausollos. c) Sanctuary of Ares. d) Main street of Halikarnassos. e) Mylasa Gate. f) Myndos Gate. g) Pedasa Gate. m) Charidemos' house, a late Roman domus. n) Salmakis Fountain. p) Theatre. q) Sanctuary of Demeter. r) Stadion.

and engineering. Although there are only few and scattered remains of the Late Classical Halikarnassos left, city archaeology and intensive studies of the ancient remains in modern Bodrum houses and gardens have enabled us to reconstruct what the re-foundation of Halikarnassos implied<sup>8</sup>. A city plan was laid out according to a grid; a magnificent city wall, a so-called *Geländemauer*, was added<sup>9</sup>, and large temples, a satrapal palace and the dynast's tomb were built<sup>10</sup>. Everything was reorganised according to a master plan that must have included or been based on political/centralized planning.

The Maussoleion was built at the city centre, next to the agora (fig. 2). A 15 m wide procession street (the modern *Turgutreis Caddesi* follows its main route) crossed the city from the eastern Mylasa Gate, to the western Myndos Gate, and flanked the Maussoleion terrace to the north. A propylon building probably led from the agora to the Maussoleion precinct and the large terrace.

<sup>8</sup> Pedersen 2001/2002, 102-110.

<sup>9</sup> Pedersen 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Pedersen 2009.



Fig. 3 : Model of the Maussoleion, the propylon and the terrace (model by Aksel Sønderborg, The Museum of Ancient Art, Aarhus University).

Visitors to the monument entered the area from the south-east and approached the tomb as they would approach a temple.

The Maussoleion was, at its core, a peristyle podium tomb, i.e. even in its unadorned architectonic language there was a strong reference to sacred architecture and the settings of sanctuaries: the tomb was built inside a *temenos*, approached via a gate-building. It alluded to a temple, and the King on High by its dimensions. Mausollos was buried in a sanctuary, inside a temple building.

It is tempting to say that the world had never ever seen anything like this before (fig. 3). But it is of course not quite right, while all the same quite close to the case. As stated before, neither modesty nor discretion were among the cardinal virtues of the Hekatomnids.

But I think that the entire complex of the Maussoleion, its position, layout and the sculptural program, was the result of deliberate choices made to encapsulate what a new Karianness was supposed to be. Placing the Hekatomnid dynasty in its rightful position. It is a monument stuffed with

relations to political networks, alliances in this world and the divine. It rested on the past and pointed to the future.

## Divine Kingship

The Maussoleion was not just a dynastic tomb, it was also staged as and became a sanctuary celebrating the Hekatomnid dynasty in an Ancient Near Eastern tradition of Divine Kingship.

In the Ancient Near Eastern perception of royalty, the notion of Divine Kingship is explicitly expressed in iconography representing the king as the tutelary deity protecting and securing a land and a people, because of the mandate entrusted to him by both the God on High and by his subalterns<sup>11</sup>.

In the Hittite enthronement ritual the king rests on the lap of the throne goddess. He is blessed by the gods, receives a new name as king, a new identity and he is transferred from the profane to the sacred world (fig. 4).

The Hittite kingdom is divine, and the king holds the office of high priest. He performs sacrifices, he is the chief mediator between men and gods; and exactly this capacity holds his power. The king is both a political and a sacred/divine figure; the one is inseparable from the other<sup>12</sup>. And therefore, when the king dies, cosmos is threatened. In order to secure a satisfying transition and avoid chaos among the survivors, a complicated royal funerary ritual, lasting 14 days, is carried out. Because this is what rituals do. They structure chaos.

The blessing of the Great King is the central motif in the depictions of the king before the deity Ahuramazda and the fire altar, as it occurs on the relief of Darius' tomb. That the Great King operates through the favour of Ahuramazda is clearly stated in the beginning of the inscription accompanying the reliefs (fig. 5). Safekeeping the empire, its territory, its people, stability and prosperity<sup>13</sup>.

It is through the blessing and favour of Ahuramazda that Darius became king, and just as Darius is king because of this blessing, the omnipotent presence of Ahuramazda is evident by Darius being king. There is a reciprocal relationship between the two, a mutual dependency, as they



Fig. 4 : The god Sharrumma, wearing a horned crown, escorts the Great King Tuthaliya IV. From the open-air sanctuary at Yazılıkaya (Seeher 1999, fig. 138).

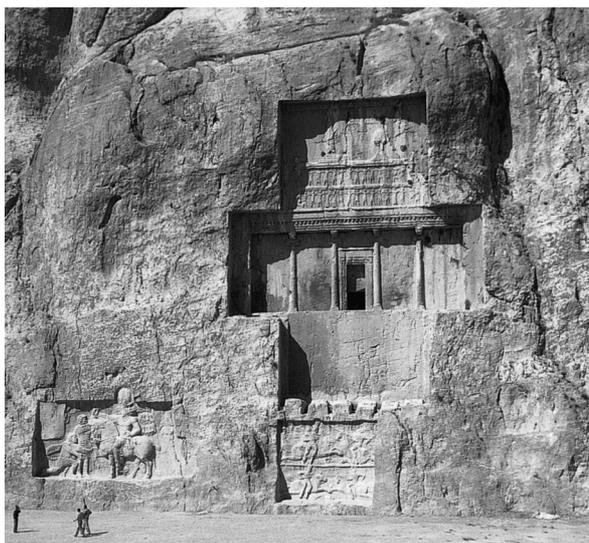


Fig. 5 : Tomb of Darius (Curtis/Tallis 2005, 15).

owe their positions to each other. To worship Ahuramazda seems to have been, by extension, to acknowledge the power and virtue of the king.

This relationship, however, does not make the Great King a god, — but nor is he a man, like other men. He stands between the gods and men; he is the appointed intercessor, the chief mediator between this world and the divine.

This, exactly, is the principal grammar of the language of the relationship between god, sovereign and subalterns in the Near Eastern tradition of Divine Kingship.

<sup>11</sup> Haas 1984, 181-182; van den Hout 1995, 546; Tinney 1998; 26-28.

<sup>12</sup> Van den Hout 1994, 37-38; Haas 1994, 181-219; Beckman 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Schmidt 1970, 81-83; Boyce 1982, 112, 116 for a detailed discussion of the religious meaning of the relief; Root 1979, 153-161.

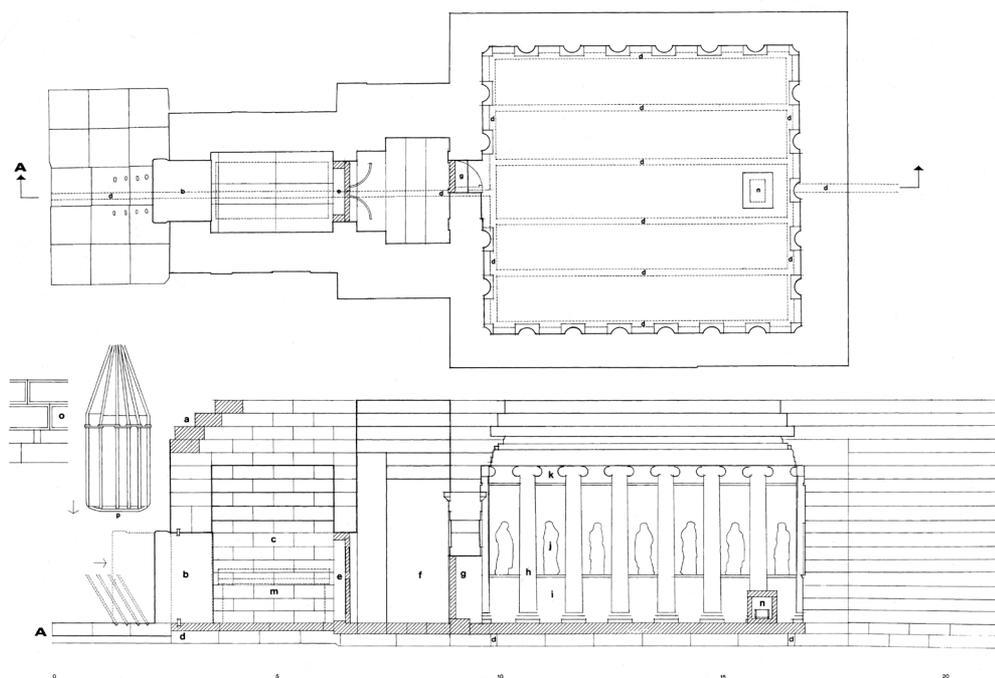


Fig. 6 : Plan and section of the Mausolleion tomb chamber (Jeppesen 2000, fig. 17.1).

## The death of the divine king

We have no records telling how and why Maussollos died. We do not know whether he was considered divine before his death, or if it was only at his funeral that “he became god,” as outlined in the old Hittite texts of the royal funerary rituals.

But there is no reason to assume that he was not believed to be blessed by the gods as King of Karians, as high priest in the Zeus sanctuary in Milas and Labraunda, and that he acted as chief mediator between god and man<sup>14</sup>.

In the planning of the new capital Halikarnassos, in the layout of this new magnificent Hekatomnid city, the position of the dynastic tomb – the staging of the Mausolleion as the greatest temple in the city, in the most prominent position, just on the line of the procession street – is the most magnificent testimony of a conscious and outspoken programmatic state art.

## When Maussollos died

We do not know what actually happened when Maussollos died; but the funeral must have been impressive.

When Maussollos died he was, from what we know, however from a dubious source, cremated<sup>15</sup>. It is unknown where this cremation took place, maybe on the Mausolleion terrace next to the monument itself as the first of the sequence of events of the funeral.

His remains were placed in the tomb chamber, presumably along with precious equipment, as we know it from other Anatolian dynastic tombs of Archaic and early Classical Lydia as well as Early Iron Age Phrygia or Cyprus. The tomb chamber was closed, perhaps by a small closing block between the main chamber and the anteroom and by closing the double marble doors (fig. 6). Then – perhaps – a person guarding the tomb of Maussollos was buried in a sarcophagus in the corridor and finally the plug-block was lowered down and placed in position. But in fact, we do not know whether the remains of a marble sarcophagus found during the Danish excavations of the Mausolleion 1966-1977 once stood in that corridor or somewhere else in the Mausolleion tomb complex.

This series of events must have included some sort of procession placing the equipment in the

<sup>14</sup> See Carstens 2011, 121-123 with further references.

<sup>15</sup> The only source describing the actual funeral of Maussollos is found in the work of Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 10.18, written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

tomb chamber, as well as the urn or the box with the remains of Maussollos.

And surely placing the enormous plug-block must have created some commotion (fig. 6).

What happened next was the performance of a huge raw meat sacrifice. The chosen animals, at least 5 oxen, 25 sheep/goats, 8 lambs/kids, 3 cocks, 10 hens, 1 chicken and 8 pigeons, may have been kept on the terrace in a fence or tied together, and the slaughtering and butchering of the animals could have been performed as part of the theatrical performance of the funeral<sup>16</sup>. Preparing and arranging the meat must have formed part of the funeral feast, a tumultuous event including considerable labour, and probably watched by an audience. I think this was done as a ritual act of feeding the god, the divine ruler Maussollos in order to please him and to ensure his continuant protection.

Thus, Maussollos was buried in a manner proper for a divine king. This was to be understood and respected by a diverse audience: the gods, his allies participating in the funeral feasting, the dynastic network of peers (friends and opponents alike), and his subalterns. A dynastic funeral was always a political event.

## The everlasting monument

The construction of a past, of a history, of dynastic traditions, is crucial in the efforts to establish a new dynastic house. It is by referring to this past that the dynasty obtains influence and indisputable political weight. History or historical references to a mythological past serve a legitimizing function. The living uses the dead as resource, vision, and representation.

The dynastic tomb is always a monument of power; it is a central focus for the conservation of the aristocracy, and is a political monument. Thus, the building of the Maussolleion was an important element in the inauguration of a new world order, a new Karian rule. It was an unusual building, grandiose, lavishly decorated, planned and executed by the finest craftsmen in the best materials. It was staged on a large terrace as a sanctuary of the dynasty and it followed, or paid respect to, well-established concepts of the dynast's tomb.

In the Maussolleion, many facets of the new dynasty were incorporated: the local ancestry, the Persian dresses of the ancestral portraits, the Hellenic motifs, and inspiration from Lykian podium tombs<sup>17</sup>.

If the Maussolleion is only perceived as a piece of Greek architecture and sculpture it seems unredeemed. However, placed in a broader Anatolian perspective, it unfolds itself into numerous facets: it was not (only) placed in the city centre because Maussollos was the founding father of the new capital<sup>18</sup>, but because it was the foremost sanctuary of the new Karian dynasty. The cult of Maussollos was intended to unite the Karians, and to confirm the Hekatomnids as dynasts.

## The death of the sovereign – the Maussolleion as idea

The Maussolleion was soon counted as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and it was already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century included as one of the canonical yet quite mysterious monuments of Classical Antiquity. But the mausoleum as a building type and the ruler's tomb as a political phenomenon was adopted already by Augustus in impressive scale with the Mausoleum of Augustus, already planned early in his reign, as part of an ideological program, as a definite political monument<sup>19</sup>. Perhaps resting on a mixture of both Egyptian, Etruscan, and, I think, also Karian foundations. Since Maussollos created his own tomb and cult place, so ostentatiously, it has formed the model of dynastic self-representation, remembering that a dynasty is a house, its peer, its people and its land.

The construction of the memorial tomb, the Anıtkabir, the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, took nine years, from October 1944 to September 1953. It was built on the Rasattepe in central Ankara, clearly visible from all parts of the city. And it was a project inaugurated because the Turkish republic needed a place to celebrate the state<sup>20</sup>. The complex consists of four parts: the 'Hittite' road of Lions, the ceremonial plaza, with its *kilim* floors, the hall of honour in Seljuk and

<sup>16</sup> Højlund/Aaris Sørensen 1981; Carstens forthcoming b.

<sup>17</sup> This is detailed in Carstens 2009, 65-74; Carstens forthcoming a.

<sup>18</sup> See Jeppesen 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Davies 2004, 49-51.

<sup>20</sup> Wilson 2007.

Ottoman style, and the peace park, the *paradeisos*, representing Turkey in the world.

This mausoleum, as well as the tomb of Lenin, Mao and Che Guavara, are all responses to the soundboard of divine kinship, the keeping of the house or the constitution of the modern state, the territorial rights and the security of the people.

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