

Aspendos Sustainable Development and Site Management Project**Final Project Report**

Years: 2013-2016

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Funding: British Institute at Ankara, The Headley Trust

Summary: The joint CHM project of the British Institute at Ankara (BIAA) and the Archaeology Department of Hacettepe University (Ankara) was run between 2013 to 2016, building on results of the Aspendos Archaeological Project. A first phase of the project was dedicated to the preparation of a sustainable development for the cultural and natural heritage of Aspendos and its surroundings and dealt with the parallel realities of a highly touristic site and its rural environment. The project aimed at merging preservation of the site with the interests of local inhabitants and tourists, set against the wider background of the historic landscape.

Details:***2013 Report:***

After more than a hundred years of archaeological discoveries in Turkey, it is now an urgent priority to conserve and protect Turkey's cultural heritage and to promote an understanding and knowledge of it among local people. The British Institute at Ankara has singled out cultural heritage management as a priority area for its own activities, as archaeological projects under its auspices have already done. Since an understanding of cultural heritage has proved so important for economic and cultural development in the United Kingdom, it seems appropriate that this should be a major part of the Institute's activities and contribution to the archaeology of Turkey. The initiative is currently supported by grants from the Headley Trust (a Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust, UK) and Hedef Alliance (Turkey).

Lately, as a result of a call from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, there has been increased interest from the private sector to undertake the outsourcing of some visitor

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services at archaeological sites and museums. Some of the resulting products of these partnerships, like the Museum Card for Turkish citizens, have been concrete steps to attract Turkish visitors to sites of cultural heritage significance. These initiatives are mainly designed to increase revenues from local and international tourism, but they can still be considered as tangible traces of a shift in the mind-set of decision makers regarding cultural heritage management.

The Institute aims at developing a cultural heritage management project in southwest Anatolia (the modern provinces of Antalya, Muğla, Burdur and Isparta), a region containing many of the most famous and best-preserved Classical cities of Asia Minor. The area has traditionally been of particular interest to scholars and researchers from the Institute. Several of the Institute's current projects are based in the region (Çaltılar Archaeological Project, Pisidia Survey Project) and experts linked to the Institute are involved in several other international or Turkish projects, notably the current Turkish survey and excavation of the ancient city of Aspendos in Pamphylia. This project has close links to the Pisidia Survey Project. The Institute has now initiated a pilot project on cultural heritage management for the city of Aspendos, as well as for Cremna, Ariassos, Sia, Panemo- teichos, Melli and Pednelissos, six antique poleis in south Pisidia, an area in which the Pisidia Survey Project has been active for many years.

For the Aspendos-Pisidia Survey Project initiative, Işıl Gürsu has been appointed as programme director as the Headley Trust/Hedef Alliance Fellow in January 2013. The project involves working closely together with the General Directorate for Cultural Heritage and Museums of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In addition to the main partner institutions – the British Institute at Ankara and Hacettepe University – support is also assured from the Public Archaeology Programme at UCL and the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations at Koç University in Istanbul, the leading Turkish institution in this field. Also in partnership with the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, the Institute co-funds an annual research fellowship in cultural heritage.

Thanks to the Institute's long-standing research tradition in the area, local specialists can also be appealed to. A clear initial objective will be to establish mutually supportive relations with the museums of Antalya and Burdur, and the Cultural Directorates of the provinces of Antalya and Burdur, and engage them in plans to protect and disseminate information about the region's cultural heritage on a step-by-step incremental basis.

The project seeks to find ways to improve the chances of their preservation on a local as well as a regional level. For this, basic principles such as promoting knowledge and understanding of historical and archaeological sites and of irreplaceable natural landscapes, as well as protecting and conserving the sites for the future are employed. Furthermore, the project aims to draw on cultural heritage to promote regional economic development and, last but not

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least, it hopes to help forge close bonds between local people and the cultural heritage of their region.

Indeed, there is much local pride to be found in Turkey's regions and cities, often focused on local produce, high- quality cuisine or spectacular landscapes and natural resources. In the UK, however, the most important source of local pride is historical heritage. It will be a key objective of the project to strengthen the engagement of local people with their cultural heritage and to increase the awareness that 'their' cultural heritage is world cultural heritage.

2014 Report

In September 2013, Veli Köse of Hacettepe University was granted the official excavation permit for the site of Aspendos. During the first excavation season (July to August 2014), cultural heritage management was one of the project's priorities. A team of researchers collected a substantial amount of both qualitative and quantitative data for the people-centred approach to cultural heritage that the project is trying to emphasise by interviewing visitors, on the one hand, and local inhabitants, on the other. Hakan Tarhan (Boğaziçi University) undertook on-site interviews as part of the visitor survey programme. He interviewed 300 international and Turkish visitors and 50 professional tour guides, while Işıl Gürsu (the BIAA Cultural Heritage Management Fellow) conducted in-depth visitor interviews at the site with a smaller group of visitors. Güldem Baykal Büyüksaraç (Istanbul University) conducted interviews with the local community in order to understand their attachment to the site and their perceptions related to the presence of an archaeological team. These interviews have revealed interesting insights that will help the team to understand the various ways in which visitors and local people interpret the site and shed light on the experience of an archaeological site visit.

Following the excavation season, meetings took place at the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism regarding a 'landscaping project' and an application for UNESCO World Heritage Listing for Aspendos. The landscaping project is based on plans that have been prepared in the light of the data collected during the 2014 season. It will be implemented by the Ministry from the end of 2014 onwards and involves the creation of various walking routes for visitors and the placement of information boards around the site. The second phase of the landscaping project will concentrate on the use of the Eurymedon (Köprüçay) river, which is very close to Aspendos, within the concept of eco-tourism. Preliminary investigations were undertaken for this purpose during the recent season.

All the necessary documents for the application to add Aspendos to the UNESCO World Heritage List have been submitted to the Ministry. The official application will be made by the Ministry in February 2015.

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2015 Report:

The British Institute at Ankara's cultural heritage management project at Aspendos started in 2013 and remains ongoing. From its very early stages, the underlying philosophy of the programme at Aspendos has been to adopt a 'people-based approach' towards creating a model project in public archaeology in Turkey. After setting up the theoretical foundations of the project, our work in 2015 has concentrated on putting these plans into action.

One important success has been the approval of the first phase of the landscaping element of the project by the Antalya Regional Conservation Council in August 2015. This element, which has been prepared as part of the Aspendos Sustainable Development and Site Management plan by Hacettepe University and the BIAA, entails the construction of a new visitor centre at the entrance to the site (with meeting spaces available for various events for locals, children and visitors), the placement of new information boards and signs with directions, and the establishment of new walking trails around the site. The implementation costs will be covered by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the work is expected to start soon.

To enable a better presentation of the site, one of the interventions badly needed was the clearance of vegetation from around the monuments. After a series of meetings with the mayor of Antalya, the municipality decided to support this initiative by providing workmen and equipment this year and for several years to come. Since the involvement of local authorities is a crucial element in successful cultural heritage management, this new arrangement with the municipality is very important for the sustainability of the project.

Interviews with the local community, especially the workmen involved in the excavation and visitors, continued to be conducted this year. The overall aim is to incorporate the results of these interviews (that were also conducted in 2014) into the cultural heritage management plan for the site and also into the application for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List (Aspendos was added to the tentative UNESCO list in April 2015).

Two other events that are definitely worth mentioning are a meeting with local children and an 'ask an expert' day. The first of these events took place on 21 August in Camili, beneath the famous aqueduct of Aspendos. The idea was to meet with children from Camili and Belkis villages and to explain and show them what archaeologists do, how they work and why the work that they do is important. This was not intended as an education-oriented event; the basic motivation behind it was not to train the children or offer any formal education in history or archaeology, but rather to communicate with them, to make them feel that their participation was all that mattered. The event involved activities in an 'excavation pool' which had been previously prepared by the excavation team and in which many artefacts were waiting to be discovered by the young archaeologists. The recovered but broken

artefacts were taken to a restoration table and put together under the watchful eye of a professional restoration expert and parents. Additionally, the children made leather Roman pouches, painted theatre masks and had their photos taken with their heads popped through cut-outs of Roman characters. It was a memorable event, both for the excavation team and for the local children and their families. The presence of our professional photographer on the day made the event even more ‘memorable’!

On 2 September, we organised an ‘ask an expert’ day. As already mentioned, new information boards will soon be placed around the site; one of the common complaints regarding the information displayed on such boards is that it is too technical and fails to address the questions of the visiting public. Taking this into consideration, this particular initiative aimed to record questions from locals and potential visitors regarding the site. We organised a trip to the site to enable them to raise questions or share their own knowledge about the landscape or the remains. The data gathered during this event are now being processed so that the contents of the information boards can be prepared based on input from potential visitors rather than being the product of the usual, one-sided ‘expert’ approach.

2016 Report

As in previous years, we joined the team working at Aspendos under the direction of Veli Köse (Hacettepe University) to work on the monumental architecture (Vandeput) as well as on cultural heritage management and public archaeology (Gürsu).

Cultural heritage management

Running in parallel to the detailed architectural studies of the monuments lining the visitor routes, the cultural heritage management project at Aspendos has continued; it focused on four different activities in 2016. The first relates to the people-centred approach adopted by the project since its inception. This year, Hakan Tarhan (postgraduate student, Boğaziçi University) and Işıl Gürsu (BIAA fellow) carried out face-to-face interviews with the inhabitants of the nearby market town of Serik, one of the largest centres in the Antalya region. Sixty-five randomly selected people were invited to take part in this survey. The focus was mainly on furthering an understanding of the attitudes of the local community toward archaeological heritage, and, in particular, assessing their interest in the site of Aspendos. These interviews built on work conducted in previous years in the small villages near Aspendos – Camili and Belkıs – as part of an effort to understand better the role of Aspendos in the economic, social and cultural dynamics of these communities. Additionally, Güldem Baykal Büyüksaraç (İstanbul University) has continued socio-anthropological and ethnographic fieldwork in February 2016 around Aspendos Archaeological site and in the neighboring Belkıs.

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