

Panormos 2017: intensive survey on the Milesian peninsula

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The western coast of Turkey has been subject to relatively little intensive archaeological investigation compared to similar landscapes on the other side of the Aegean and certain Greek islands (with the notable exception of surveys around Urla on the Çeşme peninsula: for example Ersoy, Koparal 2008). One explanation for this is the different national traditions which dominate the western and eastern Aegean spheres, despite the similarity of the topography, climate and cultural history on each side. Examples set by the holistic approach of the University of Minnesota Messenia Expedition and Southern Argolid Project have promoted landscape survey in Greece. In Turkey, where scholarship is still sometimes dominated by the classical schools, especially along the Aegean coast, survey remains sometimes regarded as a secondary, less prestigious activity compared to excavation. Fortunately, attitudes and methods are changing. With a pilot started in 2015, the Project Panormos survey is the first to apply intensive pedestrian survey methods to the western Milesian landscape.

The background to this project lies in rescue excavations undertaken between 2012 and 2014 in a collaboration between the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI) Istanbul and the local Milet Museum near modern Mavişehir (Didim/Aydın), which revealed a densely occupied necropolis dating to the seventh century BC. As a so-far unique example of southern Ionian burial practices for the Archaic Greek era, the finds and distribution of burials from the necropolis raised many questions about the occupants' relationship with the local area and the wider Mediterranean world. Were these local residents or visitors to the international oracular Sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma? Where was the settlement associated with the harbour town of Panormos, known to be the port of entry for Didyma? How big was the necropolis and how did the Panormos region relate to the wider Milesian landscape? Although Hans Lohmann and a team from the Miletos Excavation Project created an archaeological map of the peninsula in the 1990s (for example Lohmann 1999), the area around Mavişehir was not explored in detail as part of this work. Additionally, the extensive strategy of that survey, while forming an essential starting point for the recognition of finds from periods of occupation, did not provide any quantitative idea of the density of occupation at different times over the last 5,000–6,000 years, nor did it reveal apparently unoccupied areas or those where the landscape may be masking remains due to geomorphological change. For this reason, it was decided to pilot an intensive survey around the Panormos necropolis in 2015, again under the aegis of the DAI and the Milet Museum.

Intensive fieldwalking is now a well-established method for landscape research, especially in the Aegean. The basic principle is to divide up the study area into discrete areas or 'tracts', which are then walked by small teams of archaeologists (normally of around five to six people), spaced regularly (for example 10–15m) apart. All archaeological finds visible on the surface are counted or recorded and some finds may be collected and examined in more detail. Tracts can be defined in any number of ways (for example a single field can be one tract), but the Project Panormos survey tracts were predefined using a GPS-based grid for speed, and all data were collected digitally so that they could be released relatively quickly as part of the project's 'open science' pilot (Strupler, Wilkinson 2017).

Gleaning archaeologically significant results from fields and backyards was challenging in a region that has suffered from extensive building development due to modern Didim's popularity as a tourist destination and place to buy holiday homes for Turkish citizens and foreigners alike. Nonetheless, the final distribution map of finds from 2015 confirms the potential of the methodology, even in this relatively highly populated region. The area covered in 2015 revealed finds from the Bronze Age to the Ottoman era, but with very high numbers of Archaic and Roman ceramics, including an extremely high-density cluster dating to the Archaic period along the road between Panormos and ancient Didyma; also of note was a series of small farmsteads, which are apparently Roman in date.

The ubiquity of Archaic and Roman finds is striking when compared to the low count of prehistoric finds. This is despite the fact that only 2.5km to the northwest of the necropolis lies the Bronze Age harbour settlement of Tavşan Adası, which was excavated between 2006 and 2014 by a German team led by F. Bertemes from Halle University, as part of the Didyma Excavation Project. Given that Tavşan Adası seems to be the site of the Bronze Age predecessor to the later port of Panormos, the relationship between the two areas is apparently critical to understanding the changing configuration of the landscape. Moreover, little is known about the hinterland of Tavşan Adası. Geological studies have shown that this island would have been a small peninsula connected to the mainland during the Bronze Age. Tavşan Adası itself seems to have been strongly connected to the 'Minoan' world during the early second millennium BC (the late Middle Bronze Age?), with pottery styles, architecture and occasional seal evidence all echoing remains found on Crete, as is the case at nearby or similar coastal sites such as Iasos (Momigliano et al. 2012) and Miletos itself (Raymond 2009). Considerable academic discourse has been devoted to the significance and 'depth' of this Minoan *koiné*. Do these sites represent imposed Cretan colonies of some kind? To what extent were 'local' populations involved in a process of adoption of or contribution to a wider southern Aegean 'minoanisation'? Only by examining the



View over the Panormos harbour area: a mixed urban-agricultural-marginal landscape, typical of those walked during the survey (photo Toby Wilkinson, Project Panormos).

wider landscape, especially the extent and nature of contemporary occupation over the rest of the peninsula, as has been done in places such as Kythera (Broodbank, Kiriati 2007), can we hope to delineate the superficiality or depth of Minoan-ness along the Anatolian coast.

The primary aim of the 2017 season was thus to examine the little understood prehistoric occupation of this part of the peninsula, with intensive fieldwalking focused on the immediate hinterland to the east of Tavşan Adası and the area down to that walked in 2015. What a difference a couple of kilometres make! To our excitement, pre-first-millennium finds were much more numerous. There were small clusters of Minoan-style conical cup fragments in the hinterland area, suggesting that occupation of the landscape during this era was more widespread than hitherto realised. In a marginal area covered by macquis-type vegetation, a number of small obsidian-blade scatters were also encountered. Though they have not yet been examined in detail for date or origin, initial impressions suggest they relate to the similar Early Bronze Age finds from Tavşan Adası itself. Along with very sporadic obsidian finds documented in the 1970s by H. Gebel (1984; the exact find locations have unfortunately been lost), a picture of more intensive prehistoric occupation, perhaps obscured by subsequent geomorphological change and agricultural exploitation, is beginning to emerge. Unexpectedly, an apparently in situ whole Early Bronze Age (EBA) vessel was also identified from a hillside in the southern part of the 2017 survey area. The distribution of other EBA finds from the same area suggests that there may have been an EBA settlement or necropolis in this area. Finally, negative evidence from the intensive strategy has offered some important insights about landscape dynamics: the valley bottoms of two small streams flowing into the Panormos harbour were almost completely devoid of surface

archaeological finds. This suggests that these areas have experienced a considerable degree of alluviation or colluviation, and that soil in this area could be obscuring earlier land surfaces. Parts of these valleys may even have filled former small enclaves of the sea, which could have been used as harbour areas. The work highlights the need for geomorphological work to understand the changing topography of the peninsula.

Besides the daily enjoyment of fieldwalking (meeting interested and generous locals, climbing to see the magnificent views of the Grion, Akron and Mykale mountains, as well as the nearby Greek islands, or running quickly away from the less-welcoming canine population), walking day-by-day over a small area and seeing the extent of building construction across the whole peninsula reminded us of the urgency of survey work in the context of such rapid tourist development.

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More information about the project is available on the project website: <http://www.projectpanormos.com/>

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