

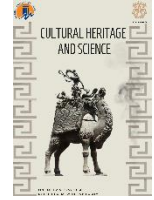


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# Rural Settlements Survey in the Chora of Diocaesarea

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### Keywords

Rough Cilicia  
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### ABSTRACT

The ancient city of Diocaesarea located in the village of Uzuncaburç nearly 30 km north of Silifke in Mersin province. The objective of this study was to determine the character of the ancient city and to review the changes it underwent throughout different periods, as well as to learn its layout and plan. To achieve this, it was aimed to explore the settlements around the ancient city of Diocaesarea in order to derive results regarding the connection between the ancient city and its chora. The ancient city of Diocaesarea developed around the temple to Zeus Olbios and was the administrative and religious center of the region in the Hellenistic period attaining its monumental character in the Roman Imperial period. In the course of our surveys in the chora of Diocaesarea numerous settlements of varying sizes and dating to various periods have been documented. Most of them stand out with their well preserved remains. Remains recorded at settlements belong to a time span from the Hellenistic period through late antiquity. Settlements of Hellenistic character within the survey area are parts of a common defense and settlement system. The polygonal masonry observed on some structures of these rural settlements indicate that these settlements came into use in the Hellenistic period. These settlements remained inhabited after the Hellenistic period. Furthermore, many more settlements of rural character were also founded during and after the Roman period. With the Roman period a new settlement pattern arose in the region, and the Hellenistic settlements lost their defensive functions yet remained alive as rural settlements, which actually increased in number. In addition to the rural character of the settlements in the region some of them have examples of urban architecture such as roads, monumental gates, churches and farm villas. That such structures are seen in rural settlements of the region should have arisen from the historical process, military strategical importance of the region, and political, cultural and economic influence of the cities on the territory.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Detailed survey were initiated in 2017 in the ancient city of Diocaesarea located in the village of Uzuncaburç nearly 30 km north of Silifke in Mersin province. The objective of this study was to determine the character of the ancient city and to review the changes it underwent throughout different periods, as well as to learn its layout and plan. For this purpose, it is aimed to carry out documentation studies under three headings: determination of settlement boundaries, evaluation of settlement pattern and use of new technology in order to determine and understand the rural settlement pattern in the archaeological researches to be carried out in the field.. Other objectives include studies for the preservation, presentation, and planning of the ancient

city and for preparation of a Uzuncaburç Site Management Plan. The purpose of “Uzuncaburç Archaeological Site Management” is to define the strategies for the preservation, presentation, and planning of the site in light of the results of the archaeological excavations. In conjunction with these studies, it is also to define actions that will transform these strategies into short-, mid-, and long-term actions. Initiatives to be taken in light of these objectives will be executed in two phases: “Uzuncaburç Site Management Feasibility Studies” and “Uzuncaburç Site Management Plan.” In this context, it was aimed to explore the settlements around the ancient city of Diocaesarea in order to derive results regarding the connection between the ancient city and its chora.

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## 2. METHOD

The ancient city of Diocaesarea developed around the temple to Zeus Olbios and was the administrative and religious center of the region in the Hellenistic period attaining its monumental character in the Roman Imperial period (Wannagat 2005, 118). The ancient city was adorned with important structures, well preserved today, such as Nymphaeum, Tyche temple, Podium Temple, Zeus Olbios Temple, two Colonnaded Streets with two Monumental Gates. The history of the city was marked in antiquity by two phases. In the Hellenistic period, the sanctuary of Zeus Olbios was the center of the temple state. During this time, the sanctuary experienced a significant monumentalization through various representative buildings. In addition to the extension of the Temple of Zeus, which is one of the largest Asia Minor with stylobate dimensions, a five-storey residential and defense tower and a fifteen-meter-high grave-building were built around it erected (Wannagat 2005, 118).

However, when Rough Cilicia, under Vespasian, became largely Roman provincial territory, the Olbian dynasts disappeared from the political stage; they were replaced by institutions of the newly founded city Diocaesarea. In the early imperial era, the rule of the dynasts ended.

The city of Diocaesarea was built around the sanctuary. Its construction with other sacred buildings, a colonnaded street, a theater and a complex water supply make clear its claim as a regional center. The ruins presently available for determining when this transformation into a city occurred seem to indicate two possibilities: the first corresponds to the beginning of the first century AD, the second to Flavian Period. Although the difference between the two hypotheses is little more than half a century, the two scenarios envisioned for this transformation of Diocaesarea into a real city belong to very different historical situations (Spanu 2011, 5).

## 3. RESULTS

Surveys around the ancient city of Diocaesarea noted numerous rural settlements. The polygonal masonry observed on some structures of these rural settlements indicate that these settlements came into use in the Hellenistic period<sup>1</sup>.

The Eserli settlement near to Yeğenli village has the character of a farmstead located on top of a hill dominating the depressed areas for cultivation; the polygonal walls of the farmhouse are characteristic of Hellenistic period settlements in the region (Fig. 1). Nevertheless, the annexed walls built with small cut stones indicate interventions of late antiquity.



**Figure 1.** Eserli, the farmstead located on top of a hill

Among the remains at Aşkar, another rural settlement near Yeğenli village, there are also houses with polygonal walls (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** Aşkar, the farmstead

Before the room is a courtyard wall hewn out of bedrock with several niches on it.

Furthermore, a fortress settlement was identified at a point dominating over the roads and surroundings at Halkalı area during our exploration at Çaltıbozkır-Yeniçıkı (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** Halkalı, the fortress settlement of the Hellenistic period

<sup>1</sup> The characteristic feature of construction activity in the territory in the 2nd century BC is polygonal wall work, which is dated by inscriptions on the walls and by Olba symbols.

This proves the existence of defense architecture of the Hellenistic period in the chora of Diocaesarea. This looks like an acropolis settlement preserved as ca. 50 x 40 m with double faced walls of polygonal stones (Fig. 4).



**Figure 4.** Halkalı, the fortress settlement of the Hellenistic period

Locations of the rural settlements around Diocaesarea closely resemble others in the region. The farmstead settlement identified at Erekil is located on a rocky hill dominating over wide agricultural ravines around. The first point to attract is the room walls with polygonal masonry (Fig. 5). It is understood that these structures of the Hellenistic period still remain in use by the local Yörüks. The room with polygonal masonry atop the hill is a farmhouse and before it is a threshing field, a cistern and a rock tomb.



**Figure 5.** Erekil, the farmstead located on top of a hill

The depressed level area called Zeynelin Çukuru presents favorable conditions for establishing a rural settlement. As is the case with other examples in the region, many settlements were identified around this depressed area. These rural settlements usually comprise a farmhouse, production areas around it, cisterns and chamosorion type tombs. One of them steps forth with its rooms with polygonal masonry (Fig. 6). Bedrock was also exploited for building the rooms according to topography. It is noteworthy that the settlements have been recently used by local Yörüks as well.

The Çaltıbozkır-Yeniçiktı area to the west of Diocaesarea was also surveyed and many rural

settlements were identified. At Tirekli area, the farmhouse on top of the rocks dominating over the cultivated small depressions has polygonal masonry, which points to the Hellenistic period for its construction (Fig.8).



**Figure 7.** Zeynelin Çukuru, the bedrock rooms



**Figure 8.** Tirekli, the farmhouse on top of the rocks dominating over the cultivated small depressions has polygonal masonry

Settlements around Diocaesarea display various characters. The settlement at Sayin has the character of a large village. Remains spread over a wide hill belong to Roman period and late antiquity (Fig.9).



**Figure 9.** Sayin, the houses in the settlement

Three vaulted tombs of the Roman period were identified in the settlement (Fig. 10). Across the settlement are remains of houses and two churches (Fig.11).



**Figure 10.** Sayin, the vaulted tomb of the Roman period



**Figure 11.** Sayin, the church

### 3.1. The Characteristics of the Rural Settlements in the Chora of Diocaesarea

We have discovered rural settlements with different characteristics in the chora of Diocaesarea. These rural settlements vary in their features according to the simplex versus complex structures of the farmsteads. These farms include some buildings used for production and storage, different types of tombs, production equipments, plenty of houses, and cisterns as well as a farm house where the owner of the farm or the landlord inhabits. Be that as it may, we understand that the farmsteads were always used in different and later stages and that some of the structures inside these farmsteads were added in later phases according to the needs of the farmsteads in the area.

It is also notable that the farm house discovered in Eserli and Erekil is quite like the towers of the Hellenistic Period in this area with its square design, small dimensions, and thick polygonal masonry. In Byzantine sources, it is suggested that the fortified farmsteads, also referred to as *limitanei* in these sources, are the dwellings of the military settlers. However, we propose that these fortified farmsteads in Rough Cilicia were used either by landlords or by the owners of the farms rather than the military settlers, as was the case in Philistina.

<sup>2</sup> S. Durugönül stated that the class of the monastery had a monument to support the Seleucids and protect the territory. Further, she claimed and that the symbol of the Olba Tempel State on the stone architecture was a proof for this, and that the theocratic feudal system in the agricultural economy showed itself in the

In these rural settlements, we have discovered many rock cut lever and weights presses. That they are located in the open field makes it possible to install them everywhere in the field easily. Another proof regarding the agricultural production in the area is the existence of the press weights. We have also discovered many houses in the farmsteads. Most of these houses must have been added in later periods, which not only shows that the farmsteads were continuously in use throughout all the periods but also makes it possible to consider some of the farmsteads as small villages in the early Byzantine Period.

The existence of tombs on farmstead in the regions indicates the continuity of life in these areas and different types of tombs are seen on farmstead. The tombs are generally located very close to the farmhouses; there are no specific necropolises in the farmsteads. The tomb types are parallel to the types commonly observed in the region. Among these, the existence of the monumental tombs is especially striking. The three tombs discovered in the farmstead in Sayin, are of the type barrel-vaulted aedicula tomb, a type commonly known in the area. We have also discovered sarcophagi; plenty of chamosorion type sarcophagi (which we consider to belong to early Byzantine Period because of the cross reliefs on their covers) in the farmsteads.

## 4. CONCLUSION

During the surveys we have carried out in the region, many settlements of different periods and sizes have been recorded so far. Most of them stand out with their well preserved remains. Remains recorded at settlements belong to a time span from the Hellenistic period through late antiquity. Settlements of Hellenistic character within the survey area are parts of a common defense and settlement system. Our recent surveys have noted a high number of Hellenistic. Although the settlement pattern in the territory was mainly a reflection of the Hellenistic defense architecture, these defensive structures and civil needs should be combined as a regional feature<sup>2</sup>. However, in recent research it has been found that there were many small farms in the vicinity of Korykos ancient city. Their workshop and production equipment are the earliest archaeological evidence for the existence of the agricultural production and organization of the Hellenistic period in the territory (Aşkın 2010, 36-40). In addition, having identified similar examples in archaeological surveys of the Diocaesarea territory, suggests along with its defensive architecture also the existence of rural architecture in the Hellenistic period. In addition to the defense functions of the towers belonging to the Hellenistic period architecture, there is the proposal that they were also used as agricultural crests for agricultural activities, because together with additional buildings, they contain structures for production (Durugönül 1998, 197).

temple, in the writings, in the inscriptions and in the symbols of Olba, Durugönül 1998, 110, 113.

Further, newly discovered findings necessitate to deal with rural settlements in the Hellenistic period urbanization.

These settlements remained inhabited after the Hellenistic period. Furthermore, many more settlements of rural character were also founded during and after the Roman period. With the Roman period a new settlement pattern arose in the region, and the Hellenistic settlements lost their defensive functions yet remained alive as rural settlements, which actually increased in number. Surveys in the region show that rural settlements increased dramatically in the region, particularly in the second century A.D. archaeological evidence for farmsteads, workshops, villages, and tombs therein are also attested.

It is understood that the geographical conditions in the region affected the formation of rural settlements. The valleys communicating between the coastal and inner areas affected the settlement patterns after the Hellenistic period. Numerous epigraphic and archaeological evidence prove that these valleys served as roads through the ages. Thus, rural settlements developed near these roads and made use of them for the transportation of the produce to the coastline. The rural settlements that were identified show that agricultural production had an important part in the economy of antiquity and that cities on the coast and rural settlements in their hinterland constitute a regional settlement model.

In addition to the rural character of the settlements in the region some of them have examples of urban architecture such as roads, monumental gates, churches and farm villas<sup>3</sup>. That such structures are seen in rural settlements of the region should have arisen from the historical process, military strategical importance of the region, and political, cultural and economic influence of the cities on the territory. Our surveys have already clarified that the number of rural settlements started to increase about the end of the second – beginning of the third century AD. In this process, which, we believe, was related with the economic crisis experienced across the entire Empire in the third century, new arrangements are noted in the rural settlements of the region, rural settlements increased in number in parallel to the increase in population, they grew and urban monuments were built. Various elements such as mosaic pavements, peristyle courtyards, monumental gates and monumental tombs started to be built frequently. In this process, towards the end of the third century the state started to collect taxes in kind, that is in products like meat, wine, oil etc. and started to pay their salaries similarly in kind; owners of large lands, who used to live in the cities and lease out their lands to villagers, started to take back over their lands as the economy declined; the Empire took the rural settlements under protection paying more attention to production after the economic crisis; and similar conditions should have paved the way for the development of the countryside and accordingly

for the appearance of urban architecture in the countryside.

The process of development is actually related to the military importance of the region since the Roman Imperial period. Particularly the Severan period is considered the golden age of constructions in the region and this is in parallel to the rise in importance of the region due to military campaigns. It was proposed that the cities of the region and the urban elite owning rural settlements managed to market most of their produce thanks to the troops and thus increased their economic power, and accordingly, supplied monetary source for the constructions (Kaplan 2011, 114). This importance remained thereafter. It is known that Diocletian's administrative and military reforms led to establishment of numerous headquarters across the empire and that these aimed to control the economy in the countryside and to assure peace. There is evidence indicating that military activities and urban architecture in the countryside developed in parallel to each other in this process. For instance, like the renovation of various monasteries in Cappadocia in 602-610 AD, territories located on the routes and camping sites of troops witnessed important developments (Trombley 2001, 227). It is known that through time, based on the political influence of the cities over their territories, the characters and statuses of rural settlements changed, some village settlements transformed to cities or that settlements with new statuses appeared between villages and cities. There are numerous similar examples in the rural settlements of Rough Cilicia; their transformation from fortress settlements of the Hellenistic period to the villages of late antiquity is clearly known and in this process of change structures of urban architecture were incorporated into these settlements<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> For urban architecture attested in rural settlements of the region see Aydınoğlu 2017.

<sup>4</sup> For the transformation process of Paslı from a fortress settlement of the Hellenistic period to a rural settlement see Aydınoğlu 2013, 87; for the similar transformation process of Sömek Özköy settlement see Mörel 2014, 157.

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