

Discovering Ancient Lycia: The Çaltılar Archaeological Project

Tamar Hodos

University of Bristol

The south-western Turkish region of Lycia is best known for its beaches and its Graeco-Roman city states, like Xanthos, Patara, and Tlos, and during this period it was known as the Land of Light. Yet for periods prior to the Graeco-Roman, our knowledge of the archaeology has been like a black hole, for little evidence of these earlier periods has ever been identified... until now.



Çaltılar höyük

The Çaltılar Archaeological Project, a collaboration between the Universities of Bristol, Liverpool and Uludağ (Turkey), with the support of the British Institute at Ankara, is examining the material culture, environment, and settlement history of pre-Classical Lycia, contributing significant new knowledge concerning the occupation and development of this region of Turkey. Çaltılar *höyük* is a long-lived settlement mound located in the summer pastures of northern Lycia, close to the Graeco-Roman cities of Oinoanda and Balbura. Its main phases of occupation date from the Late Chalcolithic (late fourth millennium BCE) to the Late Iron Age period (sixth century BCE), with little evidence of later occupation or use.



Intensive survey: collection

Between 2008 and 2010, we conducted a series of intensive surveys of the *höyük*. Our results suggest that occupation was most significant in the Late Chalcolithic, Early Bronze Age, and Middle and Late Iron Age periods, although Late Bronze Age material was also collected, which is significant in view of references to the Lukka people and settlements in this area recorded in contemporary Hittite, Egyptian, and Ugaritic documents.



Iron Age pottery



Early Bronze Age pottery

The majority of our material dates to the Iron Age, mostly to between the tenth and sixth centuries, and petrographic analysis suggests that most of this comes from

beyond Çaltılar's immediate environs, revealing connections with Anatolia (Phrygia, Lydia, Caria and the Western Anatolian littoral) and the wider Mediterranean (Athens, Corinth, Euboea, Chios). Many of these are large, highly decorated vessels, suggesting that the site was not for seasonal occupation, at least by its later periods of occupation. Geophysical results indicate a substantial stone structure of 10m by 20m with stone walls at least 2.5m high in the north-eastern sector of the top of the mound. Stone structures of such dimensions that date to the Late Iron Age are usually temples or fortification features, such as at Old Smyrna; it is possible that this structure served a similar function, although we cannot be certain without excavating it. Nevertheless, this evidence hints at the site's status within the landscape and the potential role it played as the interface between Anatolia and the Mediterranean.



Public presentation to the community



Pottery reconstruction

Each year we have held a series of outreach activities, including public presentations on our work and finds, and creating a mock grid to enable the children of the village to participate in intensive survey collection. We have also held focus groups and more informal conversations with members of village to find out what they think of our presence and our work, and to ascertain what they hope the results of our research might bring to their *yayla* village. Namely, they are interested in the potential for economic expansion deriving from tourism and improved infrastructure that such development will necessitate. We have also been renovating the former school buildings of the village, not used for decades, to use as a base for our operations during our field seasons and as a cultural centre for the community year-round. One of the buildings is of a traditional construction, and we are in the process of raising funds to restore it using the same techniques.

The *höyük* itself is still in private ownership. In order for us to commence excavation, we need to compensate the landowners. This is not just a matter of archaeological discovery, but it is also one of heritage preservation. Although the elevated mound itself is not used for cultivation at present, some of the lower terraces are being used as household vegetable plots, and it is clear from our survey that the ancient evidence of the site's history is rapidly eroding away in these areas. The site itself is also under threat from nearby hydrological development and quarrying, which has resulted already in the destruction of local Roman rock carvings during the spring and summer of 2012. Donations to the project will enable us to purchase and protect the areas of

the site most in danger of destruction as well as to continue with the restoration of the original school buildings. If you would like to support our research and/or our restoration work at Çaltılar, please contact Dr Tamar Hodos at t.hodos@bristol.ac.uk

The work of the Çaltılar Archaeological Project was featured in the national Turkish press during August 2012: <http://webtv.hurriyet.com.tr/2/36230/21164678/1/ingiltere-den-bu-cihazlarla-geldiler.aspx>