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Historisch Erfgoed

Panamara

The (mis)fortunes of a Karian sanctuary

Williamson gives us an insight in the rich history of the sanctuary at Panamara. After it becomes clear that this place was of great cultural and political importance, the author pleads for systematic research before it's too late.

On an isolated hilltop near the village of Bađyaka in southwest Turkey are the remains of what once used to be a majestic sanctuary for southern Karia (Fig. 1). This was the sanctuary of Zeus of Panamara, or Zeus Karios, as he was first called. Zeus was a popular deity in mountainous areas such as inland Karia, and his cult at Panamara was a focus for the lives of several communities in the region. Panamara reflects the mixture of native traditions and Greek influences that was peculiar to Karia. Unlike the independent Greek neighbors to the west, Karia was habitually at the mercy of a larger ruling force; during the Hellenistic period nearly all of the major powers had a turn, until Rome finally stepped in. Fortunately, the Karians adopted the Greek practice of inscribing the things that mattered to them in stone; at Panamara more than 400 inscriptions have been found, turning this sanctuary into one of those special places that affords a rare view into the turbulent history of this region in the later Hellenistic period.

Panamara at the crossroads of power

The first inscriptions from Panamara belong to the turn of the third to second century BC, during the occupation of the sanctuary by Philip V in the Second Macedonian War.¹ The natural defensive setting, with its steep sides

- 1 After the death of Ptolemy IV Philopator in 204 and the power vacuum that followed, Philip V tried to gain control over Ptolemaic territories in Thrace and Asia Minor. His invasion of Ionia and Karia brought opposition from Pergamon and Rhodes, supported by Rome. Philip V lost the Second Macedonian War in 197 BC after the battle at Kynoskephalae.

and good view towards the Marsyas (now the Çine) valley, provided Philip with an excellent base for his troops to control the surrounding region, including the neighboring city of Stratonikeia, some ten kilometers north of Panamara. The earliest datable inscription is an honorific decree for Philip's piety and benevolence towards Zeus Karios, followed by a second honoring

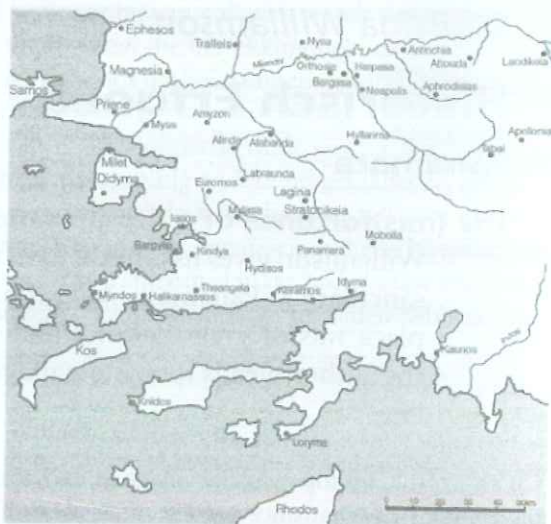


Figure 1. Map showing the area of Panamara and Stratonikeia.

his commander, Asklepiades, who helped rebuild the precinct walls of the sanctuary after an earthquake.² Both inscriptions show us a fortified sanctuary embellished with architecture, since the first decree was to be inscribed on the doorposts, probably of a temple.

Even more interesting, however, is the introduction of the governing body issuing these decrees: the *koinon* of the Panamareis. *Koina* were typical in Karia and may best be described as a local 'commonwealth', or cluster of communities, usually with a sanctuary at their religious and administrative center. The *koinon* of the Panamareis ran the sanctuary and were apparently capable of mobilizing the financing and resources necessary to build its structures. Furthermore, this decree shows us that the *koinon* did not resent Philip V for occupying their sanctuary, but even honored him instead. This would become characteristic of their attitude towards the successive ruling forces, starting with Rhodes who was next in line to rule over the region.³ Showing deference to the wider powers was common practice to ensure

2 M. Ç. Sahin and A. Lozano-Velilla, *Die Inschriften von Stratonikeia* (Bonn 1981-1990) (hereafter *Inschriften von Stratonikeia*) no.3, from 201 BC, and no.4, from 198 BC.

3 At the end of the Second Macedonian War, Antiochos the Great negotiated the Rhodian (re)possession of much of central and southern Karia, including Panamara and Stratonikeia; Rhodian control of this region was acknowledged by Rome in the Peace of Apamea in 188 BC.

harmonious relationships and perhaps even privileges; the sanctuary of Zeus, known throughout the region, provided an excellent public podium to display support and even praise for those on whom the *koinon* of the Panamareis had to rely anyway. After Philip V, various Rhodians were thus also honored at this sanctuary, including the commander (*epistates*) in charge of the regional territories.⁴

Rhodes, however, ruled her new territory with an iron hand, causing several cities under her dominion to complain to Rome. Rome responded by expelling Rhodes from central Karia in 167/166 BC. Stratonikeia, who had also been liberated from Rhodes by Rome, took this opportunity to expand and exert her influence towards the south. The appointment of Leon, a Stratonikeian, as priest of Panamara may be an early indication of this. At the end of his term as priest, Leon was honored by the *koinon* of the Panamareis, but also by other communities, for his acts of goodness and courage at Panamara.⁵ Leon had revived the cult of Zeus by revisiting several of the involved communities, including Stratonikeia, encouraging them to formally acknowledge the ancient rights of inviolability (*asylia*), not only for the sanctuary but also for the *koinon* of the Panamareis.⁶ The recognition of these rights already gave the sanctuary of Zeus a prestigious place in the region, but Leon went even further by asking the communities to increase the splendor of their participation and investment in the cult; extravagant festivals, massive sacrifices, or major dedications come to mind. In short, the sanctuary apparently had fallen into decline some time before, but thanks to Leon, who restored its magnificence and reputation, it underwent a major revival.

4 *Inschriften von Stratonikeia* nos.5-6, and 9 are decrees honoring Rhodians.

5 *Inschriften von Stratonikeia* no.7 is a fragment of an honorific decree by the *koinon* of the Panamareis; the other two decrees are published in M.Ç. ahin, 'Two Hellenistic Decrees from Panamara', *Epigraphica Anatolica* 25 (1995) 83-86: no.1 was a decree by the *polis* of Kallipolis, and no.2 by the *koinon* of the Laodikeis. The discovery of the inscriptions from Kallipolis and Laodikeis complement the dedication by the Panamareis, with the important addition of the identification of the priest as being from Stratonikeia (line 23). Riet van Bremen gives a thorough discussion of these documents in Van Bremen (2004).

6 *Inschriften von Stratonikeia* no.7, lines 4-6 shows that Leon had reconstructed the traditional honors and grants of *asylia* that extended "to Zeus and to the Panamareis" based on old documents. *Inschriften von Stratonikeia* 19 may be Stratonikeia's recognition of the *asylia* of Zeus.

Panamara and Stratonikeia

Leon was probably not acting on his own behalf. Riet Van Bremen, who has done extensive studies of these inscriptions, believes that Leon's initiatives were part of the wider strategy of expansion by Stratonikeia.⁷ Panamara is roughly midway between Stratonikeia and the Gulf of Keramos, and some of the communities (such as the Laodikeis) that worshiped at the sanctuary were still under Rhodian rule; Panamara would have been a good means for the city to achieve its ultimate goal of creating a safe 'corridor' through the southern coastal area still controlled by Rhodes.

Van Bremen argues that these inscriptions, and thus Leon's priesthood, date to the mid-second century BC; that is, shortly after Stratonikeia and Panamara had themselves become independent from Rhodes. This is an important transitional period for both the city and the sanctuary, which was still officially run by the local *koinon* of the Panamareis. Stratonikeia, now free to follow her own agenda, was apparently also at liberty to appoint priests at this sanctuary several kilometers away. Panamara had probably slipped into the same passive limbo that had paralyzed several of the *po-leis* and communities under Rhodian rule, when there was little room for their own initiative or policy making, let alone expansion. Stratonikeia may well have used Leon as a wedge in the power vacuum left in the region in the wake of Rhodes' withdrawal. Gaining credibility and influence at this sanctuary would ultimately lead to influence with the other communities that worshiped there, and probably to the buffer zone that they needed to gain access to the Rhodian dominated coastline.

In any event, not long after this the remote sanctuary was completely administered by the powerful *polis* and eventually all of the priests and most of the worshipers came from Stratonikeia. The *koinon* of the Panamareis was never heard from again; they may well have been assimilated into the population of Stratonikeia.⁸

7 See especially Riet Van Bremen, 'Leon son of Chrysaor and the religious identity of Stratonikeia in Caria' in: S. Colvin ed., *The Greco-Roman East* (Cambridge 2004) 207-244, on the honorific decrees at Panamara for Leon, priest of Stratonikeia; on the use of the sanctuary as access to the Gulf, Van Bremen, *Greco-Roman East*, 237.

8 Van Bremen, *Greco-Roman East*, 238.

Festivals and community building

Panamara flourished under Stratonikeia. Zeus was joined by Hera, who was given her own temple, built in the Ionic order.⁹ A priestly couple served at the sanctuary and there were festivals for both gods, the Heraia for Hera and the Komyrios for Zeus. Both festivals were open to all segments of society and included processions leading out from the town to the sanctuary where the festivities continued. The Heraia was typically used to date the priesthoods or events (e.g. when so-and-so was priest during the Heraia), although the festival alternated annually with the Komyrios. The Komyrios was restricted to men and involved a mystery rite in the sanctuary that included drinking wine and dedicating locks of hair (the order in which these events occurred are unknown); rather than a *rite du passage* for adolescents, this seems to have been a regular event that involved all the male participants. In the meanwhile the women stayed outside the sacred precinct, probably in the large level area in the northern part where they were waited on, presumably by the priestess, and were given wine and olive oil as well. The Hera festival, in the alternating years, was exclusive to women but they were also accompanied by the men who waited outside the sanctuary. During this festival gifts of wine, oil and money were also given to all the participants.¹⁰

So we can envision a yearly trek of the entire population –citizens, slaves, foreigners, male, female, young and old– making the journey out from Stratonikeia to the sanctuary of Panamara (which probably took half a day) where they stayed and feasted for two days before returning home. Although the emphasis of the rites alternated between women and men, everyone was involved in the celebrations during which all the usual social distinctions such as class or origin fell away – the only thing that counted was gender and affiliation with Stratonikeia. Stratonikeia had thus staked her claim in

9 *Inschriften von Stratonikeia* no.113 clearly refers to the temple of Hera. *Inschriften von Stratonikeia* no.112 is a dedicatory inscription on an Ionic entablature, by Posittos son of Apellos.

10 An extensive description of both festivals is given in J. Hanlik-Andrée, under the lemma 'Panamaros' in *Paulys Real Encyclopädie der classischen Altertums-wissenschaft* (Stuttgart 1949), 450-455. Much of this is drawn from inscriptions from the Imperial period: see *Inschriften von Stratonikeia* nos.202-203, and 205, and the dedication of hair during the Komyrios in 401-500. On the Heraia, see also A. Lozano, 'Las mujeres y su participación en las festividades religiosas de Panamara (Estratonicea, Caria)', *Veleia* 8-9 (1991-92) 139-144. Nearly all the priestly inscriptions from the Imperial period show that the annual priesthood was held by a couple, with the male priest presiding over both festivals.

this territory via Panamara, but went a step further than just a takeover of the status quo. The entire nature of the cult was changed by the addition of Hera and the festivals, which prove that the focus was not just on the territory of Stratonikeia, but also on the Stratonikeians themselves.

The miracle of Zeus Panamaros

The nature of Zeus himself changed as well, especially after 39 BC when he made a miraculous appearance, or epiphany, that warded off an assault by Labienus on the sanctuary. Labienus was an ally of Brutus and was busy engaging Parthian troops when he learned of Brutus' downfall. He then proceeded with his troops through southern Asia Minor on his own mission of conquest and pillage. Most *poleis* gave in to him readily but when Stratonikeia successfully resisted, he attacked her major rural sanctuaries instead, hitting the city where it hurts; this also shows how vital sanctuaries were to civic identity, even acting as symbols of the city itself. Labienus thus consciously desecrated the sanctuary of Hekate at Lagina in the north, and then turned to Panamara to do the same. However, while his troops tried to scale the steep hillsides of the sanctuary, their ladders collapsed, their missiles landed in empty fields, and they were met day after day by fire, rainstorms, thunder and lightning, thick fog, and hallucinations; all the while shouts of: 'great is Zeus Panamaros' could be heard and the god's lamps kept burning brightly in the temple.¹¹

In all the confusion Labienus' troops began fighting each other and eventually fled into the mountains. From this time on the god was shown on horseback on the coins (Fig. 2) and was known as Zeus 'Panamaros', while his original epithet of 'Karios' began to fade. This name change of course emphasized that it was not just any Zeus, or even the great Zeus of Karia, but it was *this very* Zeus, at *this very* sanctuary in Panamara, who saved the Stratonikeians and *this* is where it happened. Place is meaning.

This episode triggered two highly significant events for the sanctuary, but also the city. One was the *Senatus Consultum* of 39 BC which, although fragmentary, appears to have granted inviolability (*asylia*) once more to the sanctuary.¹² The recognition by Rome of this sanctuary indicates not only

11 This miraculous event was inscribed in detail in *Inschriften von Stratonikeia* no.10, and is one of the best surviving accounts of an epiphany from antiquity; see also Roussel 1931.

12 *Inschriften von Stratonikeia* nos.11 and 12.



Figure 2. Equestrian Zeus Panamaros shown on a coin from Stratonikeia, from the early Imperial period (A.R. Meadows, 'Stratonikeia in Caria. The Hellenistic city and its coinage', *Numismatic Chronicle* 162 (2002) 79-134: Group 4b, specimen 1a).

the importance of Panamara, but also the importance of Stratonikeia, who had long been loyal allies of Rome and who sent a delegation of 12 ambassadors to the Senate in Rome to plead their cause and relate the miraculous intervention by Zeus.

The second important event was the inception of yet a third festival, the Panamareia. Whereas the other festivals lasted two days, this festival lasted ten and took place in town, rather than at Panamara. Every year Zeus' image was brought down from the hilltop sanctuary, some ten kilometers away, on horseback in a procession to the town center and placed in a shrine in the *bouleuterion*, or town hall. During the ten days the entire town feasted in various public places all across the city in honor of their savior god, before his cult image was returned to the sanctuary in a separate closing festival.

These festivities took place at least through to the third century AD, when the cult of Zeus at Panamara finally began to wane. We are however very fortunate that many of the decision-makers decided to record their decisions and memories in stone, since this is the source for nearly everything we know about the sanctuary. These inscriptions have also been crucial in understanding the topography of southern Karia; several ancient cities and *koina* in the area have recently been identified, thanks in part to their appearance on the inscriptions of Panamara.¹³

Panamara today

Despite the fact that Panamara was once one of the major sanctuaries of Karia, it has unfortunately never been subject to any systematic archaeological investigations. Meanwhile, the encroaching strip mines have already obliterated parts of the sacred way that once connected Panamara and Stratonikeia. Alfred Laumonier visited the hilltop in the 1930s, and the crude sketch that he was able to make is still the only plan we have of the site. Today nothing is left standing of the temples that once crowned the top, but several marble architectural fragments and some inscriptions still lie

13 P. Debord and E. Varinlioglu, *Les hautes terres de Carie* (Bordeaux 2001).

scattered across the surface (Fig. 3). A few stretches of the precinct wall are still intact, showing how robust and fortified the sanctuary once was. Sadly, however, they can no longer protect it from the illegal excavations that continue with each successive generation of gold-diggers. The surface of the site is pockmarked with clandestine holes, some exposing



Figure 3. Surface fragments at Panamara (photo author).

sub-structural walls down to depths of nearly two meters, with all the non-marketable architectural or ceramic fragments merely tossed aside.

Although the overall superficial appearance of this once majestic sanctuary is heartbreaking, systematic archaeological work could still complement our picture of this important sanctuary, now based on inscriptions alone. Like the forests mentioned in the ancient inscriptions that still surround the top today, much of the sanctuary should also still be intact underground, since looters tend to dig in clusters, and are not after architecture anyway. The ground plans of several structures can still be recovered; also a good study of the pottery, in large quantities on the surface with surely more below, could give a better indication of the chronology and use of the sanctuary, even if they are no longer *in situ*. It would certainly be worthwhile to finally give this sanctuary, which functioned for at least five centuries and was a linking pin in the history of the region, the attention it deserves. But that might take another miracle.