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Research Article

Large Farms in East Rough Cilicia and the Case of Asarkale

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Abstract

The small rural settlements in the Olba region, which has a mountainous topography, are not fully identifiable and distinguishable due to the lack of archaeological studies and written documents. It is still difficult to recognise whether a small rural settlement is a hamlet, a village or a farm. This ambiguity also extends to large farms, and these facilities for agricultural production are easily often confused with other small-scale settlements. This confusion does not contribute to the clarification of the social structure of the Olba region, which is already lacking in information, but causes problems and confusion in the opposite direction.

The surveys at Asarkale, located in the centre of the Olba region, have shown that it is incorrect to consider it as a rural settlement and that Asarkale should rather be defined as a large farm. Moreover, the findings at Asarkale also revealed the differences in the parameters that should be taken into consideration when looking for examples of large farms in the Olba region. The discovery that the building previously thought to be a temple is a funerary monument and belongs to the 2nd century AD, not the 1st century AD; the discovery that the building thought to be a Roman house belonging to a local ruler is in fact the villa rustica of a large farm; the discovery that the surrounding terraced agricultural lands were managed from this centre; and the discovery of how the building labelled as the villa rustica displays unexpected characteristics in terms of location and plan type. These findings will help in the identification and understanding of other large farms in the region. In short, Asarkale should be considered as an important example that will partly facilitate the differentiation of large farms from other rural settlements in the Olba region, especially when considered in the context of its interesting location, building stock and the relationship of the buildings with the surrounding topography.

Keywords: Cilicia, Olba, Farm, Asarkale, Villa Rustica, Temple Tomb.



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Araştırma Makalesi

Doğu Dağlık Kilikya'daki Büyük Çiftlikler ve Asarkale Örneği

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Öz

Dağlık bir topografyaya sahip olan Olba bölgesindeki küçük kırsal yerleşimler, arkeolojik çalışmaların ve yazılı belgelerin eksikliği sebebiyle tam olarak tanımlanabilir ve ayırt edilebilir durumda değildir. Kırsaldaki herhangi bir küçük yerleşimin mezra mı, köy mü veya çiftlik mi olduğunu anlamak hala güçtür. Bu belirsizlik, büyük çiftlikleri de kapsamaktadır ve tarımsal üretime yönelik kurulmuş olan bu tesisler, diğer küçük ölçekli yerleşimlerle karıştırılmaktadır. Bu karışıklık, zaten bilgi eksikliği bulunan Olba bölgesinin sosyal yapısının aydınlatılmasına hiç katkı vermediği gibi, tam tersi yönde sorunlara ve karışıklıklara yol açmaktadır.

Olba bölgesinin ortasında yer alan Asarkale'de bu kapsamda yapılan incelemeler, günümüze kadar buranın kırsal bir yerleşim merkezi olarak değerlendirilmesinin hatalı olduğunu, aslında Asarkale'nin büyük bir çiftlik olarak tanımlanması gerektiğini göstermiştir. Bunun yanı sıra Asarkale'de yapılan tespitler, Olba bölgesindeki büyük çiftlik örneklerini ararken dikkate alınması gereken parametrelerin ne tür farklılıklar gösterebildiğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Daha önce tapınak olarak değerlendirilen yapının bir mezar anıtı olduğunun ve MS 1. yüzyıla değil, MS 2. yüzyıla ait olduğunun tespit edilmesi; yerel bir yöneticiye ait Roma evi olarak değerlendirilen yapının ise büyük bir çiftliğin villa rusticası olduğunun ortaya çıkması; geniş bir alana yayılan teraslı veya taşlardan arındırılmış tarım arazilerinin bu merkezden yönetildiğinin anlaşılması; villa rustica olarak adlandırılan yapı formunun lokasyon ve plan tipi açısından nasıl şaşırtıcı özellikler taşıdığı fark edilmesi, bölgedeki diğer büyük çiftliklerin de anlaşılmasına ve tanımlanmasına yardımcı olacak tespitlerdir. Kısacası Asarkale; özellikle ilginç lokasyonu, yapı stoğu ve yapıların topografya ile ilişkisi bağlamında ele alındığında, Olba bölgesindeki büyük çiftliklerin diğer kırsal yerleşimlerden ayırt edilebilmelerini kısmen de olsa kolaylaştıracak önemli bir örnek olarak değerlendirilmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kilikia, Olba, Çiftlik, Asarkale, Villa Rustica, Tapınak Mezar.

Introduction

The Olba region (fig. 1), located in the eastern part of Rough Cilicia, has a special geography that differs in many aspects with its unique cultural texture. Its architecture, settlement planning, building types, beliefs, customs and traditions show local characteristics, and a local perspective is required to make sense of the clues related to these unresolved topics.



Figure 1: Olba region

Comments on how large farms should be defined

Among the unresolved issues, are the “large farms” in the region and especially the issues related to their quality or scale. At this point, it should be emphasised that the settlement model defined as “large farms” are widespread across the region. These remarkable facilities therefore stand out as a topic that deserves to be analysed in more detail. However, since the mountainous nature of the region is unfavourable for agriculture, “family-scale” or “small-scale” farms are relatively common¹, but large farms, which have a much wider distribution in the region and with a much larger building stock, may easily confused with other settlement forms in the countryside.

There is still no consensus on how large farms should be labelled. For example, in a study on settlement types in the Olba region, it is reported that the first phase of the present village of Özköy was a Hellenistic farm which later “rose to the category of complex farm” during the Roman period due to the addition of a farmhouse, monumental tombs, sarcophagi, residential quarters and agricultural installations. In that study, the term “complex farm” was used to describe an older and smaller-scale farm that had expanded and become better equipped over time. Also, in the same study, it was stated that Özköy further developed through this process and became a village settlement orientated towards agricultural production².

¹ Şahin 2007, 137; Erten 2012, 68.

² Mörel 2014, 159.

There are some question marks associated with these statements. It is normal to state that almost all rural settlements in the region similar to Özköy were engaged in agricultural production and have undergone a development process similar to Özköy's. It can also be thought that those small-scale farms had developed into larger farms. However, in order to declare that a small-scale farm developed into a village, clearer evidence is required; the evolution from smaller private property to a larger public domain should be supported by concrete evidence. Since Özköy is as yet excavated, it is not possible to make clear statements about the scale of the original settlement and its function in its first phase; it is not possible to see what lies beneath the dense piles of stones and therefore it is not clear whether the first phase of the settlement was a farm, a hamlet or a village. In light of this lack of evidence, we should be cautious in suggesting that Özköy may have developed from a small farm into a large village. The possibility of the small village or hamlet which has grown to its larger present boundaries is still one of the options to be considered. In this context, it should be questioned again how accurate it is to use the concept of a large farm or complex farm for the phase of Özköy. In this respect, Özköy can be defined as a good example of the difficulty of distinguishing between different rural settlement models.

In another study on the same subject, a description of what should be understood by the term "large farm" was made. In this study, examples across the region have been cited wherein the building stock, ostentatious farmhouse and agricultural equipment are taken into consideration, deducing that complex farms are "enormous" settlements that include a dense architectural structure³.

However, the criteria for distinguishing between rural settlements categorised as "villages" and complex farms, i.e. large farms, are unclear. Most of the places and equipment described are elements that may be encountered in all rural settlements where agriculture and animal husbandry are practised. The most important distinguishing features are the towers unique to the region and the farmhouses categorised as villas, but it is easy to define a settlement with this type of ostentatious dwelling as a farm. However, it is still a question mark whether such buildings are essential for all large-scale farms. In other words, there are still difficulties in categorising settlements that do not have an ostentatious dwelling and it is very possible to confuse them with each other. Many small and large settlements that can be defined as farms do not have such dwellings.

One such example in the region is the well-preserved Duvararası settlement, containing a large number of intertwined building remains. Although there are indications of a farmhouse surrounded by extensive agricultural lands with many agricultural terraces, and a density of agricultural equipment, there is no tower or villa-style dwelling that can be distinguished from the other buildings in the settlement. Although it was defined as an "agricultural small settlement with a farmhouse"⁴. Considering its characteristics, it is possible to suggest that Duvararası was a large farm typical of the region⁵. Duvararası and

³ Aydınöğlü 2010, 251-252: "...categorized some of the farms investigated in this study as the ones which had towers and buildings. In the light of the data collected in this study, we support that these farms should be regarded as complex farmsteads. Some of the farms are huge with complex architecture. These farms include some buildings used for production and storage, different types of tombs, production equipments, plenty of houses, and cisterns as well as a farm house where the owner of the farm or the landlord inhabits... in complex farmsteads, there are buildings around the farm house used for storage and production. These buildings also include the production equipment, which confirms the existence of production in the farms. The production equipment found in such a well protected building in the farmstead in Üçayak supports this claim. There are similar well protected buildings in the farmsteads in Karakabaklı and Gökale. These buildings must have been used for storage and production purposes with their thick walls and elaborate masonry techniques on these walls."

⁴ Şahin 2007, 125, 137.

⁵ Durukan 2023, 69-70.

other similar settlements in Rough Cilicia can be considered as typical examples displaying the features that may be encountered in large farms across the region.

To summarise, the differences between large farms and other rural settlement forms in the region are still unclear and difficulties remain in defining a large farm. This situation can largely be attributed to the lack of written documents; the fact that ruins often yield insufficient evidence, the lack of excavated examples, and the fact that the traditional lifestyle of this mountainous region is still not fully understood.

In this context, some interpretations of the relationships between rural settlement types need to be re-evaluated. For example, an article on the topic includes the following statements:

*"...it has been found that there are a large number of farms or hamlet-type settlements around the communes that are dependent on them... these are more modestly structured, and the agricultural area they dominate is basically dominated by the commune. The communes and the rural settlements around them, such as farms and hamlets, share agricultural land."*⁶

The first thing that draws attention to these statements is the mention of the existence of "farm and hamlet-type settlements dependent on the *kome*". The meaning of the term "dependent" is unclear. It is not explained what kind of dependency relationship or what administrative organisation may have existed in the rural settlements in the region. Another controversial point in the same paragraph is the mention of "...modest farmland under the sovereignty of the commune". The meaning of the sovereignty of a *kome* over a farmland or the farms dependent on a *kome* should be further justified. In the absence of written documents, there is a serious lack of information about the status of the communes and farms in the Olba region. The administrative organisation of the region is unknown. The status of rural settlements, their spheres of influence, the system of administration, and the powers of the local administrator are all unclear. In light of this dearth of information it is necessary to use more cautious language when drawing conclusions. As a result of the conclusions drawn, a series of ambiguities and confusing questions arise. For example: If the surrounding agricultural areas are under the sovereignty of the *kome* and the farms are dependent on the *kome*, is the right of use also at the disposal of the *kome*, i.e. is it collective property? Is it possible for the communes to manage the agricultural areas despite the existence of a central authority? How should the status of the committee be understood within the regional economy? Many questions also arise concerning the farms. How was production carried out on those farms which were allegedly dependent on the communes? If there is no private property and the land is under the sovereignty of the commune, should the farms also be considered as the property of the commune? Who runs them and to whom are the profits transferred? Did the operators always farm with the permission of the commune on which they were dependent? Were they tenant farmers? Who and by what method are decisions taken in such settlements? Therefore, while such questions about the administrative system remain unanswered, making such clear statements about the status of the communes and the surrounding lands may lead to erroneous conclusions.

Another controversial point in the same paragraph by the same authors is the interpretation of the common use of agricultural land. According to this interpretation, *komes*, hamlets and farms use agricultural land in common, which is ambiguous to say the least. However, when the problems of implementation are estimated, seems an unreasonable model. To be able to say that the land was used in common, very precise evidence is needed. However, it will be logical to assume that a person residing in a *kome*, hamlet, or farm may

⁶ Aydınoglu and Özdemir 2020, 110.

have his own agricultural land. Indeed, despite all these unanswerable questions and ambiguous issues, it is recognised, especially in the Roman period, that land was often private ownership. Therefore, instead of talking about farms and hamlets that were “dependent” on the communes, claiming that farmland was “under the sovereignty” of the commune, or thinking about communal agricultural land, it would be more helpful to focus on private ownership. One of the strongest reasons to support this idea is the fact that the Roman state often distributed land as a pension to veteran soldiers, that there were agriculturalists among these veterans, and that there are written records of farmland belonging to Roman veterans in the Olba region⁷.

In addition to these controversial issues, it is still unclear which type of settlement should be defined as a *kome*, or even whether there is another medium-sized settlement type between the *kome* and developed towns. The types of settlements encountered in the countryside, in the absence of inscriptions, are defined by the nature of the buildings or groups of buildings, their location, number and function. These rural settlements, variously named, are defined by some researchers with titles such as *kome*; hamlet; simple farm; and complex farm; while some other researchers refer to them as “small settlements of agricultural quality”; “hilltop settlements of agricultural quality” or “small settlements of agricultural quality with farmhouses”⁸ a common terminological language has as yet not been determined. Furthermore, it is unclear whether some of these settlements can be defined as farms.

As can be seen, uncertainties and debates about rural settlement forms, including farms, continue. The identification of large farms, one of the rural settlement forms, may help to resolve these uncertainties, at least partially. In this context, we may focus on a specific example in the Olba region to determine what a large farm might look like and how it might be recognised.

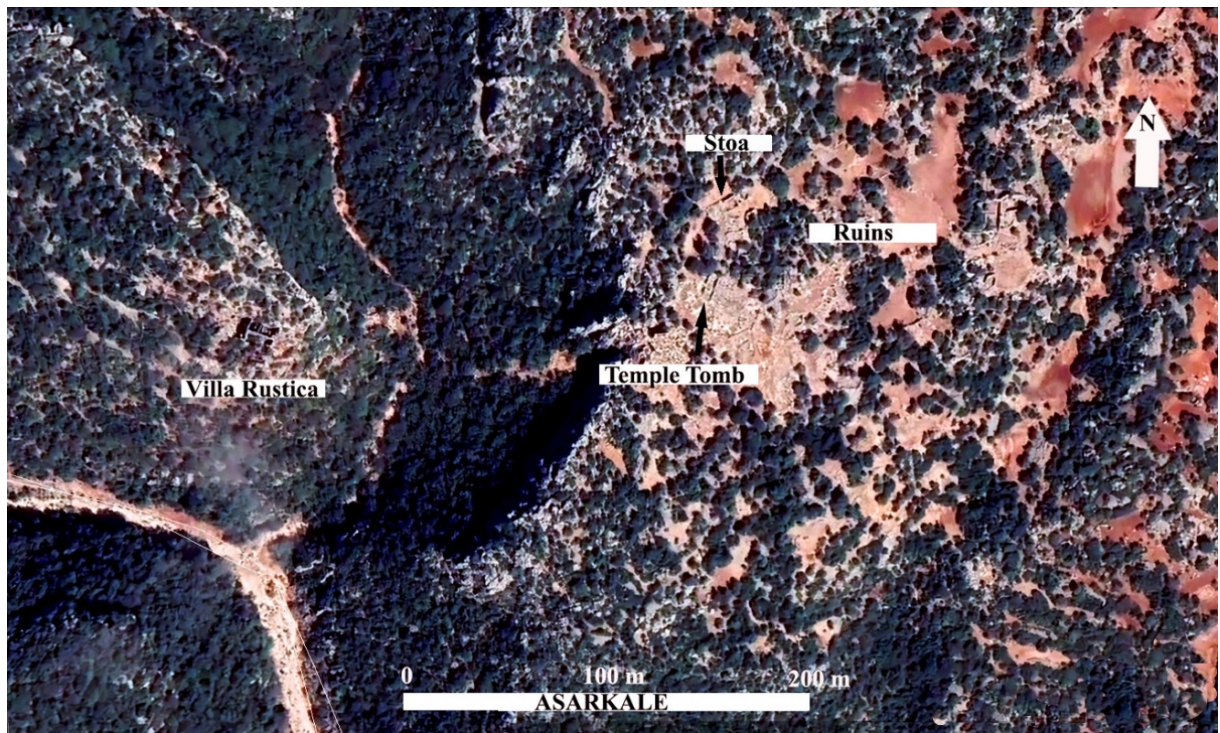


Figure 2: Karyağdı valley and Asarkale farm (from Google Earth)

⁷ Erten 2019, 110; Sayar 2019, 65.

⁸ Şahin 2007, 137; Aydınoglu 2010, 252; Şahin and Özdizbay 2014, 85.

Could Asarkale be a large farm?

On the banks of the Karyağdı valley extending to the southeast of Olba, about 4 km from the city of Olba, two opposing peaks emerge at a point where the valley bifurcates to the north. The settlement on the eastern summit at the Asar is located in the modern Yeğenli village (figs. 2-4). On the western summit (named Kurşun Kale and discussed in detail below), there is a well-preserved, solitary building of high quality (figs. 3 and 7).

Although there is a valley between these two summits, which are only two hundred metres apart as the crow flies, both summits should be considered as part of a single unit. However, the archaeological studies carried out so far have largely been carried out on the settlement on the eastern summit including the Doric building (fig. 4), which is considered to be a temple, and which has attracted the attention of researchers. This monumental structure, which was evaluated in isolation from its context, led to the misidentification of its function⁹.

Interpretations have differed as to the date of the rectangular Doric building, which was built with local limestone, now largely ruinous, but whose eastern wall is preserved almost to roof level, hitherto it has been unclear why such a monumental building was built in this location and how it relates to the settlement in which it is located (fig. 4). However, taking into account other details of the settlement and questioning the settlement as a whole, a more effective method, in terms of understanding both the character of the settlement and the true identity of the building, will be developed.

An article published in 2014 is important because it covers the remains of other buildings on the same hill including the one identified as a temple¹⁰. Some of the details in this article suggest that the evaluations of the function and dating of the building, which is thought to be a temple, should be reconsidered. The clues detected in the inscription on the architrave of the monument are interesting. These clues have a domino effect and may lead to an understanding of the real functions of both this building and its associated settlement. In short, the correct identification of this monument and its inscription will help to understand whether Asarkale was a large farm and to distinguish the “large farms” in the Olba region.

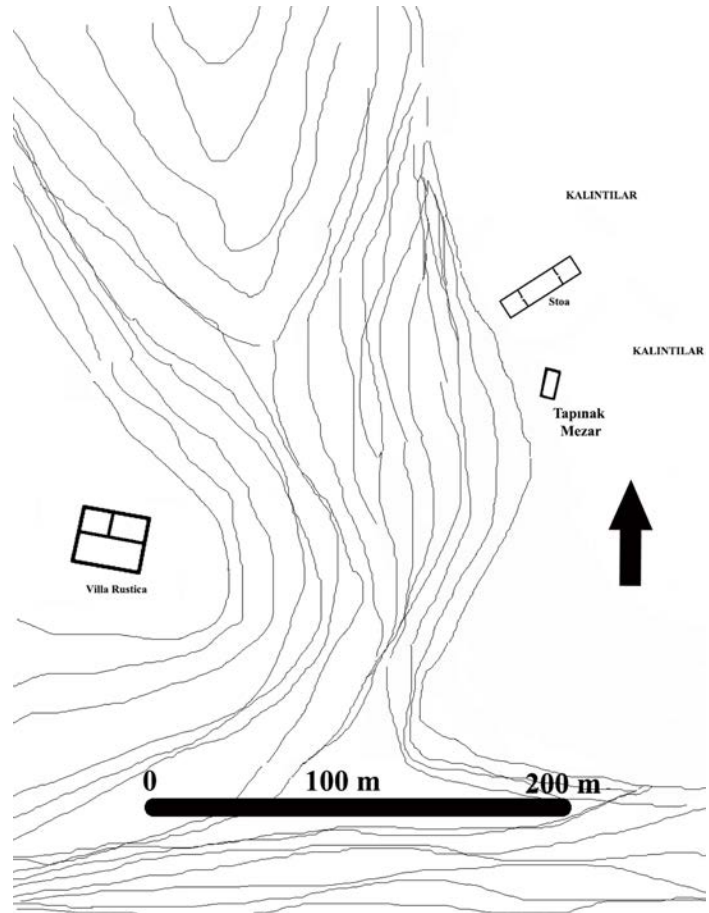


Figure 3: Plan of Asarkale farm (author's drawing)

⁹ Söğüt 1998, 97; Durugönül 2001, 159; Durukan 2003, 231.

¹⁰ Şahin and Özdzibay 2014, 85-121.

Is the monumental structure a “temple” or a “temple tomb”?

The Asarkale monument has all the features of a temple and has been identified as such by researchers who have studied this monument. However, the inscription numbered 1, which was found on the disintegrated architrave of the monument reveals new clues that may refute this. Through its letter characteristics, this inscription is thought to date to the 3-4th centuries AD. It is deciphered as:

*“the son of Hermesianax built it for his wife”.*¹¹

This monument has been identified as a tomb through parallels with other funerary inscriptions with similar expressions. However, a serious contradiction has arisen, as the monument is described as a temple in the publication in question. The researchers who found, deciphered and published the inscription explained this situation as follows:

*“That at least part of the temple was later used as a tomb with a different function is confirmed by the inscription (Inscription No. 1) carved on the aforementioned architrave. According to the inscription, this use must have taken place in the 3rd-4th century AD. Such a second use is not unusual for the temples of Rough Cilicia; an example of it can be found in the rear room of the temple at Iotape 2, in a tomb carved into the podium and covered with slabs.”*¹²

In short, the authors think that “at least part of the building”, which they describe as a temple, was used as a tomb in the 3rd-4th centuries AD, and they support this view with the example of a tomb inside the temple number 2 at Iotape.



Figure 4: Asarkale temple tomb (photo by author)

However, it should be questioned how it is possible for a temple built in the Roman period to have been converted, even partially, into a tomb during a period when paganism was still the predominant belief system. Could a Roman temple have been partially or completely converted into a tomb during the pre-Christian Roman period?

A positive answer to this question seems unlikely. It is unfeasible that an ordinary person would have inscribed on the architrave of a sacred

building the phrase: “the tomb of his wife”. The burial of a person in a temple while the temple is still active is out of the question. For this reason, it is necessary to look at Building 2 at Iotape, the tomb inside the building and the comments about this tomb. The opinions of the researchers working on Building 2 at Iotape vary. In 1998, Söğüt, who analysed this building, gives the following information about the building and the grave:

“There is a grave in the eastern corner of the back room related to a later use (Pl. 25d). The grave was carved as a podium below the level of the stylobate and its inner sides were built with rubble stones and its surface was plastered. It was covered with a slab stone (Pl. 25d). A quadrangular altar stands sideways in the front chamber... We could not get the exact depth of the grave because it was filled

¹¹ Şahin and Özdizbay 2014, 92.

¹² Şahin and Özdizbay 2014, 100.

with spilt materials. As far as can be measured, the grave is 1.80 m long, 0.60 m wide and 0.35 m deep."¹³

In these statements, there is no clue as to the dating of the grave in the east corner of the back room. Although it is said that this burial was made in a "later phase", this is not elaborated. It is not clear whether it is related to Christianity or not. In other words, there is no indication that the building may have been a Roman temple and used as a tomb in the Christian phase. There is also uncertainty as to whether the monumental building containing this tomb was a temple or not. As a matter of fact, Söğüt uses the following statements in footnotes 497 and 498 of the same study:

"This building is labelled as Building 8 by Rosenbaum, Huber and Onurkan, but there is no information that it was a temple... Heberdey-Wilhelm did not say that it was a temple but gave a plan. Hild-Hellenkemper, on the other hand, mentioned a second temple, but did not mention its location."

Although Söğüt identifies it as a temple, no one else refers to Building 2 at Iotape as a temple. In this context, serious uncertainties arose as to whether this building was a temple or a tomb. Townsend and Hoff, who were later interested in this detail, made the important determination that both Building 2 at Iotape and some other buildings thought to be temples in western Rough Cilicia were in fact "temple-tombs".

In short, it is misleading to treat Building 2 at Iotape as an example that supports the idea of burial inside a temple, and it does not seem appropriate to cite it as a comparative example for Asarkale. In other words, the example at Iotape does not have the characteristics to prove that the Asarkale monument is a temple. Under these circumstances, it is necessary to re-evaluate the inscription numbered 1 found on the architrave of Asarkale and to reconsider the interpretations of the identity of the building¹⁴.

G. Evgen, who analysed this example from Asarkale within the scope of his doctoral thesis on Doric buildings in Rough Cilicia, correctly concluded that the monumental building must have been a temple tomb, and not a temple, based on the information provided by the inscription numbered 1¹⁵.

The inscription is dated to the 3rd-4th centuries AD, and though considered to belong to its second use, shows that this building was designed and used as a temple tomb, as G. Evgen has also correctly identified. In other words, this inscription proves that this building was never built as a temple, but as a tomb. Although reuse at different times is a common feature for many buildings, it is unlikely that a Roman temple would have been used for burial in Roman times.

Another clue that may confirm that the structure at Asarkale is a temple tomb, is the fact that Greco-Roman temples built during the Roman period in the Olba region were built in or near large cities¹⁶. In the Roman period a temple's location was expected to meet cultural, demographic and economic parameters. This expectation is directly related to the general condition of the settlement and, more importantly (from the point of view of cultural integration) to conform to official policies of Romanisation. In this context, the methodology of Romanization should be taken into account: Romanization policies were not implemented in the countryside, but firstly and foremost in large, rich and crowded urban centres¹⁷. The location of Asarkale is far from being a priority location for the Romanization process, and

¹³ Söğüt 1998, 68-72.

¹⁴ Townsend and Hoff 2004, 271.

¹⁵ Evgen 2021, 27.

¹⁶ Durukan 2011, 158; Durukan 2019, 99.

¹⁷ Durukan 2011, 168

there is no reason to think that the people living there would have demanded a Roman temple. Therefore, it appears that the location of the Asarkale monument, which is located at a rather remote spot, was more suited to a temple tomb, and not for a Roman temple.

Dating of the Asarkale Temple Tomb

In addition to the debate on the function of the monumental building at Asarkale, its dating is also problematic. Depending on the architectural details of the monument or palaeographic characters of the inscription numbered 1 on the architrave, different researchers date it to the 1st, 2nd or 3rd century AD¹⁸. However, the dating of the building should be re-evaluated by taking into account the socio-economic and political developments of the region; the period when the temple tomb form was introduced to the region; and by utilising similar examples.

The criteria taken into consideration by the researchers who dated the building to the 1st century AD, in the years when the information about the region was more limited, were masonry technique and architectural details¹⁹. It was even suggested that the three niches on the long wall may be associated with Vespasianus, Titus and Domitianus²⁰. However, new findings in recent years, especially about the Romanization process, have shown that these approaches are not the main criteria to be considered in dating this building. In fact, this building is one of the best examples of how dating according to architectural criteria can be misleading, especially in the Olba region. The 1st century BC and 1st century AD in the Olba region were a long period of chaotic processes²¹. Rebellions continued until the middle of the 1st century AD²². The region was ruled by vassal kings until the reign of Vespasianus²³ when Rome began to exert direct control of the region.

The fact that the turmoil ended during the reign of Vespasianus should not be interpreted as a time of waxing Roman influence on architectural culture across the whole of Olba during this period. There is no archaeological data that can confirm this claim, not only in rural areas, but also in urban centres. The reign of Vespasianus, which saw extensive road and bridge development, is too early to make this assertive statement.

In short, although the Roman Empire started to rule the Olba region directly under Vespasianus, the Vespasianus period cannot be defined as the period when Roman culture and architecture became predominant in the Olba countryside. Therefore, it does not seem accurate to date the Asarkale temple tomb to the Vespasian period or to the preceding unsettled times.

Political turmoil directly affects architecture and leads to stagnation. As already mentioned, Roman architecture shows a significant development in the 2nd century AD throughout the region, except in a few major centres. Examples of buildings from the 1st century AD can also be found in Elaiussa Sebaste and Diokaesareia²⁴. This is because these two cities, besides being the capitals of Arkhelaos and of Polemon, are two important centres of the Romanization policies implemented in the region since the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius²⁵. However, at this point, it should be underlined again that the systematic and dense architectural texture bearing the influences of Roman culture in rural settlements

¹⁸ Söğüt 1998, 97; Durugönül 2001, 159; Durukan 2003, 231; Şahin ve Özdizbay 2014, 100; Evgen 2021, 27.

¹⁹ Durugönül 2001, 159; Şahin and Özdizbay 2014, 99.

²⁰ Durukan 2003, 231.

²¹ Mitford 1980, 1241; Durukan 2009a, 81; Durukan 2019, 121.

²² Adak 2006, 123.

²³ Sullivan 1978, 938.

²⁴ Durukan et al. 2013, 350.

²⁵ Durukan 2011, 163.

emerged as of the Hadrianic period, when political and military processes stabilised and cultural integration accelerated. Temple tombs are the most characteristic elements of this texture²⁶.

Under these circumstances, the fact that the building was constructed in the Doric order or that the technique cannot be identified as *isodomica* does not make much sense when dating this temple tomb, which is located in a very remote and rural location and bears strong characteristics of Roman architecture. The date of construction of this building should be considered to be the 2nd century AD at the earliest, not the 1st century AD, with which it has no parallel and is not compatible with the historical, cultural or archaeological development of the region.



Figure 5: Cambazlı temple tomb (photo by author)

The tradition of building temple tombs which emerged in the Olba countryside and the chronology of the development of roof constructions found in these monumental tombs, make it possible to place the Asarkale temple tomb within a narrower date range. Comparable roof construction is seen in the roofs of Cambazlı 1 (fig. 5) and Kanlıdivane T12 tombs²⁷.

There is no evidence that the roof was built over a vault or arch in these funerary monuments. Moreover, although the roof has completely collapsed in all three funerary monuments, the walls up to the roof are still standing and there is no evidence of any damage to these walls due to the collapse of the roof. This suggests that the roofs were lightened and may have originally rested on wooden rafters, since they did not damage the walls during the collapse. These comparanda indicate that the Asarkale example is contemporaneous with the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD) when the Cambazlı 1 and Kanlıdivane T12 monuments were built.

The conclusion that the monumental building is a temple tomb dating to the 2nd century AD, raises the questions of what type of settlement it belonged to and what are its social implications in such a remote location. To explain these, it is necessary to consider all the archaeological finds in the vicinity. When evaluated together, it will be possible to both correctly define the settlement on the hill and to determine the meaning of this ostentatious temple tomb in such a remote location.

²⁶ Durukan 2009b, 343.

²⁷ Durukan 2009b, 349.

Selene Epekoos Sacred Area in Asarkale

Inscriptions numbered 2 and 3 dating to the 1st or 2nd century AD were found in a second building extending as a long, thin corridor 50 metres from the temple tomb:

"The inscriptions found in the stoa at the Kurşun Kalesi settlement prove that the goddess Selene was worshipped not only as a grave guardian but also as an Epekoos=hearing/hearing goddess"...

Inscription 2: *"Lucius Secundus (built) the stoa for Selene Epekoos with his own money."*

Inscription 3: *"Elis (?), son of Iulius Rufus, (built) the stoa for Selene Epekoos up to the fifth column with his own money."²⁸*

In both of the inscriptions, the term stoa is encountered and therefore this building is labelled as such. The researchers who published the inscriptions from the stoa and analysed the building have emphasised this view: *"...this stoa was by no means built together with the temple or afterwards in accordance with the plan of the temple; it does not form an edge of the peristyle of an agora complex and an agora is not possible in this settlement which has a rural character; for these reasons, the temple should not be considered as an agora temple, but should be defined as a temple within the city or even within the settlement."²⁹*

It has already been mentioned that the building labelled as a temple was actually a temple tomb. Therefore, inscriptions 2 and 3 raise new questions. For example: Since Asarkale was not a temple, what does the expression "for Selene Epekoos..." in the stoa mean, or if this stoa was built for a sacred area dedicated to Selene Epekoos, where is this area?

It is not possible to answer this and similar questions without archaeological excavations. There is very little information about the sanctuaries within the local belief system and even about the sanctuaries after cultural interaction. However, based on the inscriptions, the existence of a sacred area belonging to Selene Epekoos can be documented. However, the location and form of this sacred area, its relationship with the building defined as a stoa, or whether the stoa itself was a sacred area remains unclear. In other words, it is not yet clear what kind of a picture should be drawn about the sacred area through these clues. However, one of the important points to be underlined is that this sacred space was dedicated to "Epekoos= the goddess of hearing". Because there are strong clues that the gods mentioned with this epithet are gods associated with the abundance of crops, in other words, gods associated with farm life and production. For example, an inscription found in the Lycaonia region reads as follows: *"...a votive inscription has been copied documenting that Longus, the son of a priest named Dionysus, made a votive offering to the all-hearing gods to express his gratitude for the abundance of crops"³⁰*. In short, making offerings to the all-hearing gods for the abundance of crops shows that these gods were associated with agricultural fertility.

To summarise; the discovery that the monumental structure at Asarkale is a temple tomb dating to the 2nd century AD and the discovery of a sacred place belonging to the god worshipped for the fertility of the crops in the immediate vicinity, helped to shape the discussions about the function of the Asarkale settlement.

Can the Asarkale settlement be defined as a large farm?

As mentioned before, it is important to understand the function of the main buildings and structures on the hill and their relationship with each other in order to define the

²⁸ For these inscriptions and this comment see, Şahin and Özdizbay 2014, 97, 98, 105.

²⁹ Şahin and Özdizbay 2014, 92.

³⁰ Kurt 2018, 599.

settlement correctly. In this context, ruins other than the temple tomb and sacred area encountered at Asarkale should also be taken into consideration for an accurate interpretation of the settlement. Researchers describe the building stock in the Asarkale settlement as follows:

“The ancient settlement has the characteristics of a small agricultural hilltop settlement and measures approximately 300x200 m in diameter. The settlement has a north-south alignment and rises by the topography as it moves towards the north. Starting from the southern skirts of the hill, the remains of approximately 20 rectangular dwellings scattered throughout the settlement can be seen. Immediately to the east and west of these remains are threshing floors with diameters ranging between 8-10 m. As we move towards the north, there are olive oil and wine workshops with single and double pressing pools carved into the bedrock and press-weight stones belonging to these workshops. Approximately 10 pear-shaped cisterns are scattered throughout the settlement by the topography. The temple, which will be discussed below, is located at the highest point in the north of the settlement. There are remains of a stoa about 50 m. northeast of the temple. About 200 m. south of the settlement centre, various khamasoria and their lids were found.”³¹

Although Asarkale is defined as “a small agricultural hilltop settlement” within the framework of these detailed determinations, there are some points that should be questioned in this definition. For example, why the adjective “small” was preferred when defining this settlement. Is this an accurate description of Asarkale? Because even though its dimensions will not change, the correct identification may lead to a different description of the nature of the settlement.

By the term “small”, the authors seem to imply a simple village or a modest rural settlement inhabited by an uncrowded community, and not very prosperous economically. But is the description of Asarkale as a “small agricultural hilltop settlement” accurate?

The first question that comes to mind at this point is how the presence of a magnificent temple tomb should be interpreted. This is because such structures were built as status symbols or elements of prestige. Therefore, the definition of Asarkale as a “small agricultural hilltop settlement” raises questions. The most important clue that can help clarify the issue is the temple tomb itself. When this building is analysed in terms of the values it represents, it will also shed light on the profile of the person who had such a magnificent temple tomb built in such a remote location.

Such ostentatious buildings were the most effective way for the nobility and the wealthy to show their power and superiority. They displayed an aura that cowed ordinary people, made them feel helpless, and even caused them to shy away. In this context, it appears that wealthy person or family lived in Asarkale and was buried in such a monument after their death.

The fact that a wealthy person or family lived here can be explained by their occupation, and this is a very important point. The ostentation of the temple tomb indicates that this person living in the countryside had earned a lot of money and reputation through his occupation. At this point, the following question is important to determine the character of the settlement: How is it possible to live in the countryside and become wealthy at the same time?

The point where Asarkale is located is quite far from the sea. For this reason, there seems to be no other option other than agriculture and animal husbandry. The Olba region is not very suitable for agriculture because it is mountainous, but arable land was brought into being through terracing the surrounding slopes and clearing the flatland of stones.

³¹ Şahin and Özdizbay 2014, 85.

Many agricultural terraces or cultivated land on the slopes identified during the investigations around Asarkale revealed that a large area around Asarkale was improved and large-scale agricultural activities were carried out in ancient times. In addition to these, the areas formed as a result of the filling of depressions (dolines) with fertile soil, which are frequently encountered in geologies with limestone structures, make a rich agricultural substrate. Such formations are also encountered around Asarkale and have been taken for agricultural use. In short, it has been determined that every point that had the potential to be cultivated and planted around Asarkale was utilised, and that all areas that could be exploited for agriculture (natural or artificial) were used, despite being a very mountainous region.

What was grown on these lands is closely related to the altitude of the settlement. This area is located at an altitude of approximately 950 m and both the altitude and the topographical conditions are very favourable for vine production, one of the most characteristic and profitable crops across the Mediterranean basin. Therefore, the source of the profits at Asarkale becomes understandable, and it becomes clear that this settlement can be defined as a “large farm” rather than a small settlement.



Figure 6: Asarkale farm and surrounding settlements (from Google Earth)

In the Olba region, farms dating back to the Hellenistic period, but increasing in number during the Roman period, are already known. What distinguishes the farm at Asarkale is the size of the land cultivated or controlled. Although the limits of this size cannot be clearly determined, it is possible to make a rough estimate by looking at the locations of other important settlements around Asarkale. The Asarkale farm is 3 km from each of the settlements of Olba, Yeğenli, and Cambazlı, 5 km from Keşlitürkmenli, and 7 km from Hüseyinler (fig. 6).

These measurements represent distances as the crow flies. Asarkale is located in the middle of these settlements, and to make an analogy, it can be thought that the settlements

mentioned above form a circle with a diameter of approximately 9-10 km. Asarkale is located near the centre of this circle. It would not be correct to consider the entire 75 sq. km. hilly area enclosed by this circle as the land of this farm. However, even this rough calculation suggests that the land controlled by Asarkale may have had at least a few kilometres of borderline, an unusual size for the Olba region, especially when terracing activities are taken into account.

To summarise; the ostentatious temple tomb at the most dominant point of Asarkale seems to indicate a significant wealth based on large-scale agricultural activities. Also, the construction of ostentatious tombs by the wealthy on their lands in order to display their prestige is not exclusive to the Olba region. A recent study has shown that the temple tomb at Mezgitkale is also an impressive example of this kind of construction³².

However, monumental tombs and large terraced agricultural fields are not the only distinguishing features of large farms. As will be recalled, workshops, storerooms, cisterns, tombs of various forms and sacred sites (as indicated by epigraphic documents) are other forms of buildings expected to be present on large farms³³. The building stock at the settlement of Asarkale fits this picture exactly.

The only thing that can be considered missing, is the villa rustica, which is to be expected on a large farm, especially under the influence of Roman culture. The available data are quite satisfactory to interpret Asarkale as a large farm established in the Roman period. However, the identification of a villa rustica in this vicinity will reinforce this situation. So, does such a building exist and if so, where should it be searched for?

A Villa Rustica in Asarkale

On the eastern summit of the valley bifurcating at the point where Asarkale is located, there is a temple tomb; while on the western summit, there is a magnificent building with a wonderful view, built against the slope, two-storeyed and multi-roomed and described as a domestic residence due to its large windows (fig. 7). The ruins of this building, popularly known as Kurşun Kale, are very well preserved. Due to its peculiar position on the steep slope and its solitude, no clear determination of the function of this building has been put forward. The views of the researchers about this site are as follows:

“About 300 m north of the settlement, on the slope of the hill opposite the Karyağdı Valley, a two-storey Roman house was found. The building has isodomic masonry. The entrance door is on the east and the windows face south. The ridge of the building was obtained by levelling the bedrock. The arches found in the interior spaces of the building indicate that this building has two storeys. The rooms on both

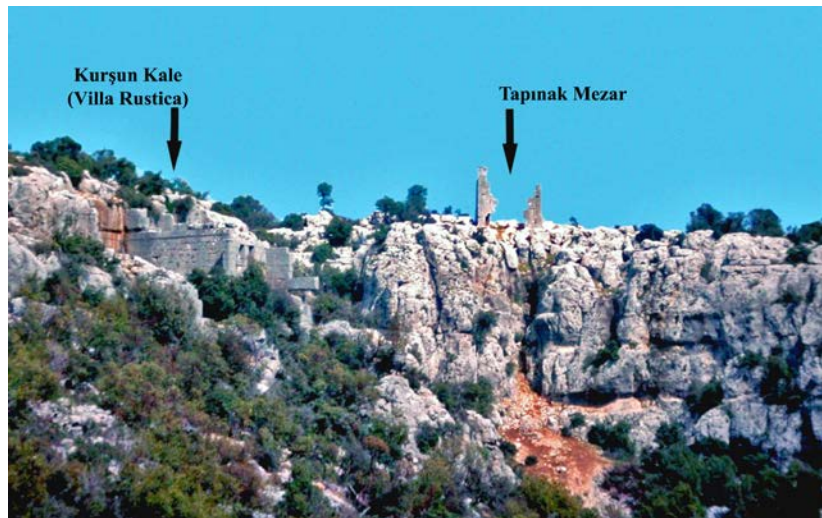


Figure 7: Asarkale, locations of villa rustica and temple tomb (photo by

³² Subaşı 2023, 70; Subaşı 2024, 212-214.

³³ Erten 2012, 69.

floors are connected by doorways. There are cisterns and workshops in the flat area just above the building, which we think belonged to a local ruler.”³⁴

The identification of the building as a Roman house is accurate. However, the assessment that it may have been the residence of a local ruler awaits a more detailed explanation, due to its distance from major settlements. In particular, the fact that Asarkale, on the opposite hill, three hundred metres away as the crow flies, is a large farm suggests that this Roman house must have been part of the same complex and must have belonged to a wealthy landowner.

When all the features of the settlement are considered together, it becomes clear that each building is a part of the “big farm”, and the unidentified buildings become meaningful. This approach makes it possible to identify this Roman house as a “villa rustica”. Standing alone on the dominant point of the valley, this large civilian building is an unusual example due to its location, and it is understood that the agricultural activity spread over a very large area was managed by the owner of the farm, who seems to have lived in this building. Otherwise, it is not possible to attribute a function or make sense of this ostentatious building, and which seems vulnerable, due to its large windows. The interpretation of this building as a villa rustica will set a good example for the identification of similar buildings in the Olba region and by extension whether the complexes associated with these building forms are also large farms.

The addition of the villa rustica to the extensive and refined agricultural lands, agricultural terraces, temple tombs, sacred spaces, and numerous spaces and equipment indicative of agricultural production fulfils all the criteria necessary to define Asarkale as a large farm. Under these circumstances, Asarkale should be considered as an important example that can help to understand other large farms in the region, both in terms of its interesting location, building stock and the relationship of the its buildings with the topography.

Conclusion

The small rural settlements in the Olba region, which has a mountainous and rugged topography, are not fully identifiable and distinguishable due to the lack of archaeological studies and written documents. Comparing the local cultural elements in this region, which are entirely dependent on geography, with other known regions of the ancient world is often inconclusive. Rural settlement types are also included in this scope and it is still difficult to recognise whether a small settlement is a hamlet, a village or a farm. This ambiguity also extends to large farms, and these facilities for agricultural production are often confused with small-scale village-like settlements. This confusion not only clouds interpretation of the social structure of the Olba region, which is already lacking, but also causes problems and confusion in the opposite direction.

The investigations carried out at Asarkale, located in the centre of the Olba region, have shown that this settlement has been misinterpreted until today and that it should be defined as a “large farm”. In addition, the findings at Asarkale have revealed how the criteria to be taken into account when looking for examples of large farms in the Olba region can vary. The building, which had previously been identified as a temple belonging to the 1st century AD, should instead be interpreted as a funerary monument dating to the 2nd century AD. The Roman house previously considered as a residence belonging to a local ruler was actually the villa rustica of a large farm; the realisation that the terraced or stone-

³⁴ Şahin 2007, 129. fig. 66.

free agricultural lands spread over a large area were managed from this centre; and the realisation of how the building termed the villa rustica can vary in terms of location and plan will contribute to the identification of other large farms in the Olba region and will make it easier to distinguish them from other rural settlements.

In short, it is understood that all the elements that should be found in a typical Roman farm are present in Asarkale, while the elements defined as sanctuary and stoa should be interpreted within the framework of local customs. The impressive locations of the villa and the temple tomb can easily be felt to have provided the landowner with a sense of prestige and superiority. These findings suggest that the topographical structure of Olba and the local cultural texture developed accordingly were always at the forefront during the establishment of these settlements. In Asarkale, the owner of the farm, although influenced by the dominant character of Roman culture in the 2nd century AD, seems to have produced local solutions suited to the rugged terrain and we may take this as valid for the Olba region in general. Therefore, these determinations made in Asarkale will bring new perspectives to both the study of the local social texture and to the lifestyle of the people of the region, to settlement planning studies, and to the understanding of the processes of cultural interaction.

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