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# Preliminary Report on the 2023 Fieldwork at Phoenix and Casara

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## Abstract

The third multidisciplinary archaeological campaign of the Phoenix Archaeological Project (PAP) was carried out in the summer of 2023 and focused on the southern areas of the ancient site of Phoenix in the southwest of the Bozburun peninsula (Marmaris) and on the ancient settlement of Casara. The main focus was on identifying and mapping various archaeological sites, especially agricultural workshops and farmsteads and their associated spaces. Two harbours, Gedik Bay and Serçe Limanı, were also investigated. We also continued our cultural and environmental heritage education program for children and launched an initiative entitled "Reviving Cultural Heritage through Culinary Arts" in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

**Keywords:** Caria, Phoenix, Casara, Bozburun, Carian Chersonese, Rhodian Peraea

## Résumé

La troisième campagne archéologique multidisciplinaire du Projet Archéologique Phoenix (PAP) a été menée à l'été 2023 et s'est concentrée sur les zones sud du site antique de Phoenix au sud-ouest de la péninsule de Bozburun (Marmaris) et sur le site antique de Kasara. L'accent a été mis sur l'identification et la cartographie de divers sites archéologiques, en particulier des ateliers agricoles et des fermes et leurs espaces associés. Deux ports, la baie de Gedik et Serçe Limanı, ont également été étudiés. Nous avons aussi poursuivi notre programme d'éducation au patrimoine culturel et environnemental pour les enfants et lancé une initiative intitulée "Faire revivre le patrimoine culturel par l'art culinaire" en coopération avec le Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement (PNUD).

**Mots-clés :** Carie, Phoenix, Kasara, Bozburun, Chersonèse de Carie, Pérée rhodienne

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## Introduction

The ancient settlements of Phoenix / Phoinix and Kasara / Casara lie within the boundaries of the modern village of Taşlıca, Marmaris district, Muğla province. The settlements located in the south-west of the Bozburun peninsula were politically, economically and culturally part of the Carian Chersonese since the Archaic period and part of the Rhodian Peraea since the Hellenistic period.<sup>1</sup> Since 2021, systematic and intensive surface surveys have been carried out in the rural areas of Taşlıca and Söğüt to improve our understanding of the archaeology of the peninsula, address important research questions and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage.<sup>2</sup>

The archaeological survey of Phoenix and its southern neighbour Casara were carried out in a rural and mountainous area of approximately 750 hectares, encompassing Gedik to the east, Yeşilgelme harbour to the north, Serçe harbour to the south and Hisardibi / Asardibi to the west (Fig. 1). Our research focused on documenting the rural settlement landscape consisting of Gedik, a natural bay in the south of the valley in the Phoenix *chora*, which consists of farms, olive oil workshops and wine production sites scattered in the north-east, east and south of Casara. The finds from previous years provided new data for an analogous assessment of the agricultural organisation of the region, the determination of the political boundaries between Phoenix and Casara, the evaluation of the relationship of the settlements to the ancient road networks and the Serçe Limanı, and the contextualisation of the finds from the Middle Ages. In particular, the systematic documentation of the acropolis of Casara and the site's southern

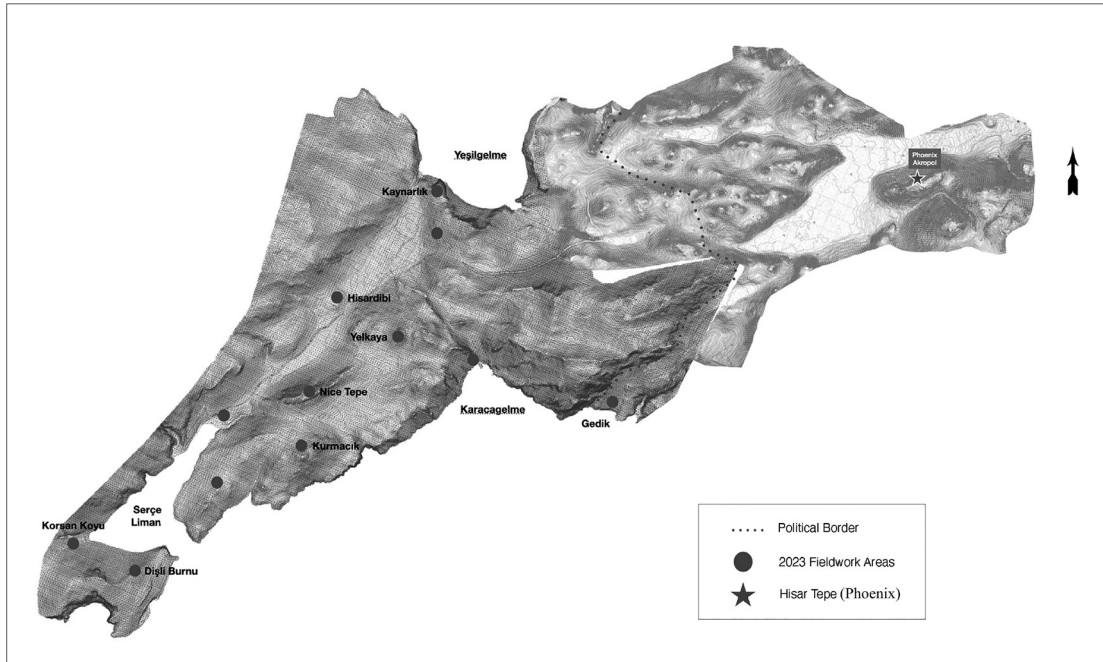


Fig. 1 Map of the areas surveyed in 2023 (PAP archive).

<sup>1</sup> Fraser, and Bean, *The Rhodian Peraea and Islands*, 58, 59.

<sup>2</sup> We would like to thank the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums of the Republic of Turkey for their official permission and support. We also thank Mr Avni Tarık Güçlütürk, specialist at the Istanbul Restoration and Conservation Center and at the Regional Laboratory Directorate, who participated in the 2023 campaign as a representative, for his valuable contributions.

necropolis was remarkable in determining the deep history of the settlement and revealing the settlement structure.

In a further phase of the 2023 fieldwork, the traditional rural architectural heritage of the village of Taşlıca was documented and its typo-chronological similarities and differences with the ruins of the village of Phoinikoudi / Fenaket identified in previous years were uncovered. At the same time, scientific endeavours on movable and immovable cultural assets in the region,<sup>3</sup> epigraphic research,<sup>4</sup> research on the Byzantine period and flora studies<sup>5</sup> were supported and the complex data obtained as a result of the studies were recorded in a digital database.

## Gedik Valley

In the first phase of the 2023 archaeological fieldwork, our research focused on the 600 m long and 15 m wide, north-south running narrow gorge that extends to Gedik Beach, about 2 km south of the Phoenix acropolis, and the natural bay to the south (Fig. 2-3). The area, also known as Prinari / Pınarlıbükü, is one of the closest points of the peninsula to the island, at a distance of 19 km from Rhodes.<sup>6</sup>

During the investigations carried out in 2022 in the north of the area, an ancient path was discovered that started from Hisar Tepe (Phoenix) acropolis and extended to Gedik Beach in the south. It was found that there were farms and olive oil workshops around the ancient path dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In addition to these workshops, detached graves, which probably belonged to the owners of the farms, were identified as elements that completed this cultural landscape in Gedik. The investigations carried out in the area revealed that, in addition



Fig. 2 Aerial views of the Gedik Valley (PAP archive).

<sup>3</sup> Architect Münire Rumeysa Çakan, (Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University), is responsible for the 'Phoenix Rural Architecture Documentation and Preservation Program' as part of her doctoral thesis.

<sup>4</sup> Assoc. Prof. Koray Konuk (CNRS, Bordeaux) and Dr Anna Sitz (Tübingen University) are responsible for the PhoenixEpigraphy sub-project.

<sup>5</sup> Research into the flora is being carried out by landscape architect Kübra Günbey.

<sup>6</sup> The area including Gedik is referred to as *paralia tracheia* by Strabo (XIV 2, 4 (652)). See also Hild *Karien in Portulanen und Portulankarten von der Antike bis in die frühosmanische Zeit*, 85. Some researchers have proposed that Gedik could be Tlos or Gelos, the existence of which is known from inscriptions. See Fraser, and Bean, *The Rhodian Peraea and Islands*, 58; Bresson, *Recueil des inscriptions de la Péree rhodienne*, 251; Foss, and Reger, "Map 61 Ephesus Introduction," 947. It has been suggested that the bay in Prinari Bay, between Eleussa and Loryma, was the port of Phoenix, see Spratt, "Remarks on the Dorian Peninsula and Gulf," 356.





**Fig. 3**  
Aerial view of  
Gedik Beach  
(PAP archive).



**Fig. 4**  
Tomb remains of  
various types from  
Gedik (PAP archive).

to the agricultural production facilities and the tombs, there was also a public / sacred area (?) from the Hellenistic period on the western slopes of the valley.<sup>7</sup>

In 2023, field research in the southern part of the area was extended to the coast. The investigations carried out in the southern part of the Gedik gorge and the bay revealed that the area was surrounded by various types of tombs, including a *khamasorion* tomb from the Hellenistic period, a tomb with a stepped pyramidal stone and an inscribed niche that appears to belong to a tomb along a narrow north-south line to the south. The tombs in question are thought to have been used intensively in the Hellenistic period, but based on an identified figure on a wall painting, the present area was used for the same purpose in Late Antiquity (Fig. 4). These finds

<sup>7</sup> Yaman et al., "Fieldwork at Phoenix 2021," 291; Yaman et al., "Fieldwork at Phoenix 2022," 189; Yaman et al., "A Preliminary Report on the 2022 Fieldwork at Phoenix," 185-198.

indicate that products, goods and people were transported to Gedik, one of the bays closest to Rhodes in the south, from the Hellenistic period onwards, but the bay was far from serving as a 'harbour'. In this context, it is thought that the area, which was connected by an ancient road from Gedik Bay to the Phoenix acropolis on Hisar Hill to the north, not only transported farm produce but also provided a passageway for visitors from Rhodes.

The tombs that we have identified in the area show that the narrow area south of the Gedik Valley, running north-south, served as a *ἀγρός νεκρόπολις* (rural necropolis). When the data on the bastion and other defences we have identified are correlated with the geographical structure, it appears likely that the area of the ancient settlement of Phoenix was bounded by the Akgeri Hill and the Gedik Valley to the south and that the administrative area of the ancient settlement of Casara was located south of this line. It has been established that the defences built in the Hellenistic period were reinforced in the Early and Middle Byzantine period and controlled the north-south line of the peninsula.

### Casara: Kaynarlık Hill, the Acropolis

The second phase of the archaeological surface investigations of 2023 was carried out on Kaynarlık Hill and its surroundings. It is located north of Serçe Limanı and the Hisardibi depression, immediately east of Yeşilgelme Bay, overlooking Symi and Sögüt Bay and its northern neighbour Thysannus (Fig. 5). Epigraphic evidence and observations indicate that the walled Kaynarlık Hill, which is about 100 m above sea level, was the center of the *deme* and the acropolis of Casara.<sup>8</sup> In the 2023 studies, the polygonal-masonry walls found on the southern part of the hill (Fig. 6) and ceramics from the Geometric period (Fig. 7) were the most important data proving that the acropolis was used from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE onwards. The two-layer structure of the walls, one inner and one outer, is similar to that of Phoenix and other settlements on the peninsula.<sup>9</sup> Due to the steepness of the northern and western slopes, it is assumed that no walls were built in these parts; the preserved walls elsewhere were generally badly damaged. The watchtowers, the additional arrangements on the city walls and the ceramic data we have identified on the acropolis of Casara prove that the acropolis was used throughout the Late Antique period and the Middle Ages.

The survey carried out in the south of the acropolis documented a three-nave church with a basilica floor plan in an accessible location near the Hisardibi depression (Fig. 8).<sup>10</sup> This church was briefly described by Vincenzo Ruggieri in 1989 and dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>11</sup> A thick

<sup>8</sup> Casara was first localised by T. Bent in 1888 (Bent, *The Travel Chronicles of Mrs J. Theodore Bent*, 82-83). On the finds and observations at Casara, see Dürrbach, and Radet, "Inscriptions de la Pérée rhodienne," 260; Bresson, *Recueil des inscriptions de la Pérée rhodienne*; Fraser, and Bean, *The Rhodian Peraea and Islands*, 59, 140; Atauz, "Asardibi (Casara)". V. Ruggieri states that there was a Byzantine settlement on the acropolis, see also Ruggieri, "Rilievi di architettura bizantina nel golfo di Simi," 358.

<sup>9</sup> See Pimouget-Pédarros, "Les fortifications de la Pérée rhodienne".

<sup>10</sup> For the church, see Ruggieri, "Rilievi di architettura bizantina nel golfo di Simi," 359-360, pianta 7; Hild, *Meilensteine, Straßen und das Verkehrsnetz der Provinz Karia*, 32.

<sup>11</sup> Ruggieri, "Rilievi di architettura bizantina nel golfo di Simi," 359. Before Ruggieri, Theodore Bent claimed to have seen a "Byzantine church" while travelling in 1888, but his map placed it further south in the valley. The fact that T. Bent was unable to obtain the admiralty maps he requested in time and only drew his map after his journey may have been a factor in the apparently incorrect localization of the building. See Bent, *The Travel Chronicles of Mrs J. Theodore Bent*, 226.



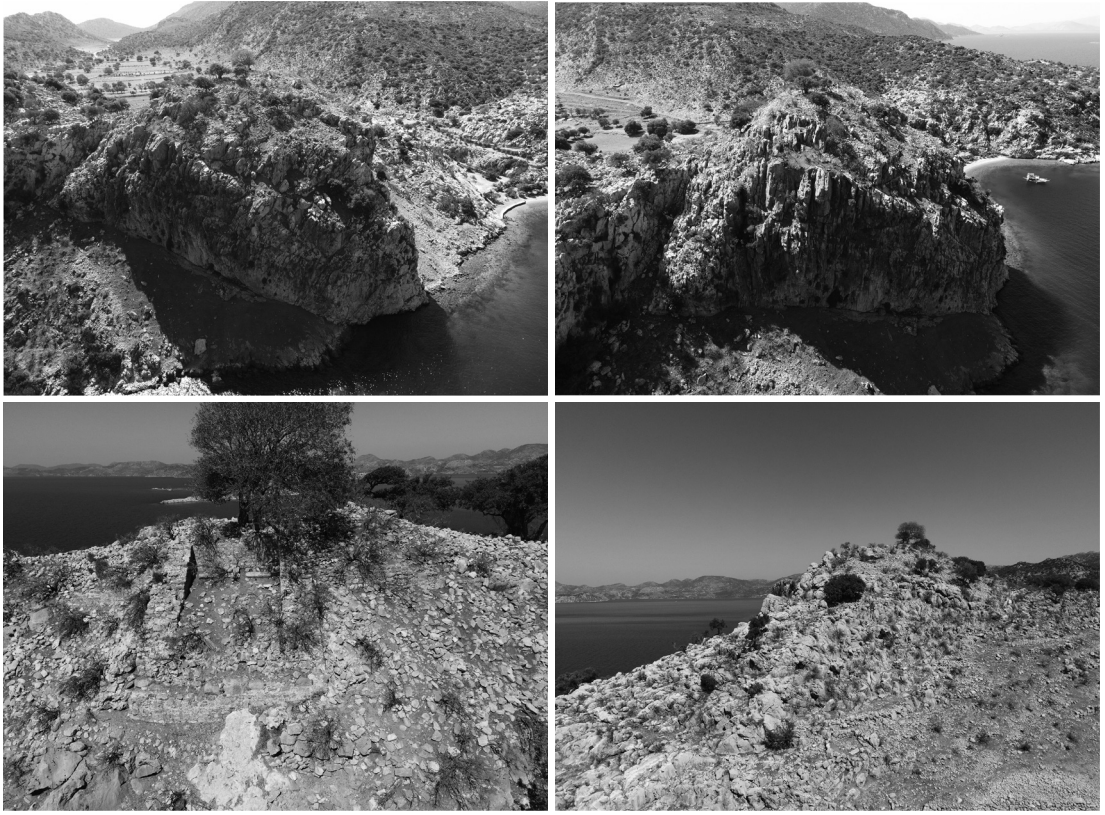


Fig. 5 Aerial views of the acropolis of Casara (Kaynarlık Hill) (PAP archive).



Fig. 6 Aerial views of the acropolis of Casara (Kaynarlık Hill) (PAP archive).

apse was discovered in the east of the church, extending in an east-west direction. Investigations have shown that *spolia* were used extensively for the church walls and that the stepped pyramidal grave blocks contained in these walls as *spolia* were transported to this area from the southern

necropolis. Dated ceramics such as Late Roman C production (LRC) Hayes Form 3, Late Roman D production Form 2 and other finds suggest that the church was built in the second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. The density of the *spolia* material, the oral traditions of the locals and the findings of V. Ruggieri indicate that there was a temple dedicated to an unknown deity in the area where the church is located in the early period.<sup>12</sup>

Casara, situated on the coast, was a harbour settlement, unlike Phoenix. The natural Yeşilgelme Bay, which has a bowl-like structure to the north-west, seems to have been used for trade between Casara and its northern neighbour Thysannus / Saranda and the nearest island to the west, Symi. Serçe Limanı (Kressa Limeni, Portus Cressa), located about 2 km south of the settlement, must have functioned as a joint trading and military harbour between Phoenix and Rhodes.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 7 Geometric Period sherds from Casara (PAP archive).



Fig. 8 Church remains at the foot of the acropolis of Casara (PAP archive).

## Hisardibi / Asardibi: Southern Necropolis and Farms

Our investigations have shown that the fertile plain of Hisardibi / Asardibi, extending in a north-east-south-west direction, was the core settlement area of the *deme* of Casara and was important for agricultural production. In situ, farms and olive oil workshops were identified, extending from the slopes of Kaynarlık Hill in the north to Hisardibi and Serçe Limanı in the

<sup>12</sup> For the cultic landscape in Casara, see Bresson, *Recueil des inscriptions de la Pérée rhodienne*, 153-160.

<sup>13</sup> For underwater ceramic finds from the bay, see Atauz, "Ceramic Assemblage from the Harbor of Kasara on the Carian Chersonesos".



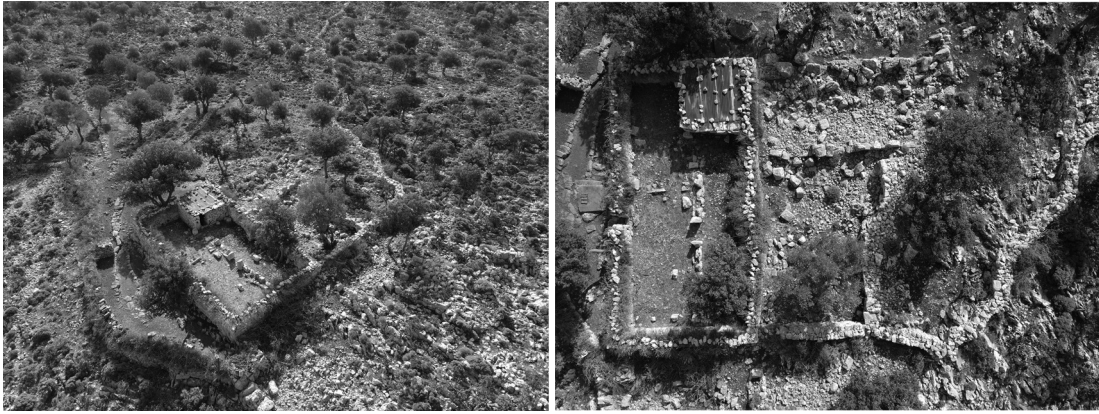


Fig. 9 Aerial views of farm structures in the Hisardibi / Asardibi (PAP archive).



Fig. 10 Tomb remains in the south necropolis of Casara (PAP archive).

south along the eastern and western slopes (Fig. 9). The finds have shown that these farms and workshops are located around the old roads stretching from Yeşilgelme Limanı in the north to Serçe Limanı in the south and to its southern neighbour Loryma in two branches, east and west.<sup>14</sup> The production-based settlement system, consisting of *Ktemata* and *Villae Rustica / Pars Rustica*, which is thought to have been in use since the early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, was structured similarly to that of its northern neighbour Phoenix. The finds indicate that the farms were reactivated from the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE and were used in a similar organisation throughout the Middle Ages. In addition, the discovery of an ancient path extending southwards from the acropolis of Casara and passing through the neighbouring settlement of Loryma indicates that the two sites were connected by land. As this path is labelled on the Tabula Peutingeriana, the route was likely in use throughout the Roman and Late Roman periods.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See also Spratt, "Remarks on the Dorian Peninsula and Gulf," 359; Hild, "Stadia und Tracheia in Karien," 239-240.

<sup>15</sup> Tab. Peut. IX 1; Hild, *Karien in Portulanen und Portulankarten von der Antike bis in die frühosmanische Zeit*, 87



The field studies carried out along Hisardibi revealed that in addition to the rural settlement organisation, there were also many graves located together with farms. It was found that the area extending along the eastern and western slopes of Hisardibi to Serçe Limanı contained various types of tombs, such as *khamosorion*, step pyramid grave markers and chamber tombs of the Rhodian type on the grave terraces running in a north-south direction. We call this area the Casara ‘South Necropolis’ and it represents an ἄστὴ νεκρόπολις (urban necropolis) (Fig. 10).

### Serçe Limanı: Portus Cressa

Serçe Limanı, located in the south of Hisardibi, is one of the best-protected and most important natural harbours in the region (Fig. 11).<sup>16</sup> The third phase of field studies in 2023 focused on Serçe Limanı and its surroundings with the aim of understanding the trade relations of Phoenix and Casara with the harbour and determining the defensive organisation of the harbour. Our findings and observations indicate that Serçe Limanı, which is geographically connected to the centre of Casara and located facing the island of Rhodes, was historically used for trading purposes together with Phoenix.<sup>17</sup>

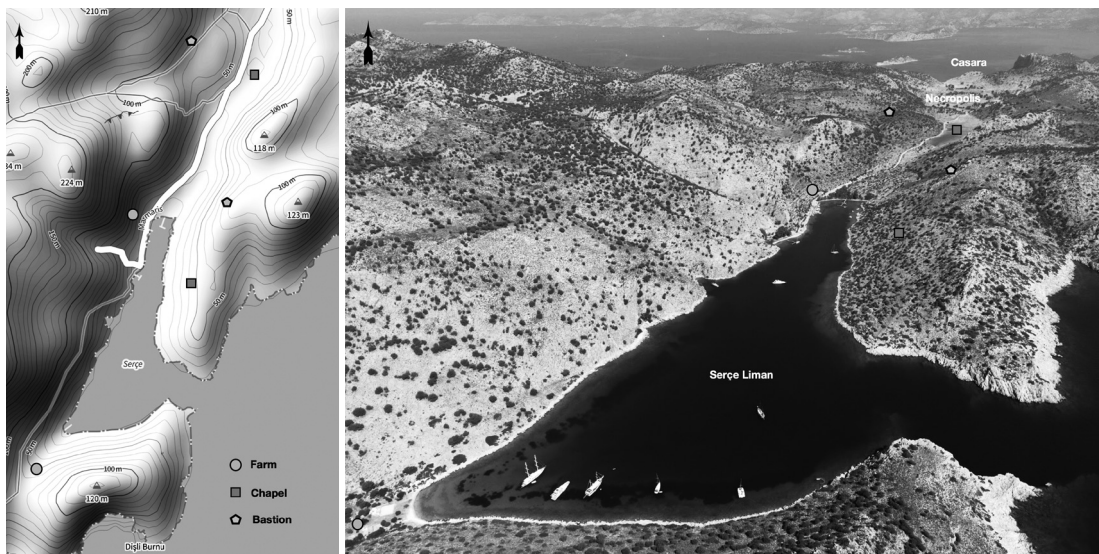


Fig. 11 Map and aerial view of the bay of Serçe Limanı (PAP archive).

<sup>16</sup> On the shipwrecks found in Serçe Limanı, see Bass, Steffy, and van Doorninck Jr., “Excavation of an 11th-century Shipwreck at Serçe Limanı, Turkey,” 161-182; Pulak, and Townsend, “The Hellenistic Shipwreck at Serçe Limanı Turkey,” 31-57.

<sup>17</sup> The bays between Rhodes and the peninsula are described by Herodotus as *Τραχέας κόλπος*, and good harbours and bays for protection are mentioned here. See Herodotus, I 174.3 Although the ancient name of the harbour is not clearly known, as there is no epigraphic data, it is accepted as Cressa Limen in ancient Greek (Ptolemy, V.2, 8) and Portus Cressa in Latin (Pliny, NH, V, 104). On mediaeval harbour maps (portulans), the name Serçe Limanı is referred to as the harbour of the Anconitans. In Piri Reis, the harbour is referred to as Çay Gemlik, and it is reported that it could accommodate a total of 30 ships and that there was no fresh water. See also Hild, “Stadia und Tracheia in Karien,” 239; Hild, *Meilensteine, Straßen und das Verkehrsnetz der Provinz Karia*, 32; Hild, *Karien in Portulanen und Portulankarten von der Antike bis in die frühosmanische Zeit*, 88-89; Atauz, “Asardibi (Casara),” 62; Carter, “The Region of Serçe Limanı in Classical Times”.

Investigations on the eastern slopes of Çatal Hill, which surround Serçe Limanı, Dişli Burnu and Korsan Koyu in the south and the western slopes of Kurmacık Hill, have shown that the harbour was naturally protected and that, apart from a guard post from the Hellenistic period in the southwest of Kurmacık Hill, no defences were built.

A 12.80 x 10 metre chapel from the Byzantine period with an east-west oriented basilica floor plan, three-aisled, an apse with a diameter of 2.87 x 2 m in the east and an entrance and narthex in the west was discovered during the field research on the slope east of Serçe Limanı. The floor plan of the chapel, which is surrounded by dense vegetation and stone rubble, is difficult to recognise. No other structures or enclosure walls were discovered around the chapel, which is surrounded by mortar walls. It is believed that the building, which overlooks the Serçe Limanı, could be seen by sailors and was probably dedicated to a saint associated with the sea, fell out of use after the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Another chapel probably of the Middle Byzantine period was also documented in the south of the plain that lies to the north of Serçe Limanı (see Fig. 13 below). Although this chapel has well-preserved walls and is clearly known by locals, it has so far not been discussed in publications on the Byzantine monuments of the region.

During investigations on the western slopes of Serçe Limanı, ancient agricultural terraces were discovered that extend in a north-south direction and are 7-8 metres wide in the north-west of the harbour. No cultural artefacts were found during the investigations along the western slope. Immediately west of the restaurant with a pier and the bay, a dried-up water source and a narrow valley extending towards Loryma were identified. Some building foundations were identified in the shoreline area where the abandoned restaurant is located to the east of this valley, but the area was found to have been significantly damaged and altered. Dated finds such as mushroom mouth amphorae and ceramics belonging to Phocian Hayes Form 3 in the area in question indicate that the bay where the abandoned restaurant is located was used for the transport of products in antiquity. The absence of traces of warehouses / *siloi* or similar structures for product regulation around the harbour indicates that the products produced in the agricultural production systems of Phoenix and Casara were shipped directly from the harbour. The lack of rooms that served as warehouses in the identified farm complexes supports this view.<sup>18</sup>

In another sector of the research around Serçe Limanı, a building complex was identified on the crest of the slope in a dominant position overlooking Dişli Bay to the north and Korsan Bay to the south, which is currently used as an animal stable. Dated ceramic finds such as the base of a 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE Rhodian amphora, roof tiles and building walls preserved at the foundation level, which have been intensively observed in the area, indicate that this area may have been a farm in the Hellenistic period. The two identified cisterns carved into the main rock and the fact that a natural reservoir was surrounded by a wall and used as a water tank, the fact that the complex is located next to the ancient path running north-south, and that it has access to Dişli Bay to the north and Korsan Bay to the south and is located at a dominant point similar to other farm complexes are other elements that support these views.

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<sup>18</sup> For de-centralised agricultural organisation at Phoenix, see Yaman et al., "Fieldwork at Phoenix 2021," 292-293.

## Epigraphic Studies: Deciphering Casara

Epigraphic investigations were carried out in a further phase of the research conducted in the area of Casara in 2023. As a result of the research conducted in previous years, the few published inscriptions helped to locate the centre of the *deme* and offered a better understanding of the cultic landscape.

Before our fieldwork at Casara, thirteen inscriptions certainly or probably from the site and its valley were known.<sup>19</sup> The 2023 fieldwork season brought six new inscriptions to light (increasing the total number of inscriptions from Casara by nearly 50%) and allowed for a re-examination of a number of already published texts. Of the nineteen inscriptions now known from Casara, at least eleven are grave inscriptions (as determined by block shape or the text itself). Among the grave texts discovered in 2023, one naming a “Dioskouridas, son of Daskyl[os?]” is significant because if restored correctly, the patronymic, Daskylos, is a rare name otherwise known primarily from the tale of Gyges, as given by Herodotos.<sup>20</sup> Four inscriptions are grave texts for women, either named (Blümel no. 59, Nikomakha) or designated as “wife of so-and-so” (Blümel no. 62 = no. 64, and new find PHX.23.446). A woman, Thessalia of Ephesos, is honoured along with her husband, Xenon of Selge, by a koinon of the Asklepiastai (Blümel no. 52). Women were therefore epigraphically prominent at Casara.

Beyond the grave texts, another new find from the 2023 season may contribute to our understanding of the cultic landscape of Casara. An unusual rectangular stone with a slightly concave upper surface *may* have the name of Apollo in the genitive; but research on the reading and interpretation of this stone is still in progress. If correct, this stone may indicate that a cult place for Apollo was located at Casara, as was the case at its neighbours, Phoenix and Loryma.<sup>21</sup>

## PhoenixByz: Phoenix and Casara Churches and Reuse<sup>22</sup>

The field studies conducted in Casara and Phoenix revealed a well-preserved rural settlement system dating back to the Hellenistic period, as already reported in earlier reports, as well as the agricultural complex and the olive oil workshops, which are important elements of this system. Studies focused on the Byzantine period indicate that these agricultural production mechanisms and settlements were reused from the Late Antique period (4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE). The data obtained from the studies show that the most visible evidence of Late Antique and Byzantine life are the churches and chapels built in various locations. The documentation studies conducted since 2021 have shed light on six churches from the Late Antique and Middle Byzantine periods in the Phoenix and Casara areas. In this context, four religious buildings and other traces of the

<sup>19</sup> Note that Blümel, “Die Inschriften der Rhodischen Peraia,” nos. 62 and 64 (Bresson, *Recueil des inscriptions de la Pérée rhodienne*, nos. 164 and 170) have proved to be one and the same inscription, as Blümel already suspected. The confusion was due to J. Theodore Bent’s belief that the letters were “half-Carian” (Hicks, “Inscriptions from Casarea, Lydae, Patara, Myra,” no. 5). They are in fact only irregular Greek letter forms.

<sup>20</sup> Alternatively, the name may be ethnic, indicating that Dioskouridas was from Daskyleion.

<sup>21</sup> Bent in 1888 had already proposed a sanctuary of Apollo at Casara on the basis, however, of a faulty reading of an inscription, which, when published by Hicks the following year, proved to be the grave inscription of a Timapolis.

<sup>22</sup> The Phoenix Archaeological Program offers our warmest thanks to Dumbarton Oaks for the Project Grant that enabled our research on the Byzantine period remains in the 2023 season. For further information, see the grant report at: <https://www.doaks.org/research/byzantine/project-grants/sitz-2023-2024>.





Fig. 12 Unidentified structure (Byzantine chapel ?) on the acropolis of Casara (PAP archive).

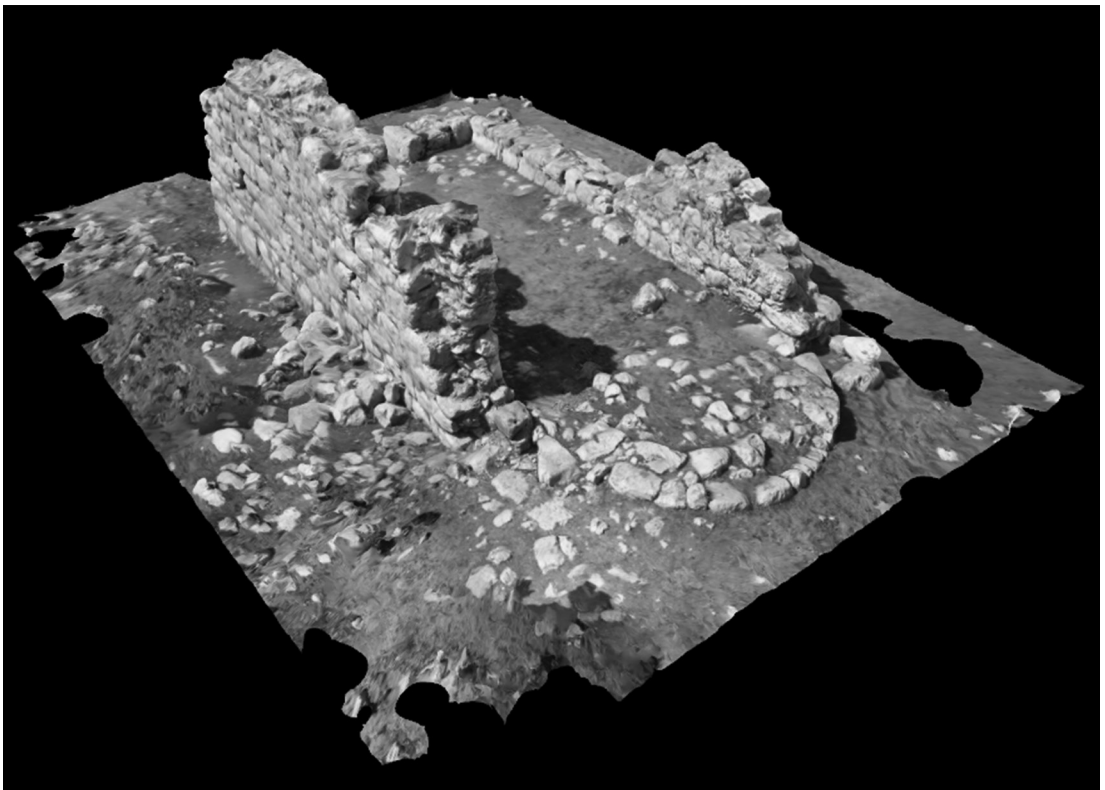


Fig. 13 3D scanning of a Byzantine chapel at Serçe Limanı (PAP archive).

Christian presence in the region, such as cross graffiti, have been documented as part of the 2023 PhoenixByz research program.

The largest church documented during the 2023 campaign is the Casara church (Fig. 8), located at the southern foot of the Casara acropolis hill, as described above. In addition, a structure measuring 4.63 x 7.25 m was identified on the acropolis of Casara, representing the medieval period of the settlement, as well as a curved apse-like wall measuring 1.78 x 1.00 m in the east (Fig. 12). It is possible that this badly damaged apse-like wall belonged to a chapel. Glazed ceramics collected nearby and other finds from the Byzantine period on the acropolis support this view.

As also discussed above, two Byzantine chapels were discovered during investigations in Hisardibi, one in the south of the plain, north of Serçe Limanı, and the other east of the harbour (Fig. 13). The placement of these structures next to a thoroughfare and on a hill, respectively, may indicate that the organisation of agricultural production, which was concentrated on the land of Phoenix and Casara in the Hellenistic period, fell under the control of the church in the Late Antique and Byzantine periods. Studies to be conducted in the coming years will also offer a comparative look at the agricultural organization in Thysannus, Phoenix's northern neighbour.

## Social Responsibility: Phoenix's cultural and environmental heritage education programme for children

In addition to the scientific fieldwork carried out in 2023, a series of activities were organised as part of a social responsibility program to raise awareness of cultural and environmental heritage. This initiative included educational seminars for school children from Marmaris Evrenpaşa Middle School (Fig. 14). Under the supervision of their teachers, the children took part in a guided tour of the ancient settlement of Phoenix. The knowledge gained during the event was further supported by an informational video created by Fatma Yücel, which was specially designed for people with hearing disabilities.

Another component of the program offered participants an immersive experience entitled "A Day in the Life of an Archaeologist" The systematic continuation of this program in the coming years is crucial for the preservation of cultural assets in the region.<sup>23</sup>



**Fig. 14** School children visiting the Phoenix Archaeological Research Center (PAAM) (PAP archive).

<sup>23</sup> The Phoenix Archaeological Project would like to sincerely thank the Muğla Governorate, the Marmaris District Governorate, the Marmaris District Directorate of National Education and the Evrenpaşa Middle School administration for their invaluable support in making this program possible. Special thanks also go to the art teachers Seda Demirtürk, Sevilay İnce Gürsoy and Fatma Yücel.



## Cooking Tradition: Reviving Cultural Heritage through Culinary Arts – A Collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

In 2023, the Phoenix Archaeological Project launched a new social responsibility initiative: the “Taşlıca Cultural and Gastronomic Route Program”, which is part of “The Future is in Tourism” project implemented jointly by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the United Nations Development Program Turkey (UNDP) and Anadolu Efes.<sup>24</sup>

As part of this initiative, signs have been placed at the entrance of Taşlıca village to indicate the location of Phoenix, as well as guidelines for “responsible tourists”. In addition, six bicycles, which can be used by both tourists and residents, have been placed in front of the village headman’s office. The toilets of the Phoenix Archaeological Research Center (PAAM) were also renovated, funded by the Investment Monitoring and Coordination Directorate of the Muğla Governor’s Office (YİKOB).

The inaugural event of the program took place on 18 June 2023, coinciding with World Sustainable Gastronomy Day, and was hosted by the Phoenix Archaeological Research Center (PAAM). During this event, Michelin-starred chef Maksut Aşkar prepared meals for the participants using local ingredients from Taşlıca (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15 Local dishes prepared and served at the Phoenix Archaeological Research Center (PAAM) (PAP archive).

<sup>24</sup> This program was conducted by team member Koray Günyaşar. The Phoenix Archaeological Project would like to thank the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the United Nations Development Program, Muğla Governorate and Anadolu Efes for recognizing the unique cultural and gastronomic values of the region and for the support that made this program possible. Special thanks are also due to team member Koray Günyaşar for his dedicated efforts throughout the process.

An important part of this program is the recognition and preservation of gastronomic traditions as

intangible cultural heritage. Documenting these culinary practices not only helps to preserve the unique cultural identity of the region, but also promotes sustainable tourism by offering visitors authentic experiences rooted in local heritage. By involving the local community in these events, the Phoenix Archaeological Project facilitates the transmission of traditional knowledge and ensures that these practices are not only preserved but also valued by future generations. Sharing this culinary heritage with locals and visitors fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation for the cultural and environmental richness of the region.

The Phoenix Archaeological Project continues to advocate for Taşlıca and its community through ongoing social responsibility programs and scientific research.

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