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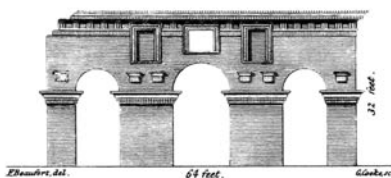
978-1-108-06705-8 - Karamania: Or, a Brief Description of the South Coast of Asia-Minor and of the Remains of Antiquity

Francis Beaufort

Excerpt

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ΠΑΤΑΡΕΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΤΟΥ ΛΥΚΙΩΝ ΕΘΝΟΥΣ Ο ΔΗΜΟΣ

Inscribed on the Corona.*North Gate of Patara*

CHAPTER I.

PATARA—KASTELORIZO.

HAVING obtained the necessary Ferman, or passport, from the Porte, His Majesty's ship Frederikssteen sailed from Smyrna, in July, 1811, and shortly after reached the coast of Karamania.

Our operations began at Yedy-Booroon, or the Seven-Capes, a knot of high and rugged mountains, which appears to have been the antient Mount Cragus of Lycia, the abode of the fabulous Chimæra. At the foot of these mountains,

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the river Xanthus winds through an extensive valley ; and a little farther to the eastward, the ruins of the city of Patara stand near the sea-shore. This place, once a celebrated oracle of Apollo, still preserves its former name, and many traces of its former grandeur ; but as it has been recently visited by a mission of the Dilettanti Society, it will be sufficient here to notice the most striking features, leaving a more copious description to the abler pen and pencil of Sir William Gell.

The theatre at Patara is excavated in the northern side of a small hill, and is somewhat more than a semi-circle, whose external diameter is about two hundred feet: it contains thirty-four rows of marble seats, few of which have been disturbed ; but the superior preservation of the proscenium distinguishes it from most of the antient theatres which are extant, and would render it well worthy of more minute architectural detail. At

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the eastern entrance there is a long and very perfect inscription, recording the building of the theatre, by Q. Velius Titianus; and its dedication by his daughter Velia Procla, in the fourth consulate of the Emperor Antoninus Pius.

A small ruined temple stands on the side of the same hill, and not far from thence, towards the summit, there is a deep circular pit, of singular appearance: a flight of steps leads to its bottom, from the centre of which a square pillar rises above the surface of the ground. It is possible that this may have been the seat of the oracle; the insulated pillar may have supported the statue of the deity, and the pit may have afforded some secret means of communication for the priest.

The town walls surrounded an area of considerable extent; they may be easily traced, as well as the situation of a castle which commanded the harbour, and several towers which flanked the walls:

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at their northern extreme, and facing the theatre, one of the gates is still erect ; a sketch of it is given in the vignette, with an inscription, which occupies the same member of the cornice on both sides. There have also been inscriptions on six projecting scrolls between the arches, but few of them are now legible.

Outside the walls there is a multitude of stone sarcophagi, most of them bearing inscriptions, and all, open and empty. Within the walls ; temples, altars, pedestals, and fragments of sculpture, appear in profusion, but ruined and mutilated. In a temple, which, from the frequent recurrence of the word ΖΕΥΣ , was probably dedicated to Jupiter, a colossal hand was found, of good workmanship ; the fingers are nine inches long, and are in the act of grasping,—perhaps the thunderbolt.

We copied many Greek, and some Latin inscriptions at Patara ; they are too numerous to insert here ; but the follow-

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ing elegiac verses, may perhaps be interesting. The dotted letters represent those which were doubtful, and an asterisk is placed where the original character was quite effaced.

Ι Δ Ρ Ι Ν Α Θ Η Ν Α Ι Η Σ
 Π Α Ν Τ Ω Ν Δ Ι Ο Ν Υ Σ Ι Ο Ν
 Ε Ρ Γ Ω Ν
 Η Ξ Ε Ι Ν Η Π Α Τ Α Ρ Ω Ν Τ Η Μ Ε
 Λ Α Β Ο Υ Σ Α Κ Ρ Α Τ Ε Ι
 Τ Μ Ω Λ Ο Υ Α Π Α Μ Η Δ Ο Ε Ν
 Τ Ο Σ
 Ε Χ Ω Δ Ε Κ Λ Ε Ο Ο Κ Α Ι Ε Ν
 Α * Τ Ο Ι Σ
 Ω Δ Ε Ι Ω Μ Ε Γ Δ Α Η Ν
 Α Μ Φ Ι Β Α Λ Ω Ν Ο Ρ Ο Φ Η Ν

It is evident, from both Strabo and Livy,* that Patara had formerly a harbour; the situation is still apparent, but at present it is a swamp, choked up with sand and bushes, and all communication with the sea cut off by a straight

* Strabo, in Lycia. Livy, xxxvii. 16, 17.

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beach, through which there is no opening.

The sand has not only filled up the harbour, but has accumulated to a considerable height between the ruins and the river Xanthus: long ranges of sand-hills rise with a gradual slope from behind each other, and then break off in abrupt faces, leaving vallies between each ridge: the acclivity is in the direction of the prevailing wind, from the westward; and the surface, on which small eddies of fine sand are in continual motion, is wrinkled like a sea-beach, when uncovered by the tide.

Patara is now uninhabited; but a few solitary peasants were found tending the cattle that wandered about the plain. From those people we learned, that at a short distance in shore, were ruins of far greater extent than those of Patara. They are probably the remains of Xanthus, described by Strabo as the largest

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KASTELORIZO.

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city of Lycia, and celebrated for its singularly desperate resistance to the Persian and to the Roman arms.*

Two miles to the eastward of Patara, there is a large and gloomy bay, where, from the excessive depth of the water, our ship found but uncomfortable anchorage: but in the creeks, smaller vessels find some shelter, and a Greek polacra was loading in one of them with corn for Malta. This bay is now called Kalamaki; and it accurately answers to Livy's description of Port Phœnicus, in which the Roman fleet anchored previously to the attack on Patara.†

From thence we proceeded along a high, rugged shore; and after examining several barren islands, the ship anchored off the harbour and town of Kastelorizo, on the eastern side of a large rocky island of that name. The harbour, though

* Herodotus, i. 176. Plutarch, *Life of Brutus*. Appian. de Bel. Civ. lib. iv.

† Livy, xxxvii. 16.

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small, is snug ; merchant ships of any size can moor within a hundred yards of the houses ; and on the other side, they may even lie so close to the shore as to reach it on a plank.

Two old castles command the town, the harbour, and the outer anchorage ; but in a former war they were taken by the Russians, and almost destroyed. From the uppermost, which stands on a picturesque cliff, the muzzles of a few small cannon still project ; but the Turks, to conceal its weakness, allow no strangers to enter. On the summit of the island, which is about eight hundred feet above the level of the sea, there is another small ruined fortress, which from its situation must have been impregnable. Vertot says, that the knights of Rhodes kept possession of this island for a long time ; these castles and fortifications ; which appear to have the character of the European architecture of the middle ages, may have been their work.

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The island of Kastelorizo produces absolutely nothing ; meat, fruit, corn, and vegetables, all come from the continent, which, though barren, and devoid of culture in its external appearance, contains inland, it is said, many spacious and productive vallies. It, therefore, requires some time for a ship to procure a supply of provisions, and especially of live stock. A small bullock of about three cwt. cost eight dollars : and brinjoes,* grapes, water-melons, and pumkins, were proportionably cheap.

Water is scarce on this part of the coast : from the valley of Patara to the river of Myra, an uninterrupted range of mountains, abruptly rising from the sea, forbids the passage of any stream : the winter torrents cease with the rains ; and from April to November, the inhabitants have no resource but in the capacity of their reservoirs. In summer, therefore,

* *Solanum Melongena.*

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ships are very reluctantly allowed to fill their water-casks.

The town is principally inhabited by Greeks, but under the government of a Turkish Agha,* who is dependant on the Bey of Rhodes. Pilots may generally be met with here, for vessels bound to any part of this coast, or to Syria, and even to Egypt; for Alexandria being supplied, in a great measure, with fuel from the woody mountains of Karamania, there is a constant intercourse between that place and this little port.

From the gulf of Makry to Cape Khe-lidonia, the sea-shore is composed of a white limestone; but in this island an ochry drip, exuding from between the strata, gives a reddish tinge to the cliffs. From this circumstance it probably ac-

* An Agha is a magistrate, or governor; his district is called an Aghalik. A petty Agha generally holds his government for a year only, at the expiration of which he is removed to another, if he can purchase it; for every employment in the empire is purchased.