

REPORT OF THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF THE TOMB OF  
ANTIOCHUS I KING OF COMMAGENE CONDUCTED BY THE  
AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF ORIENTAL RESEARCH IN 1953.

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The Preliminary Survey of the Tomb of Antiochus I of Commagene on the summit of Nimrud Dagh in the Vilayet of Malatya was conducted in 1953 under the sponsorship of the American Schools of Oriental Research. Its representative in Turkey was Miss Theresa Goell to whom the permit to direct the work was issued by the Department of Antiquities, Ankara under date June 8, 1953, letter No. 672.

46.2'306. The actual work at the tomb, after preparatory work of about 5 weeks in Ankara, Malatya, and Eski Kahta took place between August 24th and October 1st, 1953.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY:

1. To make a general topographical and architectural plan of the site and tomb complex;
2. To examine the extant remains and to solve problems concerning several of the architectural features by means of surface examination, and to record them;
3. To locate surviving inscriptions: 4. To estimate the personnel, equipment and funds necessary for future prolonged excavations of the site.

STAFF:

The staff at the site included the director who was in charge of the general work, directing the clearance and architecture in particular; Dr. Friedrich Karl Dörner, Assistant Professor of Ancient History at Münster University, Germany,

collaborating as historian and epigrapher; Mr. İsmet Ebcioğlu, assistant of the Kon. ya Museum, who acted as commissar for the Department of Antiquities; and intermittently Mr. Korkut Özal, surveying engineer, of Malatya and his assistants.

RESUME OF RESULTS ACHIEVED:

A general survey plan of the site was made, showing a delineation of the chief architectural features of the Monument, including the East Court, the West Court and the North Terrace. Their features and constituent details were recorded.

EAST COURT:

As a result of the surface clearance of debris fallen from the tumulus and collapsing members of the architecture and sculpture it became apparent that the principal Court for the performance of the ritual of Antiochus in celebration of his birthday and ascension to the throne, was the East Court. This determination was the result of the surprising discovery that the so-called Monumental Stairway leading to the colossal statues and to the great inscriptions of Antiochus was *not a Stairway*. It actually was a tribune on which the ritual, no doubt, was conducted immediately below the statues, while the lower steps constituted a long platform (running north to south) which carried a long wall of orthostats sculptured with reliefs. One relief found in the debris on the level of the court was a representation of the Lion Horoscope of Antiochus, well-known to us from its replica on the

West Court. A fragment of the inscription was found on the platform which still contained dowels of several of the orthostats in their sockets. At the base of the platform of reliefs several courses of the retaining wall of this Monument were still *in situ*. This revision of the nature of the so-called stairway changes completely our previous opinion of the tomb complex and adds fresh light to the ritual practices of Antiochus.

In consequence of the above we were also able to determine that the so-called Block Altar, which had been considered by previous investigators as standing on the stairway, actually is not a part of it at all but is free-standing to the east of the retaining wall. Lying to the south of the altar is a group of stone blocks surmounted by large, flat stones. They appear to be offering-tables standing in front of the row of reliefs-which were flanked at their north and south ends by groups of lions and eagles.

Another feature on the East Court that was illuminated was the so-called Stepped Altar on the eastern edge of the Court. We determined its outlines. They formed a square ca. 13.00 metres by 13.00 metres. Its lower steps and southern retaining wall formed an encircling passage. The eagle and lion that originally surmounted its apex are now lying at its western base where they appear to have been thrown by previous excavators who destroyed the western and eastern steps by forcing a trench through the east to west axis of the Monument. We came to the conclusion that the walled passage running east to west at its western base formed originally a ramp or stairway leading up the stepped western face of the Altar.

The Court was flanked on the north and south sides by low walls composed of contiguous sandstone orthostats inserted in sockets. These sockets are sunken into limestone plinths. The plinths, running east to west, remain in a fairly good

state of preservation *in situ*, but the orthostats are scattered to the north and south and have disintegrated into grey dust. The reliefs, which originally adorned them, depicted the ancestors of Antiochus and faced the Court. The subject matter of only a few reliefs could be distinguished. The inscriptions, chiselled on the backs of the orthostats, have perished almost in their entirety. We collected scattered fragments of the inscriptions and Dr. Dörner attempted to assemble them in a logical sequence for deciphering, and to compare them with previous publications. The orthostats with reliefs could be hardened chemically and turned over in order to decipher what still remains of the inscriptions, and unless steps are taken to preserve them they will soon vanish completely.

#### EPIGRAPHY:

At a later date a separate report of the epigraphical material of the tomb will be prepared by Dr. Dörner. But we may state briefly at this time that the great inscription of Antiochus engraved on the western side of the bases of the colossal statues depicting Antiochus and his Gods was cleared of surface debris in order to enable Dr. Dörner to study and compare it in its present condition with previously published material. In general, the lower parts of the columns are in a fairly good state of preservation, but the upper parts have suffered heavily from exposure. Several missing fragments of the inscription were found in the debris, thus filling the lacunae and, adding fresh material to that already known, with a possibility of reinterpretation of some portions. In anticipation of our remarks about the Western Court we would like to state here that the inscriptions on the bases of the colossal statues on that Court are so heavily covered with debris from the slipping tumulus that no attempt was made to clear them this season. Such an attempt would have demanded a sepa-

rate project, necessitating the use of heavy equipment not at our disposal.

#### WEST COURT:

The West Court is situated at a level of about ten metres lower than the East Court. The limited space and hazardous condition of the West Court render examination and study even more difficult than the East Court. This Court possesses practically identical architectural features as the East Court but adjusted to meet the physical requirements of the limited space. Thus the orthostats of Antiochus shaking hands with his Gods, instead of being situated on a monumental platform, are relegated to a narrow annex of the north side of the Court. Apparently the Court suffered more heavily from earthquake; than the East Court, so that not one statue has preserved the upper part. We were able to determine that accesses led from the west up to the West Court. The mountain itself was chiselled away from north to south to give access by means of a platform passage running from north and south to the West Court from its southern limits. The continuation of the living rock into the core of the tumulus is still visible on the southern side of the Court, where the surface rubble piled up over it has slipped away. The presence of a living rock core of the tumulus on the western side suggests that the tomb of Antiochus is probably a rock-cut chamber hewn out of the living rock and conforms with the indigenous type of sepulchral monument of Commagene, namely a rock-cut chamber known to us through the discoveries of Dr. Dörner at the tomb of Mithradates at Arsameia-on-the-Nymphaios (now Eski Kahta).

Orthostat reliefs and inscriptions remain scattered among the debris. The block incense altars in front of the plinths which hold the orthostats on the west and south sides are in a better state of preservation than those on the East Court.

The row of great orthostats with Antiochus shaking hands with his Gods have suffered heavily since 1883 when they were first recorded and are in a state of rapid disintegration. The lion horoscope in particular has lost parts of its face, stars, and inscription, as it seems to be a special target for visitors hurling stones at it. Detailed photographic records were made of all parts of the West Court, although we did not carry out any extended clearance examination on this Court. Dr. Dörner examined the epigraphical remains which will be dealt with in his separate report. The inscriptions on the bases of the colossal statues were so heavily covered with debris that it would have been beyond the scope of this year's project to attempt to clear them.

#### NORTH TERRACE :

The North Terrace had heretofore been considered unfinished due to the fact that its overturned long east to west wall was unsculptured and uninscribed, but support our conclusion that the orthostats stood erect at one time in the sockets of the foundation plinths. Apparently, the wall had been overthrown by a severe earthquake. It had served as a separating barrier between the East Court and its approaches and the North Terrace that had, been occupied by buildings, fragments of walls of which still remained *in situ*. Since our objectives were limited, we were unable to conduct excavations with a view to determining the function or nature of these buildings on the steep, northern upper slope of the mountain top. It is hoped that subsequent excavations will demonstrate that the dwellings of the priests and personnel serving the sanctuary, and storage space for food served to participants in the ritual were situated here. The discovery of these walls and, rooms promises a solution of the vexing problems concerning the North Terrace. Doorways in the west end and the centre of the long east to west Wall

led to the passage separating the buildings from the accesses and surrounding area of the East Court. Fragments of statues lie in the passage. We were unable to determine where their original position might have been.

#### RETAINING WALLS AND ACCESSES:

In order to give a firm foothold to the precarious site of the tumulus and its terraces, a system of retaining walls was constructed of large stones. Notable are those supporting the west edge of the West Court, the northern end of the colossal tribune of the East Court and its approach, and the approach from the north-east to the East Court proper. These retaining walls and the large fragments of loose rubble found at the base of the tumulus require more extensive clearance to expose their extent.

A long east-to-west approach chiselled from the living rock beginning at the lower slopes gives access to the north-eastern side of the East Court. Its southern side is reached by a stairway with several turnings leading from the valley below.

There is a steep stairway now in a

had state of destruction on the south-west side of the West Court.

#### CONCLUSION:

The objectives of the Preliminary Survey of 1953 as originally proposed by the American Schools of Oriental Research demonstrate that further concentrated work on the monument would be productive of fruitful results. This season's scope was to make only a surface examination. We therefore were unable to locate the position of the tomb itself. It is hoped that this work will continue in the spring of 1954 as a full-fledged excavation, leading to a solution of remaining problems.

The writer wishes to take this occasion to formally thank the Director of Antiquities and Museums of the Turkish Republic Dr. Cahid Kınay for his warm support of the Preliminary Survey. Thanks also are extended to his assistants and staff, and to the officials of the Government throughout Turkey for their help in arranging formalities. We are also grateful to the local citizens of the Vilayet of Malatya and to our workers for their constant friendship, assistance and co-operation in our work.

