

COINS OF A MONUMENTAL STRUCTURE IDENTIFIED AS A TEMPLE-PLAN TOMB AT OLBA

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Keywords: Cilicia, Olba, monumental structure, monumental tomb, coin

Abstract: The first archaeological excavations at the monumental structure in Olba, identified as a temple-plan tomb, were carried out in 2025 and completed within the same year. During these investigations, a total of 45 coins were recovered from different areas and stratigraphic layers. When evaluated together with their findspots and stratigraphic contexts, the early group of coins, dated to the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Licinius II, can be understood to belong to the initial phase of use of the structure. In contrast, the later finds, the majority of which date from the mid-4th century AD to the first quarter of the 5th century AD, indicate that the structure was used for a different function during the Late Roman period following architectural modifications. While the architectural elements bearing cross motifs identified within the structure support this transformation, a coin of Justin II recovered from the surface level points to the period after the abandonment of the structure. These data indicate that the structure was constructed in the mid-2nd century AD, lost its original function in the mid-4th century AD, and continued to be used for different purposes at least until the first quarter of the 5th century AD. In conclusion, the coins recovered from the excavation of the temple-plan tomb clarify the chronological framework of the structure's phases of use and provide a holistic evaluation consistent with the archaeological and architectural evidence.

Cuvinte-cheie: Cilicia, Olba, edificiul monumental, mormânt monumental, monedă

Rezumat: Primele cercetări arheologice efectuate asupra edificiului monumental de la Olba, identificat drept un mormânt de tip templu (temple-plan tomb), au fost realizate în anul 2025 și finalizate în cursul aceluiași an. În cadrul acestor investigații au fost descoperite 45 de monede provenind din diferite sectoare și contexte stratigrafice. Analizate împreună cu locurile de descoperire și cu poziția lor stratigrafică, emisiunile monetare timpurii, datate în timpul lui Antoninus Pius și Licinius II, pot fi atribuite fazei inițiale de utilizare a edificiului.

În schimb, descoperirile monetare târzii, majoritatea datând din intervalul cuprins între mijlocul secolului al IV-lea p.Chr. și primul sfert al secolului al V-lea p.Chr., indică faptul că edificiul a fost reutilizat cu o funcționalitate diferită în perioada romană târzie, ulterior unor modificări arhitectonice. Elementele arhitectonice decorate cu motive cruciforme, identificate în interiorul structurii, susțin această transformare funcțională, iar o monedă emisă în timpul lui Justin II, recuperată din nivelul de suprafață, indică o etapă ulterioară abandonării edificiului.

Aceste date demonstrează că structura a fost edificată la mijlocul secolului al II-lea p.Chr., și-a pierdut funcția originală către mijlocul secolului al IV-lea p.Chr. și a continuat să fie utilizată în scopuri diferite cel puțin până în primul sfert al secolului al V-lea p.Chr. În concluzie, materialul numismatic provenit din săpătura mormântului de tip templu contribuie la clarificarea cadrului cronologic al etapelor de utilizare ale edificiului și permite o evaluare integrată, concordantă cu datele arheologice și arhitecturale.

INTRODUCTION

The monumental structure in Olba, identified as a temple-plan tomb, is one of the most iconic structures of the city. It is located on the plain west of the acropolis, approximately 150 m southwest of the theatre (Fig. 1). The monumental structure, located on the plain to the west of the acropolis, was constructed along a northwest–southeast axis. The front façade of the structure faces southeast, towards the ancient road¹ leading south from Olba.

Researchers visiting Olba have made assessments and carried out documentation studies on the monumental

structure that constitutes the subject of this study, as well as on many of the city's buildings. However, these studies were limited to the parts of the building visible on the surface. Therefore, the excavations carried out at the structure in 2025 constitute a first both for the city and the region and have enabled the acquisition of significant data regarding the structure. In addition, a cistern was uncovered approximately 2 m to the east of the structure, and the interior of this vaulted cistern is completely filled with soil and stone debris².

The first documentation study of the monumental structure in Olba, identified as a temple-plan tomb, was

¹ The traces of the ancient road between Olba and Keşlitürkmenli Neighborhood can still be observed in places today.

² The cistern, which could only be partially excavated due to structural stability concerns, may provide significant data in future excavations once protective measures are implemented.