



THE ANKARA FRIENDS OF ARIT

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ARIT LECTURE

“TOTENMAHL” RELIEFS OF THE PERSIAN PERIOD AND HERODOTUS’ STORY OF THE DEATH OF ATYS: AN ANATOLIAN HEROIC ARCHETYPE



Mark Munn

The Pennsylvania State University

Wednesday, June 25, 2025

7:00 pm (Turkish time)

This lecture is hybrid.

Funerary stelae from NW Anatolia of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE commonly depict scenes of banqueting, hunting, battle, and procession. The specific meaning of these emblematic scenes is subject to some debate. The “Totenmahl” (funerary banquet) scenes have most often been understood as a display of the elite status, a complement to the display of the deceased as warrior or hunter. I argue that they are wedding banquets. The representation of a wedding, a hunt, and a procession on a funerary monument echoes the elements of the story told by Herodotus of Atys, the son of Croesus, who was engaged in a wedding arranged by his father, who went on a hunt, and who died and was buried and mourned (1.34-45). Herodotus’ story suggests that the death of Atys was memorialized in the manner represented on the later stelae, which very likely were inspired by an original stele on the monumental tumulus of Atys, possibly the Karnıyarık tumulus near Sardis. The commemoration of the Lydian prince thus became the archetype for memorializing the heroized dead in the following Achaemenid era.

In person: ARIT Office, Atatürk Blv. 154/13, Çankaya, Ankara

For Zoom Registration:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/1cpmlxTYQOespTIzK0GDSg>