

Ancient Lycia: Re-discovering the History behind the Legend

Turkey, 29th July to 19th August 2011

University College London

Expedition Report

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Introduction

The expedition took place between the 29th of July and the 19th of August 2011, in Southern Turkey, specifically the region where the ancient Lycians had settled.

The objectives of this expedition were the following:

- a) Hike the Lycian Way.
- b) Maintain the way-marking of worn parts of the Lycian Way.
- c) Explore the on-going archaeological excavations in the Lycian region.

Background

The Lycian way is a 509 km way-marked footpath around the coast of Lycia in Southern Turkey. The highest mountain Olympos reaches up to 3000m. Chosen as No.15 of the 50 greatest walks in the World (Country Walking, November 2004). the Lycian Way dates back to 3000BC and used to be the official path that connected the cities of the first known Federation in History, Lycia. The path had been abandoned and lost following the continuing change of civilization and two major earthquakes, however it was re-discovered by a UK citizen, named Kate Clow, in the 1990's. Its unique value lies in the fact that it combines rare scenery and the opportunity to visit the ancient Lycian sites many of which have never been excavated or officially mapped. Due to the fact that the broader region is considered sensitive in terms of national security the Turkish authorities have not allowed the publishing of large scale maps. Certain ancient sites are not identified on any of the maps available and can only be located by cross-reference to archaeological journals.

Lycia was discovered for the modern world by Sir Charles Fellows, the British orientalist, who visited the region in 1838. The beautifully illustrated account of his travels created an instant sensation in London. In 1842 the British Museum agreed to send out a Lycian expedition aboard the HMS Beacon. The research party led by Fellows and Lieutenant Spratt returned to England with 70 huge crates full of archaeological finds, mainly from the ancient capital city of Xanthos. Today, a great collection of these findings is presented for the visitors of the British Museum in rooms 15, 17 and 20. Fellows' companion George Scharf junior managed to draw more than 150 drawings that are presented at the British Museum, the British Library, the National Portrait Gallery and the Wellcome Institute Library in London.

Fieldwork

In this section, we provide details of the three objectives outlined in the Introduction.

1. Hike the Lycian Way

The Lycian way crosses some spectacular sights along its route from Dalaman to Antalya, offering hikers an unparalleled blend of history and scenery around each corner.

On the Western part of the region, there are sights of significant archaeological interest including the island of Saint-Nicolas island with its seven deserted churches and the ghost city of Levisi with several Byzantine Greek-Orthodox churches.

Moving to the centre of the Southern region, famous sites include a) Sakklikent Gorge, which is the second largest gorge in Europe, b) Iztuzu beach, home to the sea turtle *Caretta caretta*, and c) Patara, an ancient city which holds some of the most important oracles of the Mediterranean region.

Finally, heading towards the Eastern part of the region, the famous eternal fires of Mount Cirali required us to hike for over 12km in the dark to find the highest point where the remains of the fires of Chimaera were located.

One of the most adventurous aspects of our hiking mission included the descent from Faralya to Butterfly Valley. Despite a report of a recent almost-fatal accident in that area, we decided to undertake the challenge, having equipped ourselves with the necessary climbing gear beforehand. While the descent took longer than expected, we were rewarded by the outstanding beauty of the Valley once we reached the bottom.

2. Maintain the way-marking of worn parts of the Lycian Way

Certain parts of the Lycia Way required maintenance of the way marking since the climate and the wide flora of the region degraded the signs that had been originally created when the route was re-discovered in the 1990's.

We contacted Ms Kate Clow, the recent founder of the Lycian Way, with the aim of acquiring specific information regarding the sections of the path that urgently needed re-way marking. From our correspondence with Ms. Clow, it became apparent that the part that required our attention was primarily between Sidyma and Gavuragili, a section totalling almost 18 kilometres. This part of the Lycian Way presented a number of difficulties with many hikers having reported of being lost due to the bad condition of the signposting coupled with the challenging nature of the route itself.

Hence, we procured red and white paint and employed an innovative way to store it and re-use it as we hiked with the aid of small water bottles. Some parts of the route did require spray paint to ensure the mark could be easily identified from a long distance. In addition to the re-way marking of the aforementioned section, we took the initiative and maintained the markings of the Lycian Way throughout our expedition, when we deemed it necessary.

Yet another adventurous moment during our expedition, involved our hike in the Sakklikent Gorge. Our late arrival at the site meant that part of the route would take place in the dark. While we were advised by the locals not to undertake the route due to the lack light, we decided, yet again, that we were up for the challenge. Having taken all precautionary measures and in view of our previous hiking experience, we successfully completed the route and were rewarded by the unique scenery which gave an even more magical feel at night.

3. Explore the on-going archaeological excavations in the Lycian Region

Our final objective, one of the most important and intriguing parts of our mission, was favoured by the research taking place in the area at the time, as well as an element of luck!

- *The discovery of Apostle Phillip's grave in Ierapolis – Chasing professor D' Andria*

Having been made aware of a recent archaeological discovery in the ancient city of Ierapolis, which occurred only two weeks prior to our arrival in the region, we took the unique opportunity to visit the location.

Our day commenced with an exploration of the ancient city of Ierapolis where significant excavation had taken place recently to discover the grave of Apostle Phillip. The team led by the veteran Italian Professor d' Andria, was particularly cautious in providing information regarding their latest discovery. Using our negotiation skills and having liaised with over four different team members and spent the entire day chasing them around the site, we were finally admitted to the team's archaeological mission for a brief meeting with the professor before his daily interview for an Italian television channel. While enjoying a refreshing Italian espresso, Professor d' Andria gave us important details regarding this excavation, and explained to us that the reason of their cautiousness was justified since the research had not yet officially been published and there was already an enormous international academic interest. We were informed that Apostle Philip's body was not expected to be found in the grave since it had already been transferred to Rome centuries ago. In addition, the team did not expect to find any treasures inside since the grave had most likely been subject of previous vandalism by treasure hunters.

- *A night with the Turkish Archaeological mission in Arykanda*

During our visit to the isolated archaeological site of Arykanda, which was of particular interest due to the on-going excavations undertaken by the University of Ankara, we had the unexpected honour of running into the supervising professor Dr. Macit Tekinalp from Hacettepe University who was supervising the archaeological team.

The professor kindly invited us to spend the night at the team's archaeological mission where he gave an in depth description of the recent findings in the area near the Stadion. He also talked to us about the history of the early antique period of the area and the research he was privileged to participate alongside Dr. Cevdet Bayburtluoglu from Ankara University. Over supper, the professor intrigued us by sharing a mystery with us regarding a lost Christian monastery dating from the 11th century, which is rarely visited nowadays due to the remoteness of its location and the fact that the area has still not been excavated.

The monastery could only be found by precise coordinates and was hidden behind the trees on the top of a hill. We located the site with the aid of Google Earth and commenced our trip to find the place upon sunrise. Once we found the site, we realised the reason the professor considered the monastery to be a mystery. His concern was that this monastery should not have been found at this location since there were no records of Christian communities in the broad area which could justify its existence. Around the unexcavated area, we realised that the monastery was built as a fortress and was considered one of the largest in the region. The trace of human presence was identified by the vandalised sarcophaguses of the chief-priests (hegoumanous), evidence of past attempts to find treasures. The purpose of building such a large monastery and the reason it was deserted still remain a mystery.

Miscellaneous Information

In addition to the two aforementioned rare encounters that we experienced, we also had the chance to visit a number of additional archaeological sites, such as the sunken cities of Kekova and Simena, as well as the well-preserved city of Aphrodisias. In addition, we took

the opportunity to see the new theatre that was being built in Patara at the time and which is expected to attract major academic and culture events in subsequent years. The spectacular graves of Termessos also enriched our list of archaeological sites explored.

On the downside, we did not manage to realize one of our objectives which was originally set in cooperation with Kate Clow, which involved the discovery and report of an alternative lost ancient roman road between Sydima and Xanthos. Despite our continuous efforts to gain the appropriate permission from the Turkish authorities several months in advance, eventually our application did not go through. We were also informed that the French archaeological mission in Xanthos, after decades of systematic excavation, had been recently asked to suspend their research for unknown reasons.

ANNEX

Hiking on the Lycian Way





Way-marking



Archaeological excavations in the Lycian Region

Apostle Phillip's grave in Ierapolis



Arykanda and exploration of the monastery

