

Abstract

From Tatarli to Munich. The recovery of a painted wooden tomb chamber near Kelainai

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The starting point of this paper are the wood paintings of unknown origin in Munich which were given to the “Archäologische Staatssammlung” in 1989 as gift and permanent loan respectively. Although Peter Calmeyer published a first acquisition report in the “Münchner Jahrbücher” in 1993, scholars have hardly taken notice of these important monuments of Achaemenid art.

The aim of this paper is to present evidence that the wood paintings in Munich originally belonged to a tumulus tomb with a wooden chamber in Tatarli (Province of Afyon). This tumulus tomb was robbed by locals after incitement by antiquities traders in 1969. When the museum of Afyon was informed about the looting, the museum staff proceeded to perform rescue excavation there. The tomb was found in great disorder and widely robbed, but at least the architecture of the tomb could be documented. The tomb is a wooden chamber with an earth hill, the construction of which corresponds to the design of Gordian tumuli. Some beams were removed already in antiquity, to create new grave niches in the wall. According to the excavators, some beams were removed very recently, probably during the raiding of 1969. After having studied the beams both in Munich and Afyon it can be certain that the Munich beams come from the tomb near Tatarli. The type of wood, the technique of joinery of the beams, as well as the style and iconography of the paintings correspond. Moreover, the tree rings of the Munich wood do not only match the Tatarli beams in general; several specific ring-sequences coincide so spectacularly that we can state with complete assurance that certain timbers in Munich are from the same original tree as the ones in Afyon.

The images painted on the timbers consist of an unusually elaborate battle scene between Persians and Scythians, two procession scenes, weapon dances, crouching felines and some other scenes which are hardly recognizable. These themes correspond widely to the wall paintings of Lycian grave monuments. However, the battle scene between Persians and Scythians is quite distinct and finds no other parallels in Achaemenid art.

The paper presents the reconstruction project of the Tatarli tomb and its recovered image program, focusing on the concepts of status they articulate and the cultural forms these took.