Since 1996 the Rough Cilicia Archaeological Survey has examined an extensive area of western Rough Cilicia in order to obtain a more balanced appraisal of the historical process of Romanization in this peripheral region of the Eastern Mediterranean. The main purpose of the survey has been to identify cultural indicators of the indigenous population of western Rough Cilicia as these survive in the landscape and to assess the degree to which indigenous culture was shaped by offshore forces such as commerce and military conquest during antiquity. In peripheral areas such as western Rough Cilicia, evidence of native adoption of imported modes of economic production furnish a unique opportunity to view the development of an imperial world system through the lens of local societies. To date, the survey has investigated nine small urban sites characterized as “cities” or poleis, twelve “village” sites, and more than 100 non-urban loci of past human experience. The variety and the unique character of burial centers in western Rough Cilicia reveal a great deal about the cultural background of the region’s inhabitants during the Roman Era. The attributes preserved in epigraphical and material remains of this region indicate that the population consisted of urban land-owning elites dwelling principally along the coast, similar landowners residing in mixed settlements in the midlands or mesogeia, and “Isaurian” pastoralists living in the highlands.

Rough Cilicia (south coastal Turkey) was a mountainous coastal region of marginal significance. In less than 30 kilometers its terrain rises from sea level to a broad highland plateau (the Taşeli in the Tauros Mts.), the crest of which attains 2300m elevation. The coastal population of Rough Cilicia organized itself into a patchwork of city-state/hinterland metropoleis resembling modern counties, in that the urban centers control neighboring neighboring villages. The survey area exhibited six small city states along the coast (Iotape, Selinus, Kestros, Nephelion, Antioch, and Charadros) and three in the hinterland (Lamos, Asar Tepe, and Sivaste, all above 500m elev.). Most if not all settlements were located atop limestone outcrops and promontories. The scale of built environments at urban settlements was similar in either region (ca. 18 hectares). Temporal ceramic data indicates that several sites were occupied before 500 BCE. Chronologically identifiable totals indicate a consistent pattern: low concentrations of pre-Roman ceramics give way to a dramatic spike in the Early Roman era (ca. 60 BCE to 250 CE). This is followed by declining totals in the Late Roman era (250-600 CE) that continue to surpass pre-Roman totals. This conforms well to a pattern in surviving architectural remains of limited evidence of permanent structures of any kind in the pre-Roman era, followed by significant construction of built environments in the Roman and Late Roman eras. The preponderance of the epigraphical evidence indicates that the urban elites settled along the coast were largely assimilated to mainstream Greco-Roman values, particularly with respect to political organization. Hinterland populations in the mesogeia (300-800m elevation) and the highlands (above 800m) tended to be more closely tied to Isaurian populations of the interior.

Monumental Tombs of the Coastal Region

Tomb monuments along the coast tend to be sizeable permanent structures. Most survive as small but well-built chamber tombs, typically constructed with vaulted roofs. All but a few display a building technique of mortar with stone aggregate. Typically these are two-storey structures exhibiting a barrel-vaulted basement or undercroft and a main tomb chamber above. The building exterior typically exhibits a flat facade with a small rectangular door (one per storey) constructed of monolithic jambs and a large dressed lintel block, where an inscribed dedication is invariably displayed. Some twenty-five surviving tomb dedications indicate that they were referred to by native inhabitants as “heroia.” Surviving examples suggest that the facades were preceded by a shallow arched vestibule. Interior design consisted of two storeys of arcosolia (recessed niches or chambers to receive urns), three at each storey. Instead of arcosolia some tombs displayed stone slabs to receive corpses. Recovered fragments of mosaic and/or ceramic tile indicate the likely existence of pavement. This simple, but solidly built tomb type is the most commonly encountered type in the survey area. All but three of the 34 surviving burial monuments at...
Selinus are chamber tombs (Rosenbaum et al. 1967, 53-58), for example, and vaulted tombs with mortared construction have been identified in isolated upland locations such as the necropoleis situated along the Karasin river behind Charadros (Frengez Kale, RC 0409; RC 0402). Two larger and more elaborate tomb forms present at coastal sites are the Grabhaus (mausoleum) and the Grabtempel, grave temple, or tomb temple (Townsend and Hoff 2004). The Grabhaus was a large monumental structure with a barrel-vaulted roof standing on a step-based podium. Although evidence for a colonnaded facade is lacking, the Grabhaus appears to have been occasionally enclosed by a peribolos. Like the smaller chamber tombs mentioned above, the Grabhaus employed mortar and stone aggregate construction. Also like chamber tombs, the Grabhaus displayed arcosolia in the interior, often distributed on more than one floor level. While the tomb can exhibit a large and impressive exterior, greater emphasis appears to have been placed on interior design, possibly in imitation of local domestic interiors.

Unlike the Grabhaus tomb form, the typical plan of the Temple Tomb resembled that of a Greek-styled temple complete with porch and columns (either in antis or prostyle) and an interior cella. Typically, the temple tomb stood on a crepis of steps, but unlike the Grabhaus it was invariably constructed in finely dressed ashlar masonry. According to Townsend and Hoff (2004), the temple tomb consciously imitated the Hellenistic tradition of small non-peripteral temples and has been repeatedly misidentified as such. The Grabhaus, on the other hand, is easily recognized as a funerary monument. Along with tower tombs these funereal monuments were relatively commonplace in south coastal Anatolia. The imposing stature and monumental character of the Grabhaus and the Temple Tomb indicate that they were constructed by leading elements of the community.

Midland Rock-Cut Tombs

In the mesogeia (300-800m elevation) we find corporate tombs constructed by organized groups of unrelated tomb occupants. Remains of corporate tombs survive in several forms, the most unique being the large rock-cut tombs recorded at Lamos, Direvli, and Goçuk Asarı (RC 0030). Cut from exposed...
bedrock these tombs were drafted into rectangular forms designed to imitate the Lycian-style house motif, complete with gabled roof elements, sculpted acroteria, and doorways with prostyle pediments in relief. Typically the rock-cut tomb exhibits a rectangular aperture on its top surface to receive a large block dressed to resemble its gabled roof. In one example at Lamos, a variation of the rock-cut tomb actually presents the appearance of a Lycian-style house tomb. This tomb represents something of a hybrid between the rock-cut tombs mentioned above and the smaller Lycian-house style tombs to be mentioned below. Reliefs are visible on three sides of the “house,” including victory wreaths, human busts in intaglio, an eagle, and a panoply of armor. A long damaged inscription survives on the dressed ledge beside the sculpted door of the tomb, demonstrating that it was built and owned in common by unrelated citizens, and hence functioned as a “corporate” tomb.

Highland Necropolis Clusters

The survey team has come to identify the tomb types of the highland interior (above 800m elevation) as “necropolis clusters.” Examples of these have been investigated at Sivaste (RC 0301), Ilica Kale (RC 0309), Kenetepe (RC 0304), Çoruş (RC 1205), and Hisar Asarı (RC 0405). At Kenetepe the necropolis cluster is situated in a narrow saddle between the twin peaks. Although densely forested today, the saddle exhibits an extensive ruin field of burial monuments, including altars and pedestals inscribed with Isaurian rock-cut reliefs, stepped structures that resemble miniaturized rock-cut tombs, additional small monuments dressed to resemble Lycian-style house tombs, and numerous fragments of stone-cut ossuary boxes known as larnaces or ostothecae. Most of the surviving fragments of larnaces exhibit primitive reliefs commonly associated with the Isaurian back country, particularly the representations of family units and the shrouded female forms. Others were dressed to resemble small Lycian-style houses complete with framed doors and gabled roof-lids; still others exhibit characteristic animal reliefs of lions and eagles. The scale of the monuments at these locations is significantly smaller than those found at Lamos and Direvli; the Lycian-style house tombs resemble miniature versions of rock cut tombs at those locales. Greek dedications are limited and exhibit numerous misspellings and grammatical errors. The combination of these characteristics (small “reusable” tomb monuments, primitive reliefs, inferior Greek texts) indicates that settlements in the highland region stood within the cultural zone of the Isaurian tribal elements of the back country. It needs to be stressed, however, that remains of what appear to be Temple Tombs also survive at Kenetepe (RC 0304) and Hisar Asarı (RC 0405). This suggests that the Rough Cilician mesogeia harbored a mixed population exhibiting cultural attributes of the coastal population combined with a heavy overlay of people from the Isaurian interior.

Although caution is required when attempting to characterize evidence as muted as this, based on size and permanence alone a hierarchy of Rough Cilician tomb types presents itself. By virtue of their size and monumentality, Temple Tombs and Grabhaus tombs stand at the top echelon, in view of their permanence and reliance on Greco-Roman building technology, heroia and mortar-constructed chamber tombs rank second, rock-cut tombs dressed to resemble Lycian-style houses rank third given the significant talent and energy demanded by their construction, and the clusters of small larnaces, imitation house tombs and altars displaying Isaurian reliefs in midland necropolis rank last. The first two tomb types are located predominantly but not exclusively in the communities along the coast; the latter two are situated almost exclusively in the midlands. This in turn suggests that the resident populations in these two regions were culturally different, despite the prevailing sense that the Rough Cilician population as a whole remained autochthonous and Anatolian throughout the Roman era. Along the coast land-holding elites who largely assimilated mainstream Greco-Roman culture were dominant; in the highlands an Isaurian-based laboring population appears to have prevailed. While the mixing of these two elements was inevitable, careful analysis of the in situ burial remains does seem to delineate the existence of two
distinct cultural zones based on altitude.