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The Stadia in Caria

Karia'da Stadionlar

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Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

The Stadia in Caria Karia'da Stadionlar

Paavo ROOS*

Abstract

The ancient stadia form a part of a vast field that includes buildings and the athletic activity performed in them. This article is confined to the buildings, and although the source material to the existence of stadia consists of literary and epigraphic evidence as well as the archaeological remains only the latter are dealt with here. Remains of stadia are common in a large part of the ancient world – but not always recognizable – but the most important part is Greece and Anatolia.

In Anatolia there are some well preserved stadia in sites like Aphrodisias, Laodiceia, Cibyra and Perge. Naturally the best preserved specimens are normally also well studied, even though there are exceptions. The best preserved ones are usually from the Roman period, and if they have had earlier predecessors, this is seldom visible. There are hardly remains from Pre-Hellenistic time.

The article deals with only with the province of Caria in the south-western part of Anatolia which has some of the most interesting specimens of them. There are both well preserved specimens and such that leave few remains but are still – or have been – interesting. A short catalogue of the stadia in the province is provided.

Keywords: Anatolia, Caria, stadion, sphendone, starting device

Öz

Antik stadyumlar, binaları ve içlerinde gerçekleştirilen atletik faaliyetleri içeren geniş bir alanın bir parçasını oluşturur. Bu makale binalarla sınırlıdır ve stadyumların varlığına ilişkin kaynak malzeme edebi ve epigrafik kanıtların yanı sıra arkeolojik kalıntılardan oluşsa da burada sadece arkeolojik kalıntılarından tanımlanabilen stadyumlar ele alınmaktadır. Stadyum kalıntıları antik dünyanın büyük bir bölümünde yaygındır –ama her zaman tanımlanamayabilirler- ancak en önemli kısmı Yunanistan ve Anadolu'da yer alır.

Anadolu'da Aphrodisias, Laodikeia, Kibyra ve Perge gibi yerlerde iyi korunmuş stadyumlar vardır. İstisnalar olsa da doğal olarak en iyi korunmuş örnekler daha çok araştırılmıştır. En iyi korunmuş olan stadyumlar genellikle Roma Dönemi'ndendir ve daha önceki evreleri varsa, bu nadiren görülür. Pre-Hellenistik Dönem'den neredeyse hiç kalıntı yoktur.

Makalede yalnızca Anadolu'nun güneybatı kesiminde en ilginç örneklere sahip olan Karia Bölgesi'nde bulunan stadyumlar ele alınmaktadır. Bölgede hem iyi korunmuş örnekler hem de çok az kalıntı bırakan, ancak hala ilginç olan örnekler vardır. Karia Bölgesi'ndeki stadyumların kısa bir kataloğu verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anadolu, Karia, stadion, sphendone, hareket tertibatı

Introduction

The word stadion has more than one meaning. It is the length of approximately 180 meters, the race competition run over this distance, and the establishment where the competition is held. But the definitions may be complicated in different ways. The competition may be performed on a shorter distance for some reason, e.g. difficulties in terrain, or deprived of an establishment and held on an agora or a temple temenos. And the term for the establishment may also be mixed up with a hippodrome or something else by



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ancient authors as well as modern travellers. Moreover, the complications may be shown when scholars speak of the auditorium of a stadion and in ancient inscriptions an artist may speak of his performances 'en stadiois'.

A survey of stadia that have existed in antiquity may be founded on different features. It may be the existence of remains of the establishment, it may be evidence from literature of establishments that have existed but perhaps do not exist anymore, and it may be inscriptions mentioning the existence of festivals kept in the place and indicating the existence of a stadion. In this case only the existence of remains will be dealt with.

The development of stadia may be displayed in three stages. The first is the type with straight short ends without a sphendone; Olympia and Labraunda may be shown as examples of that type. The second is the type usually placed in an oblong valley with a sphendone in one end and straight in the other, which is the normal and very common type, but even the well-preserved valleys like Magnesia on the Maeander, Philadelphia or Saittai are seldom preserved enough to show both ends. The third is the type with both ends rounded that is usually represented by later specimens, the so-called stadion amphitheatron¹. Examples of this type are Aphrodisias, Laodiceia and no doubt Tralles. Of course it is not easy to use the division rigorously since the establishments are not always so well preserved that a decision can be made, and moreover an establishment may of course also be rebuilt during its existence and so change its appearance. There may also be diverging specimens of different types, the one-sided specimens constructed on slopes with few or no tiers of seats on the lower side like Aigai and Arycanda, and much shorter specimens not deserving the denomination stadion that nevertheless may have been used for running competitions (see infra). Races have also been performed on the agora as in Athens or Corinth or on a temple temenos as in Isthmos or along the stylobate as in Didyma.

Identifying a stadion

As a stadion is often a long narrow horseshoe-formed field such a field may easily be identified as a stadion. Sometimes the sloping sides have traces of spectators' seats², and even if they do not seem to be visible they may turn out visible enough, as the stadion of Magnesia showed after a fire in 1989³ (figs. 1-2). To interprete a narrow field as a stadion may of course be a wrong guess. Since many stadia are located in connection with a theater, especially fields in front of theaters like Mylasa, Colossai, Thera or Stratoniceia might easily be suggested to be stadia; some such identification are proved as wrong whereas others still may await their solution. In some cases the real stadion two may be mentioned. One is Iasos, where Texier in the 19th century saw a sphendone and steps along the side⁴. Later it was classified as a short stadion⁵ (the end had been covered by sand in Texier's time), but at last the excavation turned it into the seats of a bouleuterion and the side of the agora⁶. The other is Orthosia where a large field in E-W direction with the southern side supported on barrel vaults has been interpreted as a stadion, 200 m long⁷. Since Marchese mentions both a

¹ Welch 1998, 563.

² See Roos 1994, 181, fig. 3.

³ In the excavations that started in 2008, the stadion turned out to be one of the best preserved in Anatolia (Bingöl 2020, 600-601, fig. 15).

⁴ Texier 1882, 634.

⁵ See Bean & Cook 1957, 93, 100, fig. 10.

⁶ See Roos 1994, 181.

⁷ Marchese 1986, 1, 235: "*The city featured a large stadium which measures approximately 200 m, an extensive agora, fortification walls...*", Marchese 1986, 2, 140, pls. 97 a-c.

stadion and an agora the latter cannot have been mistaken for a stadion and the thought of a stadion lived on until the site was excavated; however, excavation reports from about 2000 do not mention any stadion⁸, and foundations of a naos and other remains on the place leave no room for a stadion. The final publication starts a reference to Marchese⁹ but then does not mention it anymore, and instead of killing the notion of a stadion lets it die in peace.





Figure 1: Typical oblong stadion valley, Magnesia on the Maeander

Figure 2: Tiers of seats in the stadion of Magnesia clearly visible after a fire in 1989.



 Ruines d'un ancien Batiment de marbre, a Cphese.

 Figure 3: The monumental gate of the stadion in Ephesus. Drawing from Pitton de Tournefort 1717. About as much is preserved of it today

Spectators' seats in situ may be a good proof for the existence of a stadion, but often they are found as separate objects in museums or gardens¹⁰, or even built into walls¹¹. Sometimes seats have been cut out in the living rock, like in Labraunda, Alinda and the hippodrome of Anazarbos, and in those cases the traces cannot have of course been removed¹². But there has seldom been preserved so much that it would be a proof for the existence of a stadion if it is not combined with other criteria.

There are other parts of an establishment that may be preserved and visible. Stadia, especially from the Roman period, may have a spectacular entrance like we can see in

10 E.g. in Halicarnassus, see Berkaya et al. 2008, 144-145.

⁸ Varinlioğlu & Debord 2000, 135-139; Varinlioğlu & Debord 2001, 113-118.

⁹ Debord & Varinlioğlu 2010, 235, n. 8: [Marchese] voit de ruines spectaculaires, un grand stade (mais cf. infra...), une vaste agora... but the reference is not fulfilled, and the word stade is not even mentioned in the index.

¹¹ E.g. in Apollonia ad Rhyndacum, Roos 1994, 186, fig. 10.

¹² For Anazarbos see Roos 1994, 184, fig. 7.

Ephesus (fig. 3) or less preserved in Miletos¹³. Early travellers can report that the stadion in Alinda had a spectacular entrance gate, nothing of which is preserved now (fig. 4); evidently it had disappeared already in the middle of the 18th century¹⁴. Stadia with both ends rounded may have a vaulted entrance with a tunnel under the spectators' seats as in Aphrodisias and Tralles (fig. 5). Some stadia have vaulted cavities under the spectators' seats as Perinthus in Thracia or Perge or the hippodrome in Caesarea (Mazaca).



Figure 4: Monumental gate in Alinda, drawn by Huyot in 1820

Finally, an important but rare part of a stadion consists of the devices for the start of the runners. They consist of two components, the starting blocks or slabs for the runners' feet, and the starting-gate for handling the start. The former, known in Greece from Olympia, Nemea and other places, are in Anatolia found in situ only in Labraunda (fig. 6), but reused specimens of slabs can be seen in Ephesus, built into the castle wall (fig. 7)¹⁵. Certainly they might be found in many villages near the stadia, built into the walls since their form makes them suitable for reuse, on the other hand they are not easily recognizable unless the sides are turned the right way. As for the starting devices, since single parts but seldom a complete construction may be found, they are not easy to understand. In Anatolia parts belonging to such can be seen in Priene (fig. 8), Miletos and Didyma¹⁶. It is a pity that the first discoverer of the construction of Heracleia Salbake (see infra) at a time when the famous establishments had not yet been found, and was deeply imposed by its good preservation, did not describe

it nearer¹⁷; the later travellers who perhaps saw less of it, have not done so either; so now when nothing is preserved we have no idea of what was to be seen during his visit.

This fact points to a difficulty in reporting establishments. We report preserved features and quote earlier travellers who have described or at least mentioned them but do not always check whether they are still preserved or have perhaps been built over or transported away. So it might be discussed how recent an observation must be in order to be taken in account as existent. In fact it is of course often



Figure 5: The vaulted entrance in the eastern end of the stadion at Tralles from the interior (for the view from the exterior see Roos 1994, 182 fig. 5).

¹³ Kleiner 1968, 111-112, fig. 82, reconstructed as in fig. 83.

¹⁴ See Ruggendorfer 2011, 213.

¹⁵ Roos 1978/80, 109-110.

¹⁶ See Gerkan 1921, 6-7, fig. 5; Knackfuss 1941, 140-141.

¹⁷ Laborde 1838, 100.

so that an old observation was good enough for a report as preserved but the actual remnants are so scanty that they would not be classified as criteria of a stadion if the earlier mention had not existed.



Figure 6: Three of the starting-blocks of the western starting-line in Labraunda. Almost the whole line is preserved but moved, no doubt by an earthquake



Figure 7: Discarded starting-block from the stadion of Ephesus built into the castle wall at Ayasoluk

Unsuccessful identifications of suitable plains as stadia are not the only source of mistakes. Sometimes there might indeed be remains that can be interpreted as parts of a stadion but at last turn out to be something else like the side of an agora. Such cases may be reported from Iasus, Stratoniceia and Phaselis. In some cases the area may turn out to be too small but can still be regarded as possible to use for the racecourse of an exercise field, e.g. in Theangela and Myndos, even if stadion is perhaps not the correct denomination or it. (On the other hand there are also establishments that are unusually long, as Laodiceia).



Figure 8: Preserved bases of the starting-gate system of the stadion in Priene



Figure 9: Map showing the stadia (dots) and hippodromes (squares) in Anatolia

Stadia in Anatolia

Although the sport festivals in Anatolia were not very famous they were certainly numerous, at least in Roman times. The stadia certainly also were numerous, as can be seen from the sketchy map (fig. 9), which does not distinguish types or dates – certainly not all were in function at the same time.

Stadia in Caria

Dealing with the stadia in the whole of Anatolia would be a far too vast project in this connection, so I must confine it to a rather small part and choose Caria, the district that I know best (fig. 10). In fact the confinement is not very sensible – it is true that the eastern frontier of Caria towards Lycia is rather empty where stadia are concerned; on the other hand the northern frontier towards Ionia, Lydia and Phrygia with the Maeander valley is very densely furnished with stadia on both sides. Of course the location of stadia is not due to a political definition of Caria, and so I make it more a practical question and draw the line approximately along the Maeander River and the Aydın-Denizli highway which leaves interesting sites like Priene, Magnesia, Tralles, Nysa, Tripolis and Laodiceia outside.

The variety of stadia in Caria is rather great, with a span from primitive straight constructions without much preparation for spectators like Labraunda, to well executed constructions with an arena surrounded by vast slopes with accommodation for spectators and vaulted or built entrances like Aphrodisias. The latter are of course often built or rebuilt in Roman Imperial times, whereas the former may be traced back to Hellenistic times but perhaps not more.

In the following catalogue of stadia in Caria there is of course a great difference in documentation. There are well-documented establishments studied and published in monographs and there are constructions hardly studied or described where there is hardly more to say than what is said here.



Figure 10: Map of Caria (after O. Henry), The sites represented by larger dots are mentioned in the text

Catalogue

Alabanda

The stadion of Alabanda was unknown until it was located by the survey of the archaeological expedition in 2015¹⁸. A long narrow field with a sphendone in the west reaching to the city wall in the east (fig. 11). Seats might exist in south and west but have not been verified.

Alinda

Rock-cut stadion, direction WNW-ESE at the entrance of the *nahiye* of Karpuzlu so that the traffic runs along what was the race-course. The establishment was well preserved in the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries but evidently not visible later. The north side has six uneven tiers of rock-cut seats, 39 cm high and 75 cm deep; the south side has three more even tiers (fig. 12). Some square blocks are preserved in front of the seats, if some are *in situ*, the width of the race-course may have been 18 m. The building was mentioned by Chandler¹⁹ and drawn by Huyot in 1820, a drawing that was reproduced by Robert²⁰ (see fig. 4), but evidently not visible after the middle of the 19th century²¹.





Figure 11: Suggested but not ascertained site for the stadion at Alabanda

Figure 12: Rock-cut tiers of seats on the southern side of the stadion at Alinda

Antiocheia on the Maeander

Narrow valley with rounded end on the southern slope of the hill that forms the ancient city, WNW-ESE, 25-30 m wide (fig. 13). No remains are visible now, and it is unclear how much there was that could identify it as a stadion, but vaulted arches along the northern side were reported in the 19th century²².

Aphrodisias

The stadion of Aphrodisias is one of the best preserved in Anatolia (fig. 14) and also one of the most thoroughly studied and published²³. It belongs to the rare type of stadia with a sphendone at either end, a stadion amphitheatron. The stadion is situated in E-W direction along the northern city wall, not quite according the grid direction. The stadion is very large with a cavea that measures 270 m in length and 59 m in width, whereas the dromos is 238 m long, which means a considerable margin beyond the required length of the running-track.

¹⁸ Akkan et al. 2016, 320; Aydın Tavukçu 2015, 243.

¹⁹ Chandler 1817, 1, 231.

²⁰ Robert & Robert 1983, 7, fig. 5.

²¹ See Ruggendorfer 2011, 212-213.

²² Richter 1822, 530; Hamilton 1842, 530.

²³ Welch 1998. Several authors have furnished descriptions and illustrations already in the 19th century.

The length of the straight sides is 180 m, i.e. the normal length for a stadion. The capacity is estimated to 30.000 spectators.

The cavea is divided in 40 kerkides with 26 tiers of seats, preserved up to the top like part of the arcades above them. Two of the kerkides opposite each other in the center of the long sides have tribunal seats. They are situated unusually high, 1,6 m above the track. A great number of seats are furnished with names of those whom they are intended for, categories or persons. There is a wide vaulted entrance in the short ends leading to the arena with keystones of the vaults sculpted with busts, and there are remains of marble mouldings above them. There are barrel vaults under the seats on the south side.

The stadion is dated to the beginning of the first century B.C. It had probably a Hellenistic predecessor, of which nothing is known. In Late Antiquity the eastern sphendone was converted into a small oval amphitheater, a procedure of which this is the best example. Part of the dromos was thus obliterated and the athletic festivals had probably been abolished by that time.



Figure 13: The stadion of Antiocheia on the Maeander from SE



Figure 14: The stadion of Aphrodisias from the west. The vaulted opening and the small amphitheater in the end of the dromos are clearly visible

Didyma

The sanctuary of Didyma had no constructed stadion, but it is clear that the area south of the temple was used as a race-course²⁴. The length of the stylobate is 118 m, but the stadion has probably continued to the normal length, although there is no evidence for it. The steps could be used for spectators (some of the steps have letters cut in them)²⁵. Opposite the stylobate there are two rock-cut steps for a length of 9 m, 45 cm high and 75 cm wide, leaving a width of 18,3 m for the race-course. Originally they have probably been 7-8 in number and reached as far as the stylobate but not longer. There are remains of steps between what have been portions of the tiers.

The devices for the start of the runners are situated in the eastern end of the course – slightly more to the east than the corner of the stylobate – and consist of two separate lines of roughly square slabs pierced by vertical square holes²⁶. The line next to the race-course had originally six slabs with holes 10-12 cm. The intervals between them are about but not exactly 1 m. The other line had three larger slabs, about 70 cm square, with holes 28 cm square, which shows that they were meant for much higher posts, not only for keeping the runners apart but for some sort of gate for releasing the runners.

²⁴ Knackfuss 1941, 2, pl. 2, 166, 3, pl. 79, Z 619.

²⁵ Knackfuss 1941, 1, 140, 2, pl. 229, F 164-5.

²⁶ Knackfuss 1941, 3, pl. 84, Ž 638.

Halicarnassus

The stadion is situated in the outskirts of the city and is orientated N-S. Its existence had been known for a long time and the site east of the Mausoleum was identified in the 1970ies from the finds of seats on and near the spot²⁷. In 1988 an excavation that clearly shew the location was started but various reasons made a complete excavation impossible, so the measurements of the establishments and various other details are impossible to give. The eastern side is preserved for more than 150 meters, and there might have been a sphendone in the south end. Stone seats from several tiers are found in situ (fig. 15) and much more in other places in the city. Those next to the staircases are furnished with lion paws.



Figure 15: Seats with lion paws in situ in the stadion at Halicarnassus

A dozen of the seats, both in situ and in the museum, have inscriptions in the front. They consist of names, apparently indicating the donors, and seem to be contemporary with the seats. No finds have been made that can give a date for the stadion, but the similarity of details with the stadion of Aphrodisias suggests late first or early second century AD for it²⁸.

Heracleia Salbake

The stadion of Heracleia Salbake was found by Laborde who, however, thought the site to be Trapezopolis²⁹. He made a drawing of the sphendone and the tiers and mentioned its size, comparable with that of Aphrodisias, and the strange diposition for the carceres and the start but unfortunately did not describe them nearer³⁰. Evidently it was still visible through the 19th century but unfortunately none of the visitors during it did it either although they mentioned that the remains were still visible. In 1939 it is shown on the plan between the ruins and the



Figure 16: Part of the tiers of seats in the stadion at Heracleia Salbake

village of Vakif in E-W direction with the sphendone in the east³¹. The Roberts who visited the site in 1947 only quoted Laborde but did not tell whether there was still anything to be seen³². Later I have lamented the loss of this important establishment³³ but this loss has evidently been repaired by the villagers who have unearthed part of the northern tiers³⁴ (fig. 16). 13 tiers are visible (more or less as is shown in Laborde's drawing) with a length of about 75 m, but no doubt more can be preserved below them. Nothing else is visible of the establishment.

²⁷ Berkaya et al. 2008, 140-141.

²⁸ Berkaya et al. 2008, 144-145.

²⁹ Laborde 1838, 100.

³⁰ Laborde 1838, pl. 58,1.

³¹ Buckler & Calder 1939, xiii.

³² Robert & Robert 1954, 158. Laborde's drawing is reproduced as pl. 24,1.

³³ Roos 1994, 182.

³⁴ See also Hild 2013, 50, fig. 42.

Labraunda

The stadion of Labraunda lies quite open but was not identified as a stadion until 1960 when Joneborg, the architect of the Labraunda expedition realized its nature. It is a rather natural rough field in E-W direction, not quite long enough for a stadion, so that it had to be supported with retaining walls of ashlar blocks at both ends (fig. 17). So the field obtained a length of 189 m, 172 m of which was the race-course. In the middle of the northern side there is a rocky slope where steps are cut in the



Figure 17: Retaining wall at the western end of the racecourse of the stadion at Labraunda, 9 m from the line of starting-blocks that are visible among the trees

rock, probably with the purpose to create spectators' seats³⁵. They are about a dozen in number and reach about 25 m at the most. On the southern side nothing similar exists so that no width of the course can be given, but the extension of the field is 34 m.

The greatest interest in the stadion of Labraunda lies in the existence of startingblocks. They are executed in the same way in both ends and the majority of them are preserved, although hardly any of them is in situ (fig. 6). In fact Labraunda is the only place in Anatolia where we have starting-blocks preserved in the stadion. They are thick gneiss blocks of the older type with one single groove for the toes³⁶, represented in some places in Greece. It would fit with the time of its construction during the prolongation of the annual festival in Mausolus' reign (377-353 BC). The length of the starting line was nearly 20 m, which evidently provided 14 lanes for the runners.

Miletos

The stadion at Miletos is rather well preserved and one of those in Anatolia that have been studied earliest. It is of the older type with two straight sides without sphendone. Both ends have had monumental gates, but whereas the western is Hellenistic, the eastern one seems to date from Late Antiquity. The race-course is 29,5 m wide, i.e. 100 feet, and probably 192 m long. There are parts of starting-gates preserved in both ends, consisting of stones with holes for posts, the two end stones and the one in the middle larger than the others. In the eastern end two different lines can be distinguished, the older consisting of 13 stones, whereas in the west only the later variety can be seen. There were lanes for twelve runners with a distance of 169 cm between the post-holes³⁷.

There are tiers of seats for the spectators on both sides of the arena. Originally they have evidently been about 20 in number.

Myndos

Many remnants of ancient buildings are shown on an Admiralty Chart from 1837, reproduced by Bean & Cook³⁸, but are no longer visible. A stadion is among them, but evidently shorter than a normal version (there would not be room for a full-size stadion among the other ruins, and the drawn size is barely half-length). Many ancient blocks can be

³⁵ See Roos 2017, 110-111, figs. 6-7.

³⁶ Roos 2017, 118, fig. 34.

³⁷ Gerkan 1921, 7, fig. 5; Kleiner 1968, 111.

³⁸ Bean & Cook 1955, 109, fig. 3; mentioned also Bean & Cook 1957, 93, n. 135; Tırpan 1987, 168.

seen built into modern walls but none that points to the existence of a stadion. A free place for the stadion may still be imagined on the field, anyhow (fig. 18).

Theangela

Theangela has a stadion that hardly deserves its name on account of its size; it is not only half-size but not more that quarter-size with about 45 m length and 10 m width with remnants of a wall³⁹. No seats are visible.

Triopion

The site where the festival of the Triopian Apollo was celebrated has no traces of a stadion where the games might have taken place, but a level field large enough in E-W direction below the Kumyer kalesi might be the actual spot⁴⁰ (fig. 19).

In addition to these sites with real or alleged remnants there are also a few sites where we know that there should be stadia on account of information of festivals or athletic contests like Kedreai. That problem may be solved in different ways; competitions may be held in a place without visible remnants like an agora or just a field, or in a place outside the city, e.g. in a stadion belonging to another site.



Figure 18: Possible site for the short stadion at Myndos



Figure 19: View from the north over the field below Kumyer kalesi, where the stadion at Triopion may have been situated

³⁹ Bean & Cook 1957, 91-92, marked on the plan fig. 6; Bean 1971, 131-132, fig. 20; Tırpan 1987, 176, 184, fig. 12. 40 Bean & Cook 1952, 181-182, 209-210; Bean & Cook 1957, 86, n. 101; Tuna 1987, 312.

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Figure 12. Rock-cut tiers of seats on the southern side of the stadion at Alinda.

Figure 13. The stadion of Antiocheia on the Maeander from SE.

Figure 14. The stadion of Aphrodisias from the west. The vaulted opening and the small amphitheater in the end of the dromos are clearly visible.

Figure 15. Seats with lion paws in situ in the stadion at Halicarnassus (Berkaya et al. 2008).

Figure 16. Part of the tiers of seats in the stadion at Heracleia Salbake.

Figure 17. Retaining wall at the western end of the race-course of the stadion at Labraunda, 9 m from the line of starting-blocks that are visible among the trees.

Figure 18. Possible site for the short stadion at Myndos.

Figure 19. View from the north over the field below Kumyer kalesi, where the stadion at Triopion may have been situated.

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