

Lycaonia and Its Organisation in Roman Antiquity

2.1 Natural Space: Lycaonia in Antiquity

Adopting a distinction made by Reinhart Koselleck, we start with “natural space”.¹ It is important at the outset to account for the geographical situation in which human actions take place. All human behaviour is preconditioned by natural space. Like Greek civilization centuries before, Christianity entered Lycaonia from the south, from the Mediterranean Sea.²

On the southern coast of Asia Minor, the Taurus mountains drop steeply into the sea leaving only a small number of habitable places. Coastal plains emerged only in shallow bays where sediment accumulated, not disappearing into the deep.³ The Greeks came by sea and settled on the coastal plains of Pamphylia and Cilicia where they could pull their small ships onto the sand banks in the bays. The plains up to the shore consisted of arable land on which the settlers could start a new life, the mountains to the north protecting them from the inlanders.⁴ Surrounded by mountains on the western, northern, and eastern sides but open to the Mediterranean to the south, the inhabitants of these coastal plains were oriented primarily towards the sea, relying on seafaring to circumnavigate the cliffs to reach other coastal settlements in the next safe inlet. Between the Pamphylian and Cilician plains fortresses⁵ and small coastal cities,⁶ some with harbours,⁷ others on promontories,⁸ were built⁹ on

1 Cf. Koselleck, “Raum und Geschichte”, 83.

2 For the following description, cf. the overview in map 1 and the detailed maps in chap. 4 below.

3 Cf. Hütteroth and Höhfeld, *Türkei*, 116.

4 Cf. Strabo 14.4.1–3; Hild, TIB 5.24–25; Blumenthal, *Siedlungskolonisation*, esp. 159–160.

5 e.g. Coracesium, Laertes, and Charadrus.

6 e.g. Iotape, Syedra, and Selinus. On the archaeological remains, cf. Drexhage, “Küstenstädte”, 174–175.

7 e.g. Hamaxia for timber export.

8 e.g. Anemurium, Arsinoe, and Aphrodisias/Zephyrion. On Anemurium with its opulent Roman baths (construction started in the 3rd cent. AD), theatre for more than a thousand spectators, odeon, agora, and aqueducts, cf. Drexhage, “Küstenstädte”, 168–174.

9 Cf. Strabo 14.5.3.

the rugged coast.¹⁰ Sustainable settlement, however, was restricted to the two mentioned plains.¹¹

The man who would bring Christianity to Lycaonia grew up on one of these plains, Paul from Tarsus in Cilicia.¹² Sent out to spread the “Word”, he and Barnabas would come by sea, setting foot on the Pamphylian plain in the 40s of the 1st century AD.¹³

2.1.1 *Access: Through the Mountains to Lycaonia*

Like Barnabas and Paul, earlier travellers to the interior followed the valleys through which the rivers from the Taurus run down to coastal plains. These valleys connect the plains on the Mediterranean with the Anatolian highlands and their lake districts. How could travellers gain access to Lycaonia from the Mediterranean coast? Along which roads did Christianity expand into Lycaonia in the interior?

If Paul first came to Lycaonia from Tarsus the city of his birth, his route from the Cilician plain in the east would have been northwards. He would have followed the course of the Cydnus river (Tarsus Çayı) up into the mountains, passing through the Cilician Gates.¹⁴ He could have ascended from Podandus along the *Via Tauri*, through Cybistra situated south-east of modern Ereğli in western Cappadocia, passing Sidamaria (Ambar) to Iconium (Konya) or to Laranda (Karaman) south of Derbe.¹⁵ Later Paul most probably took the latter route twice,¹⁶ although this was not the only route from Tarsus to Lycaonia.¹⁷

10 From the west, the Pamphylian plain stretched from Olbia (west of modern Antalya) beyond Side (Selimiye) and the mouth of the river Melas (Manavgat Çayı) in the east. The Cilician plain started at Soloi/Pompeiopolis (south of Mersin) and Tarsus in the west, going beyond Issus/Nikopolis (Yeşilköy) to the Amanus mountains in the east.

11 Between them the Calycadnus river (Göksu), with its huge catchment area high up in the Taurus mountains, after its south-eastward course through the mountains, forms a delta in the Mediterranean. Over time the soil it carried left the promontory of Cape Sarpedon (İncekum Burnu) south of Seleucia stretching 10 km into the sea with cities like Zephyrion and Korasion (Susananoğlu) up the coast (cf. Strabo 14.5.4).

12 Cf. Acts 22:3.

13 Cf. Acts 13:13.

14 Cf. Diod. Sic. 14.20 and *RRMAM* 3/9, p. 11.

15 Cf. Strabo 12.2.2, 6; *RRMAM* 3/3, p. 20 and no. 003 (Trajanic milestone at Yavaşhan).

16 Cf. Acts 15:41; 18:22–23.

17 From Tarsus Paul could also have headed south-west along the coastal route, passing Soloi and Corycus (near Kız Kalesi). From cities like Holmoi (Taşucu) and Seleucia on the Mediterranean, the route following the course of the mighty Calycadnus and its tributaries led inland north-west passing west of the colony of Ninica. From here or from Corycus via Olba, Paul could have crossed the mountains to Laranda – since Hittite and Luwian