



Promoting the geomorphological heritage of the plain of Xanthos and Letoon (Turkey)

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Xanthos and Letoon, yet jointly included on the World Heritage List of Unesco since 1988, could not be more opposed. The first is an ancient Lycian then Hellenistic city, located on a rocky promontory on the left bank of the river and at the apex of the delta of the river Xanthus in the south of Turkey. The second is a Hellenistic shrine, backed by only a small limestone island on the right bank of the river in the middle of the plain. Xanthos is out of reach of the river and slope dynamics; Letoon was built amid swamps and has struggled since Antiquity against gradual sinking under the alluvial deposits.

To understand how the Lycians occupied this plain from the VIIth century BC and what kind of representations they attached on it, their relationship to their environment must be reconstructed. In such an unstable plain as the end plain of the river Xanthe, it is an important component of any archaeological understanding to highlight the differences between the environmental context in which the sites developed and its current appearance. The changing face of landscapes, even if it is only partially man-made, must be incorporated into the writing of history. Letoon and Xanthos are not only the subject of scholarly study: they also welcome visitors attracted by their cultural values. In this presentation, an attempt is made at promoting the geomorphological heritage of the plain of Xanthos. Educational panels are proposed for Letoon, which aim at introducing visitors to the history of the landscape of the plain. They present different studies (historical, archaeological, literary and geomorphological studies), each providing a specific point of view at different angles into the environmental history of the site. Together, they tell a comprehensive story of Letoon. The geomorphological approach, which is generally not given a lot of emphasis on archaeological site, plays the role of a connecting thread in this pedagogical effort of presentation of a geomorphosite. This communication concludes with developments on the issues and problems raised by the specificities of the object of pedagogical efforts, the intended public and the very characterisation as a geomorphosite.