



Tombs of the Kings

CYPRUS TOURISM ORGANISATION

INTRODUCTION

Coming out from the ticketing office (the custodian's office) and before starting your tour, stop for a while on the right hand side, in front of the stone sign of the necropolis' aerial photo. You will hear a historical background which will help you to better comprehend the archaeological site "The Tombs of the Kings".

The archaeological site of the Tombs of the Kings constitutes a part of the cemeteries of ancient Pafos and is situated on the edge of the said northern Necropolis. This site, as well as the archaeological park of Kato Pafos, is listed as World Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. The Tombs of the Kings are burial monuments entirely hewn out of the rock and they are included in the most important works of ancient times that have been saved, for they are among the few monuments of Hellenistic architecture that can be seen in Pafos.

You must certainly be wondering why a necropolis is important and why is it worth visiting one. A necropolis gives us important information on the life of inhabitants of the city, mainly regarding their social status, and sometimes regarding their professions. Furthermore, we acquire information that concerns daily life in the city, the relations with the outside world, the contacts with other cultures and eventually how they were influenced by them. The burial habits of inhabitants are also an important subject of study, as the way of burial and the offerings accompanying the dead reveal their religious convictions, their origin and other precious historical elements.

Despite the name of the site, the Tombs of the Kings, there isn't any archaeological evidence, except perhaps in one case that we will see later on, which proves that Cypriot kings have been buried in these monuments. The chronology of the Tombs to the Hellenistic and Roman period excludes this possibility, as the Cypriot kingdoms were abolished with the conquest of Cyprus by

the Ptolemies. Their name is therefore due to their monumental aspect and to the magnificence of their architecture.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The historical facts since the Period of Cypriot kingdoms up to the Hellenistic and Roman Times are being explained further down.

Cyprus begins to be organised in city-kingdoms since the end of the Late Bronze Age, perhaps since the 11th century B.C.. One of them was also the kingdom of Pafos, in the locality where the village of Kouklia is situated today, 17 kilometres east of the current town of Pafos. According to the ancient tradition, the founder of the city was Agapinor, king of Tegea in Arcadia of Peloponnes e, who arrived in Cyprus after the end of the Trojan War.

One of the most important sanctuaries dedicated to the great Goddess of Cyprus that was later identified as Aphrodite is also to be found in Pafos. Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty of Greek Mythology, according to mythological tradition emerged from the foaming sea near the coasts of Pafos.

The kingdom of Pafos bloomed for many centuries following the fate of other kingdoms of the island. Towards the mid 6th century, the entire island comes under the Persian Empire. The following period, particularly since the mid 5th century up to the beginning of the 4th century B.C., Cyprus is confronted with the Persian sovereignty and Cypriot kingdoms fight for their independence. The first successful effort is achieved in 450 B.C. with the help of the Athenian fleet under the Athenian general Kimon, but does not last for a long time and finally Cyprus comes back in the sphere of influence of the Persian Empire. In 411 B.C. an important political man and leader, Evagoras I, king of Salamis, showed up in the political scene of Cyprus.

Evagoras with the help of the Athenians, tried to unite the Cypriot kingdoms against the Persian Empire. He managed to put under his influence most of the kingdoms of Cyprus; Kition, Amathus and Soloi however did not accept his hegemony and asked the Persians to help them. After a great defeat in 380 B.C. Evagoras signed a treaty of peace with the king of Persia. Persian sovereignty finishes with the expedition of Alexander the Great in the East. After the seizure of Tyros by Alexander the Great, which was also supported by the kings of Cyprus by sending 100 boats, the Macedonian conqueror granted autonomy to the Cypriot kingdoms. Alexander the Great dies in 323 B.C. and after a severe disagreement between his two generals, Ptolemy and Antigonus, Cyprus falls to the hands of Ptolemy, who establishes the royal dynasty of the Ptolemies. Shortly before the catalysis of the kingdom of Pafos by Ptolemy, its last king Nicocles, decided at the end of the 4th century B.C. to found a new city, Nea Pafos, in the area of current Kato Pafos. The new city was the economic centre of the kingdom, while the old capital of the kingdom, that was named Palaipafos, remained the religious centre and the seat of the king.

The Hellenistic period begins after the death of Alexander the Great and since the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. Cyprus is part of the kingdom of Ptolemies that had their seat in Alexandria of Egypt. Pafos became capital of Cyprus since the 2nd century B.C... This was mainly due to its strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean, to the proximity of the city with Alexandria and to the large port. A large scale of trade and export to Egypt of raw materials which were produced in Cyprus, mainly copper and timber, was carried out from the port of Pafos, where the martial fleet of Ptolemies was moored.

Pafos remained the capital of Cyprus until the end of the Roman period. Romans finally conquered the island in 30 B.C. and Cyprus remained under Roman governance until 330 A.D., when the empire is divided in two parts, the western and the Eastern Roman Empire. Cyprus becomes part of the Eastern Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire that we know today.

Explanation of the Necropolis

The necropolis is contemporary to the foundation of Nea Pafos and as we have said, the Cypriot kingdoms were abolished in the end the 4th century B.C.; therefore it is not possible to have burials of Cypriote kings. Due to the monumental architecture of the tombs, the conclusion is deducted that this part of the necropolis of Pafos must have been used for burials of rich people and perhaps for burials of the Ptolemaic state's dignitaries that served in Pafos.

This visit includes only a part of the necropolis, the northern part, which entered the UNESCO's list and is the most impressive. The total extent of the cemeteries is very large as it covers the entire region that is extended in circumference outside the walls of Pafos and includes many types of tombs beyond the ones hewn out of the rock. The most ancient tombs are contemporary to the foundation of Nea Pafos, that is to say the end of the 4th century B.C.. The most imposing ones were made a little later, towards the 3rd century B.C., when the richer families developed. Then the region filled up with tombs, the remainder of the burials were spread everywhere and the site continued to be used as a cemetery, but for the poorer that were reusing the site.

Unfortunately this necropolis has always been known and it was not only looted but had been used for many years by quarry workers, troglodytes and other. This resulted in causing severe destructions in the monuments, which in certain cases were unfortunately totally destroyed.

Further down, you will hear the description of all eight Tombs separately.

Tomb No 1

Proceed now to the left where you will see a tomb that is not particularly imposing, it is however hewn out of the rock, half above the ground and half underground. Pass through the

rectangular entrance in order to be led into the interior of the chamber. Here you see two small niches for children burials and five niches for adults.

If you look around the burial niches you will see some remains of colourful plaster, with which was covered the entire internal surface of the tomb. This plaster was added in order to protect the stone and also to decorate the interior of the tomb, so that it appears richer. The laying of the tomb walls with this plaster created the illusion that they were covered with an expensive material like marble, which was often imported to the island.

Come out from the tomb and proceed further down, towards the side of the sea, following the wide earthen road. Few steps further down, you will see on the left the tumulus, that is to say the rocky hill, and afterwards, the sign of direction that will lead you to the number 2 tomb.

Tumulus and Tomb No2

Tomb No 2

You will be found in the tomb if you proceed circularly to the left from the small pathway, that is to say going back towards the first tomb. You will now see in front of you the tomb with the number 2. After reaching there, you will see on the left side the well and next to it a stepped dromos. Dromos is the term for the stone staircase that leads into the interior of the tomb. This is a tomb with atrium and a peristyle of Dorian style; however you will comprehend better the Dorian architectural style when you visit tombs 3 and 4, where the atrium with the Dorian columns is distinguished very well. Exactly opposite you, that is to say in the northern side, you see two altars that resemble to the facade of a temple. The altars were hewn out above the burial niche. On your right hand side lays the burial chamber with two types of burials, the niches and the shaft tombs. Above the entrance of the burial chamber there is a square cavity, in which there was a plate where the name of the family was written. The tomb was altered

during the Roman period. At a certain stage, they probably decided to cover the atrium, as it appears from the traces of openings hewn out on the three sides of the atrium.

We know from various archaeological evidences that many of the burial customs that were existed in ancient Greece continued to be kept in this cemetery of the Hellenistic period. Some of them are also known through the descriptions of Homer. Before the burial, the relatives of the dead covered his body with oil, then with a linen cloth and then the dead was publicly exposed (prothesis). Lamentation started and relatives visited the dead for the last time. A silent procession through the streets of the city took place before arriving at the cemetery for the burial. The burial was followed by perideipno, that is to say the dinner to honour the dead, during which the relatives ate at the tomb. The offerings such as the amphorae that were found are indicative of the ceremony of burial customs. The amphorae were probably used for the libations of wine and olive oil, as offerings to the dead. The well had a ritual and symbolic character, as well as the gold jewels. The gold jewels, which they put together with the burials, accompanied the dead in life after death. Generally speaking, the offerings testify necrophobia as they believed that the dead would return and would claim them. You can see some of these finds in the Archaeological Museum of Pafos.

Go up the stepped dromos so as to come on the flat surface of the tumulus.

TUMULUS

Tumuli are indicative signs of the existence of tombs underneath them; this resulting to the fact that the tomb raiders could locate the tombs. Thus Cesnola too, who looted the necropolis just like many other archaeological sites towards the end of the 19th century, knew where to dig in order to find the tombs. Luigi Palma Di Cesnola was of Italian origin and arrived in Cyprus as the Consul of the United States of America, after serving in the civilian war of America. After the end of the war he entered the Diplomatic Corps. Cesnola was charmed by the antiquities and began excavation works, aiming at the discovery of treasures that he would sell, and certainly not at the promotion of antiquities of Cyprus. Being an opportunist, he caused great damage because he did not follow the appropriate procedures in excavation and the later transportation

of finds, resulting to the destruction of many objects. He did not keep a diary of excavations, neither had he marked the site of origin of each object and thus we do not know the precise origin of most items he discovered. The tactic that he followed was to dig for treasures without caring for or respecting the ancient culture and afterwards he was covering the site. Cesnola was contemporary to Heinrich Schliemann (who discovered Troy and Mycenae). Having therefore in mind the treasures that Heinrich Schliemann found and wanting to surpass him, he caused an even greater damage by putting finds from various archaeological sites together and trying to sell them as a whole. After a lot of roaming, the Cypriot antiquities were finally bought by the American state and they were the reason for founding the Metropolitan Museum of New York. Cesnola took from Cyprus with him 35.573 objects, most of which are exposed today in the Metropolitan Museum of New York.

This tumulus is the largest of the ancient necropolis. The tumuli are widely known and are common burial monuments in Macedonia, the homeland of Alexander the Great. The surface of the tomb, where you are now as you have gone up the stepped dromos, is divided into funerary enclosures, that is to say spaces for family burial. You can see the stepped dromoi leading inside the burial chambers. All burials of the tumulus date back to the Hellenistic period that is to say from 325- 58 B.C.. In this tumulus, plenty of tombs were excavated.

Return on the wide earthen road.

Now, go straight on, westwards, towards the sea in order to reach tombs 3 and 4.

TOMB 3

Search to find the entrance of this tomb; you will realise that it is not distinct. The reason is the precaution of their tombs and offerings from the tomb raiders. Stop however above them to admire the burial architecture. This tomb is of Dorian style, that is to say the most ancient codified style of Greek architecture. The most important monument of Dorian style is the temple of goddess Athena (also known as Parthenon) in the Acropolis of Athens.

You are seeing the atrium that is surrounded by a portico of Dorian style. Columns in the Dorian style are baseless and capitals of the columns are frugal. The restored Dorian entablature with the triglyphs and metopes can be seen very clearly above the columns. The metope is the flat surface between the triglyphs. Most probably the architectural models of the tombs emanate from the burial architecture of the necropolis of Alexandria. There are many similarities with the burial monuments of the Mustafa Pasha necropolis in Alexandria. Most elements of this burial architecture originate from the architecture of residences of the Hellenistic period, as we know them from Delos, Pergamon, Priene and other cities of the ancient Greek world.

Go straight on in order to enter through the stepped dromos into the interior of the tomb. As soon as you go down you will see to your left a well. The well has a ritual and symbolic purpose. In ancient Greek mythology the soul-transmitting god Hermes delivered the souls of dead people to Charon so as to be led in the kingdom of Hades, the god of underworld. The dead passed from the world of living to the underworld, the world of dead, through the River Acheron (which is situated in Epirus). Here as well, due to the well that contains the water, the passage from the upper world to the underworld is symbolised. Each soul passing through the ferry of Charon had to give one obol for the transport. Certain coins are also included among the finds in the tombs; they would obviously have this use, that is to say the payment for the transport of dead in the underworld. The reason of the occurring of the well is also a ritual one, because after each burial the attendants had to be washed before leaving the tomb (a custom which we maintain as well up to present in Cyprus, for burials in the Christian orthodox cemeteries). The water also functions as a means of purification.

The burial chamber is situated on the western side of the tomb that is to say to the right of the well as soon as you go down through the stepped dromos. Many burial niches located on its sides have been excavated; right opposite the burial chamber lays a big vaulted chamber that might have been used for ritual purposes. The second burial niche is to be found on the north-eastern side and it communicates with another tomb through a hole that was opened by tomb raiders. The tomb consists of a stepped dromos, shaft tombs and one more well.

If you look around the arch-shaped roof of the burial chamber you will see certain remains of plaster, with which the entire internal surface of the tomb was covered. This plaster was added in order to protect the stone. It was also added for the decoration of the interior of the tomb so that it appears richer, as through decoration they made the tombs look as if they were covered with marble or other expensive material. This tomb has been restored, just like the columns that you see as well as the Eastern portico, where you can better distinguish the Dorian entablature.

TOMB No 4

Coming out from tomb No 3, we see right next to it a second tomb with atrium and a Dorian peristyle, the tomb No 4. This tomb is accessible through a stepped dromos with 13 steps. The stepped dromos was partly covered with stone slabs. Enter into the tomb. Right opposite the dromos lays the burial chamber with niches for simple burials, which communicates with the Eastern portico. Some other shaft tombs were excavated under the porticoes. Westwards of this central complex a big tomb was excavated with a dromos and a large burial chamber in which were hewn out ten niches and a child's tomb on the floor. The chamber was badly damaged due to quarrying but the tomb was discovered intact, and some gold jewels were found in it. This tomb was only used during the Hellenistic period.

Here the Dorian entablature, that is to say the metopes and triglyphs, is to be seen above all four porticoes. In this case, the western portico is different as it is supported by square pillars instead of columns that have the other three porticoes. Near the entrance lies the well, which as we said in the previous tomb has a ritual but also a symbolic purpose.

The reason that tombs were built in this way, that is to say with a peristyle atrium, is that they wanted to resemble the structure of residences. The tomb is the residence of the dead; hence it should be structured like that. They also believed in life after death. Residences during the

Hellenistic period were built in this way, with an internal court and rooms around it. One of these residences is the House of Dionysus that you can see in the Archaeological Park of Kato Pafos.

Two small pillars are still saved and they also maintain the red colour which was used for the decoration of the tomb. They belong to a vaulted tomb which was badly damaged through quarrying. The small pillars constitute more humble funeral monuments than the burial plates and were simply bearing the name and origin of the dead. The atrium was possibly covered, closed that is to say on the upper side, because above the entablature there is something that looks like a base, where probably the beams for the roof were laid.

The dead were transported to the site of the necropolis in order to be buried most likely in wooden coffins, or simply placed on a deathbed. There is no evidence for the discovery of sarcophagi in these tombs. In any case the marble sarcophagi were often used in wealthy burials and many of them were discovered in the region of Pafos (you can see some sarcophagi in Pafos Museum).

TOMB No 5

Proceed towards the sea until you reach the next small earthen road, which is parallel to the sea and go to the right, that is to say westwards. You will see the next tomb number 5 on your right hand side. It is the fourth tomb of Dorian style with peristyle atrium that you see in this necropolis. This atrium is surrounded by 12 pillars instead of columns. You can enter into the interior of this tomb as well, through the monumental stepped dromos. The dromos leads to an arch-shaped entrance. As you advance from the covered part of dromos and going round, you see the portico which is extended on all four sides of the tomb. A cippus is to be seen on the north section of dromos indicating the burial niche. Opposite the dromos, that is on the southern part lies the ritual chamber where the burial customs were held: wine and olive

libations, offerings to the dead of milk, honey, water and wine. Fruit and food were also offered. This is a very large tomb. It covers a total area of 390 square metres and has a depth of five metres. A different element here is that the well is situated in the centre of the atrium and not in the corner at the end of dromos. The west portico was destroyed before the Middle Ages; in its south western corner a large pottery kiln was built in which glazed sgraffiti ceramic was discovered, characteristic of the medieval times of Cyprus. (These are pots that look glazed on the external surface and usually depict married couples. They were used as wedding presents).

TOMB No 6

Return once again on the small earthen road parallel to the sea and follow the pathway on your right which will lead you to the entrance of tomb number 6. This dromos is very impressive. It is the longest ever excavated in Cyprus and the majority of the tomb, approximately 20 metres, is covered by a vault. Once you enter through the dromos, you are led to the interior of the tomb, and on your left hand side you will see the well which is accessible through a staircase with nine steps. Opposite the well you see two niches carved out of the rock and underneath the offering table, where milk, honey, water and wine were offered to the dead. Fruit and food were also offered. In certain cases residues of ashes were discovered, which lead the archaeologists to the conclusion that there were also ritual fires where eggs and birds among others were offered to the dead. This impressive dromos leads to the atrium and opposite lies the burial chamber which includes three niches and a shaft tomb.

These niches were covered with a wall with trompe l'oeil wooden doors.

TOMB No 7

The next and northernmost tomb is tomb 7. Proceed to the north towards the fence, there where the hotel comes into view, and few metres before that you will see the tomb with the number 7, also known as "Palioekklisia" because it was converted into a church. This tomb is very well preserved, and you can also see the remains of plaster. The Dorian entablature (metopes and triglyphs) are well preserved too. On the sides of the dromos were hewn out various niches and ossuaries. The latter were necessary to keep the bones when tombs were reused. In the tomb there are two burial chambers with niches and, of course, the indispensable well underneath the Eastern portico.

Return once again in the big central earthen road and proceed vice-versa towards the exit of the necropolis. Few metres further down you will see the tomb number 8.

TOMB No 8

Stand at first by the stone fence so as to see the tomb from above.

The atrium here is replaced by a rectangular rock that is surrounded by four wings. The burial niches are carved out on this rectangular rock. Now proceed into the tomb through the stepped dromos.

This tomb is different from the other tombs. In the middle instead of an atrium there is a rock surrounded by a corridor and the burial niches are organised around it. As soon as you go down into the interior of the tomb, you will see on the left hand side a burial niche. You are in the central axis of the tomb and most probably this would be the place of the central burial. Two

pillars carved out of the rock support the Dorian entablature (the metopes and triglyphs). In the void that exists between the pillars and the epistyle there must have been capitals to support it.

In front of this burial niche architectural fragments were discovered that fell apart and two limestone statues of birds, most probably of two eagles, that caused great interest and further study for the archaeologists. Eventually these statues, which are kept in the Archaeological Museum of Pafos, constitute the royal emblem of Ptolemies. Due to this discovery it is thought that in this tomb the body of a king of the dynasty of Ptolemies who died in Cyprus is interred. If this is true, then according to historical and archaeological evidence, this was probably the site of burial of Ptolemy the brother of Cleopatra VI. However, in the event that these statues depict falcons, then it is possible that this is the depiction of god Oros. God Oros was an Egyptian deity, a solar god that was identified with Apollo and was depicted as a falcon or a person with the head of a falcon. This is also the god that takes the souls to the underworld. As in these tombs we have many influences from Alexandrian Egypt, we could eventually accept this opinion as well, but then again it must have been a very important person that would have this honour.

There is also another niche of secondary importance, which you will see opposite the well, with the staircase leading to the orifice of the well. Next to the burial niche lies the ritual chamber.

This tomb was excavated at a later stage than the rest and the excavation was done very carefully. In this tomb (in front of the burial niche) many architectural fragments were discovered which were colourful; they were found fallen apart on the floor in the tomb. Most probably they were built around and above it, in order to create, for the one who was inside the tomb, a greater sense of the architecture. These architectural fragments are to be found in the shelter next to the tomb.

In some burials of the Hellenistic period which were not looted, Rhodian Amphorae and spindle-shaped pots were discovered. The amphorae were used for rituals and the pots for offerings of wine and water to the dead.

The tomb must have been used since the 1st century B.C. up to the 1st century A.D. and most have been probably destroyed by earthquakes.