

Patara

Its role in U.S. History





A view of the *Bouleuterion* before restoration – the assembly building – that seated about 1,100 members in *Patara*. Inscriptions recently uncovered at the site provide the names of the various Lyciarchs who sat in designated seats about midway up the semicircular chamber.



3D model of *Patara Democratic Parliament Building*



A view of the *Bouleuterion* under restoration.

Patara and its role in U.S. History

The historical significance of the small but picturesque town of *Patara* in Southwest Turkey goes beyond its appearance in Homer's *The Iliad* or its status as the cradle of ruins from Greek, Roman and Byzantine periods. Rather, *Patara* was the capital of *Lycia*, an ancient civilization of democratic principles that inspired framers of the U.S. Constitution and, ultimately, influenced the formation of the United States.

The Lycian government – known as the *Lycian League* – is identified as the first democratic union in history to utilize proportional representation as a model for political organization. *Lycia's* independent city-states were united under the League that presided over federal institutions. Depending on its size, each of the League's 23 city-states was eligible to send up to three representatives to the parliament – or *Bouleuterion* – located in *Patara*. Smaller towns could unite together to send one representative to the capital on their behalf. The number of representatives from each city-state determined taxes and other financial obligations. The general assembly was responsible for electing federal officers controlling communal land and determining trade and civic rights as well. Despite *Lycia's* rugged geography and vulnerability to invasions, the League remained strong until it disintegrated in the 4th century A.D. under the Byzantines.

Patara and the Federalist Papers

Patara, through the Lycian League, entered into the history of the United States when *Alexander Hamilton* and *James Madison* each discussed the Lycian form of government in the Federalist Papers. Structurally, the semicircular rows of the Lycian parliament building gave rise to the seating arrangement used in the chambers of the U.S. Congress today.

Excerpts from the Federalist Papers on Proportional Representation in Lycia

Both *Hamilton* and *Madison* cited the *Lycian League* in the Federalist Papers in defense of representative democracy, as they believed that delegating authority to representatives would prevent tyranny. At a May 16, 2006 proceeding on the origins of American Democracy, Florida Congressman *Cliff Stearns* declared in the House of Representatives that:

The British archeologist *George Bean* highlighted some of the unique features of the Lycian League -- features not dissimilar to our own country's: 'Among the various races of Anatolia, the Lycians always held a distinctive place. Locked away in their mountainous country, they had a fierce love of freedom and independence, and resisted strongly all attempts at outside domination;

The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection

For the *Independent Journal*
by *Alexander Hamilton*

In the *Lycian confederacy*, which consisted of twenty-three CITIES or republics, the largest were entitled to THREE votes in the COMMON COUNCIL, those of the middle class to TWO, and the smallest to ONE. The COMMON COUNCIL had the appointment of all the judges and magistrates of the respective CITIES. This was certainly the most delicate species of interference in their internal administration; for if there be any thing that seems exclusively appropriated to the local jurisdictions, it is the appointment of their own officers. Yet Montesquieu, speaking of this association, says: 'Were I to give a model of an excellent Confederate Republic, it would be that of Lycia.' Thus we perceive that the distinctions insisted upon were not within the contemplation of this enlightened civilian; and we shall be led to conclude, that they are the novel refinements of an erroneous theory.

they were the last in Asia Minor to be incorporated as a province into the Roman Empire.’

Unlike the archeological sites in *Ephesus* and *Pergamon* that have been active for over a century, a systematic excavation of *Patara* dates back only a couple of decades. Ongoing excavations will not only further illuminate how the League functioned, but will also place *Patara* alongside *Troy*, *Pergamon* and *Ephesus* as the most consequential historical sites in Anatolia.

So far the discovery has excited not only the archaeologists, but noted members of the U.S. government as well:

It blew my mind to find out that the parliament building of the first federation in history, which served as an inspiration for the framers of our own Constitution, was being excavated 15 minutes from my house on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey,

said *Stephen J. Solarz*, the former congressman from Brooklyn.

The Turkish Coalition of America regards *Patara* and the *Lycian Federation* as integral to the understanding of the United States Constitution and American history. *Patara* is an important historical bridge between Anatolia and the United States, worthy of further study and emphasis. To this end, the *Turkish Coalition of America* incorporates a visit to *Patara* as a significant itinerary stop for the trips it organizes to Turkey.

The Same Subject Continued: The Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the Union

From *the New York Packet*
by *Alexander Hamilton*

THE tendency of the principle of legislation for States, or communities, in their political capacities, as it has been exemplified by the experiment we have made of it, is equally attested by the events which have befallen all other governments of the confederate kind, of which we have any account, in exact proportion to its prevalence in those systems. The confirmations of this fact will be worthy of a distinct and particular examination. I shall content myself with barely observing here, that of all the confederacies of antiquity, which history has handed down to us, the Lycian and Achaean leagues, as far as there remain vestiges of them, appear to have been most free from the fetters of that mistaken principle, and were accordingly those which have best deserved, and have most liberally received, the applauding suffrages of political writers.

The Alleged Danger from the Powers of the Union to the State Governments Considered

For the Independent Journal
by *James Madison*

We have seen, in all the examples of ancient and modern confederacies, the strongest tendency continually betraying itself in the members, to despoil the general government of its authorities, with a very ineffectual capacity in the latter to defend itself against the encroachments. Although, in most of these examples, the system has been so dissimilar from that under consideration as greatly to weaken any inference concerning the latter from the fate of the former, yet, as the States will retain, under the proposed Constitution, a very extensive portion of active sovereignty, the inference ought not to be wholly disregarded. In the Achaean league it is probable that the federal

head had a degree and species of power, which gave it a considerable likeness to the government framed by the convention. *The Lycian Confederacy*, as far as its principles and form are transmitted, must have borne a still greater analogy to it. Yet history does not inform us that either of them ever degenerated, or tended to degenerate, into one consolidated government. On the contrary, we know that the ruin of one of them proceeded from the incapacity of the federal authority to prevent the dissensions, and finally the disunion, of the subordinate authorities. These cases are the more worthy of our attention, as the external causes by which the component parts were pressed together were much more numerous and powerful than in our case; and consequently less powerful ligaments within would be sufficient to bind the members to the head, and to each other.