

# Nephelis: a recently discovered town of coastal Rough Cilicia

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## Introduction\*

Early in 1991 inhabitants of the small community of Muzkent (formerly Kıcık) in the Kaymakamlık of Gazipaşa in S Turkey uncovered significant remains of a Roman settlement while conducting extensive ground-moving operations to create terraces for the cultivation of bananas and a network of roads to provide access to them. The remains occupy a site overlooking the Mediterranean sea below the steep ridge on which the modern village is situated. Located at latitude N 36°10', longitude E 32°25', the site lies c.40 km WNW by sea from Cape Anamur (ancient Anemourion), the southernmost promontory of Asia Minor, and c.18 km ESE of the Selinus river (modern Musa Çay), site of ancient Selinus, also known as Trajanopolis in honor of Trajan who died there in August 117 (figs. 1 and 3).

The village of Muzkent ('Banana-town'), so-named to publicize the major crop of the district, is easily accessible from Gazipaşa by following the main Antalya–Mersin coastal road eastwards for c.12 km, where one turns right on to a well-constructed asphalt road that climbs southwards for c.5 km to the crest of a steep ridge (fig. 2). From a height of c.300 m asl this dominates the steep slopes now terraced with banana fields that descend sharply to the sea. Prominent in the vista towards the sea is an isolated bluff with precipitous summit known locally as Taşkesildiği Tepe (elevation c.200 m asl) at the center of a steep-sided promontory called Kesik Burun (figs. 4-5). This area clearly served as the fortified acropolis of an ancient settlement that occupied the relatively level expanse of ground extending from the base of the hill to the N and E. The N limit of the site is marked by the abrupt slope of the ridge that ascends to the crest beyond the flat ground, while a wadi that cuts a deep valley at the western base of the acropolis clearly forms the settlement's W boundary.

In the course of shaping the terraced fields in this part of the site, the earth-moving equipment had disturbed much building material, including several inscribed blocks, and exposed a number of ancient structures. By the time that the local authorities had ordered work to stop, a great deal of damage had occurred. Nevertheless, much remains visible *in situ* and many fragments of ancient buildings have been re-used in the newly-built retaining walls that separate the various fields of what is now an extensive banana plantation. Besides the ancient structures that once stood on the level ground now occupied by fields, there are many remains of buildings still standing amidst the dense undergrowth that clothes the lower slopes of the acropolis, three of which still rise almost to their original height and are plainly visible even in the distance from the ridge above (fig. 6). Indeed, it is quite remarkable that a coastal site with ruins as conspicuous as these so close to such a well-travelled main road should have escaped scholarly notice until the present.

The site was visited first in April 1991 by I. Karamut in his capacity as Director of the Alanya Museum. J. Russell visited the site at Karamut's invitation in September 1991. Both have visited the site together and separately on a number of subsequent occasions. Impressed by the importance and intrinsic interest of the site and its remains, both parties eventually applied for permission from the General Directorate of Monuments and Museums of the Turkish Republic to prepare a joint report on the antiquities at Muzkent based exclusively on autopsy. This permission was granted, but it should be emphasized that, in accordance with the terms of their request, the permit did not include the license to survey the site and measure monuments and in-

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### \* Frequently cited references:

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