

## An Ivory Relief of Saint Thecla

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### Introduction

The Ivory Relief of St. Thecla was found Laodiceia ad Lycum, which is located in the west end of Phrygia, 6 km northeast of Denizli; it is on the junction of Eskihisar, Goncalı and Bozburun districts<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 1). This important city of Lycus (Çürüksu) valley was founded in the Hellenistic period on the order of the Seleucid King Antiochus II and named after his wife Queen Laodice about the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (261-53 BC)<sup>2</sup>. Ancient sources state that the Hellenistic city was founded on top of an earlier sacred settlement called Diospolis and Rhoas<sup>3</sup>.

Laodiceia is also located at the crossroads of main routes connecting west, central and south Anatolia with each other. One of the most important incomes of the city came from trade, particularly textile trade. The ancient city with Hippodamic layout rises on a high platform surrounded with rivers on three sides: Lycus (Çürüksu) flows on the northeast, Capros (Başlıçay) on the southeast and Asopos (Gümüşçay) on the southwest<sup>4</sup>. The city collapsed several times due to earthquakes and with the quake of AD 494 it started to shrink. With the severe quake in the reign of Phocas (602-10), the city was abandoned and the inhabitants settled at Kaleiçi (i.e. citadel) of Denizli, Hisarköy and nearby areas<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to distinguish each Laodiceia from the many of the Hellenistic period, the city is named together with the river flowing by. See Strabon XII.8.16; Pliny, N.H. V.105; Weber 1898, 178-79; Ruge 1924, 722; Gagniers 1969, 1; Traversari 2000, 11; Sevin 2001, 203.

<sup>2</sup> Ramsay 1895, 32; Anderson 1897, 409-10; Head 1906, lxxiii; Head 1911, 678; Ruge 1924, 722; Buckler - Calder 1939, x; Magie 1950, 127, 986-987 (no.23); Gagniers 1969, 1-2; Bean 1980, 213; Belke - Mersich 1990, 323; Bejor 2000, 15-16; Texier 2002, 383.

<sup>3</sup> Pliny, N.H. V.105; Ramsay 1895, 35; Head 1906, lxxiii; Ruge 1924, 722; Gagniers 1969, 1; Bean 1980, 213; Belke - Mersich 1990, 323; Texier 2002, 383-84. Diospolis means "city of Zeus" and the founder and chief deity of the city is Zeus Laodiceus. Rhoas is, on the other hand, an Anatolian name. This information given by Pliny is further verified by our excavations at the mounds known as Asopos 1 and 2 to the northwest of the city for the finds (pottery, flintstone, silex, ovens etc.) go back to the Late Chalcolithic (3500 BC) and Early Bronze Age (3000 BC); furthermore, surveys in the west of the city gathered potsherds with black slip dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and the excavations at the North Necropolis brought to light coins going back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.

<sup>4</sup> Asopos and Capros join into Lycus in the north by Korucuk town. Then Lycus flows into the River Meander west of Sarayköy.

<sup>5</sup> Şimşek – Ceylan 2003, 155; Şimşek 2005, 310, 312-13; Şimşek 2006, 420-24, 426; Şimşek 2007a, 38-50; Büyükkolancı 2007, 51-6; Şimşek – Büyükkolancı 2006, 91.

Laodiceia's high times were from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. As Laodiceia is one of the seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation (1.11) the city stepped afore with religious context in the Early Byzantine period. Extant churches in the ruins of the city date to the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries while in the 4<sup>th</sup> century chapels of the new religion were built<sup>6</sup>.

Excavations at Laodiceia since 2002 have brought to light not only architecture but also small finds pointing to the religious place of the city. Among the small finds ampullae constitute an important group for they were used to hold sacred water or oil by the pilgrims and bought at holy sites<sup>7</sup>. Unguentaria<sup>8</sup> of Late Antiquity and miniature glass bottles, which are thought to have had the same function as ampullae, bear witness to the sanctity of the city.

The ivory relief of St. Thecla<sup>9</sup>, which constitutes the scope of the present article, was unearthed in the southwest portico of Temple A during the course of campaign in 2007<sup>10</sup>. Temple A is located on the north side of Syria Street which extends in the east-west direction in the city center (Fig. 2). The prostyle temple measuring 27.75x13.60 m. was built with travertine blocks on a high podium and then faced with marble. The temple with spirally fluted columns is located at the north end of a large courtyard surrounded with porticoes on four sides and the courtyard measures 58.00x42.33 m. on the exterior<sup>11</sup>. Finds indicate that the temple was built in the Antonine period, i.e. second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD; it was heavily repaired in the reign of Diocletian (AD 284-305); it was converted to religious archives when Christianity was legitimized in the first quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD; it fell into ruins with the earthquake of AD 494. With new arrangements in the area, the porticoes of Temple A stayed in use until the earthquake in Phocas's reign (AD 602-10). As the city was abandoned after this earthquake, the site then served as a stone quarry and lime kiln.

New arrangements related with Christianity concentrate in the west and south porticoes of Temple A. These arrangements started with the chapel construction in the 4<sup>th</sup> century; some new additions made following the quake of AD 494 stayed in use until the final quake in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 3). Coins uncovered in the courtyard and its porticoes belong to the reigns of Constantine II (337-61), Constans (337-50), Julian II (361-63), Justinian I (527-65), Tiberius I (578-82), Mauricius Tiberius (582-602) and finally to Phocas (602-10).

## Saint Thecla and her depictions in art

Information on the life of Thecla, one of the most important saints who lived in Anatolia, has reached to the present via the accounts in Greek, Latin, Arabic, Armenian and Coptic sources<sup>12</sup>. Thecla's story starts with Paul's arrival in Iconium from Pisidian

<sup>6</sup> Şimşek 2007b, 267.

<sup>7</sup> For ampullae from Laodiceia see Şimşek – Duman 2007a.

<sup>8</sup> For unguentaria from Laodiceia see Şimşek – Duman 2007b.

<sup>9</sup> Kazhdan 1991, 2033-2034; Leibbrand 1974, 432-436.

<sup>10</sup> Şimşek 2009a (excavations at Temple A).

<sup>11</sup> Şimşek 2006, 423-26, Figs. 1, 8-11; Şimşek 2007b, 227-45, Figs. 78-82; Şimşek 2007c, 461-67, Figs. 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> The earliest source giving information about St. Thecla's life is the *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, which is dated to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. See Goodspeed 1901a, 65; Canevello 2004, 260.



Antioch<sup>13</sup>. Thecla listened, through an open window of her house, to Paul's talk praising the life of Virgin Mary and was very much impressed. Her mother did not allow her to go out of the house in order to listen to Paul and she also informed Thamyris, Thecla's fiancé, about Thecla's affection to Paul's speeches. She told that her daughter Thecla did not leave the window for three days and nights and did not eat or drink anything, thus that this man disturbed the Iconians and all the young men and women went to him. All efforts of Thamyris to prevent Thecla from listening to the words of the apostle failed so he went to the governor of Iconium together with all the other men and complained about Paul who was telling all the young girls that they should stay virgin against the traditions; thus, Paul ended up in the prison.

When Thecla learned about these, she escaped from home and bribing the guardians of the prison with the valuables she brought from home, she went in to see Paul. She knelt before Paul and listened to the miraculous deeds of the Lord. When Thecla was still in the prison together with Paul, the governor decided that Paul was to be kicked out of Iconium by beating and that Thecla was to be burned alive at the theatre so that she would set an example for the other young girls who agreed with Paul's words. When the pyre in the theatre was set on fire, a downpour put it out and Thecla managed to escape in the mean time. Thecla found Paul hiding in a grave outside the city and they went to Antioch together.

A Syrian nobleman named Alexander saw Thecla with Paul in Antioch and wanted to buy her from Paul but Paul answered that; "*the woman he was talking about did not belong to him and nor he knew not to whom she belonged*". Then, Alexander's attempt to kidnap Thecla failed and Alexander, getting angry, went to the governor of Antioch complaining about her. As Alexander was a leading personage of Antioch, the governor decided that Thecla was to be thrown to wild beasts as she had misbehaved towards a sacred thing. Thus, Thecla was thrown naked before a lioness, which did not attack her but rather sat by her feet and started to lick them. Then Thecla was taken to the arena and thrown naked before many other wild beasts; this time, the lioness fought with the other beasts to protect Thecla and killed all the other beasts. So Thecla was saved from the arena and took refuge at the home of a noblewoman called Tryphaena who showed sympathy to her. Tryphaena gave her some gold money and helped her get out of Antioch. In spite of all the difficulties she faced, Thecla continued to look for Paul and she found him finally at Myra. She told Paul about what she went through and that she wanted to go back to Iconium. Then Paul told her to "*go and tell people about the orders of the Lord*". Thecla went to Iconium and visited her mother briefly but she did not stay there and settled at Seleuceia ad Calycadnum in Isauria<sup>14</sup> and preached about Christianity, fought against paganism and worked various miracles<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Goodspeed 1901b, 185-90; Vanderspoel 1986, 251-52; Hayne 1994, 209-18; Cimok 2001, 106-8; Canevello 2004, 261-68.

<sup>14</sup> Seleuceia ad Calycadnum (modern Silifke) was the capital of Roman Isauria. In the early Christian period when the East Mediterranean started to become Christianized rapidly, Seleuceia became a big bishopric with 33 cities of Isauria within her diocese. In AD 359 the city also hosted a church council. For more information see Özyıldırım 2004, 239-55.

<sup>15</sup> In the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD Basil, who lived at Seleuceia, compiled the miracles of Thecla into a sacred book. For more information see Dagron 1978.

According to tradition, Thecla's death was also miraculous just like her life. Thecla lived in a cave at Seleuceia and disappeared in a cleft of rock in this cave. The hill where this cave is found transformed to a sanctuary in the later periods. The site is called Meryemlik (literally "the place of Mary") today and there are three churches, one of which is named after Thecla, a large bath and cisterns<sup>16</sup>. In the Early Christian period this site was an important pilgrimage site and ancient travelers' accounts provide information about it<sup>17</sup>.

Meanwhile, Thecla's story pointed out some important cities except Seleucia ad Calycadnum, such as Myra<sup>18</sup>. It was an important Lycian city with the port Andriake which had a close commercial contact with Syria and Egypt in Early Christian Period<sup>19</sup>. Ancient biblical texts had some hints about this commerce like the voyage of St. Paul who changed his ships at Patara on the way of Ephesus to Tyre, and again, on his final trip, was transferred at Andriake to an Alexandrian corn-vessel bound for Rome<sup>20</sup>.

As we know from the other regions of Anatolia the coastal cities of Lycia were more receptive to the new religion therefore the trade with Levant or possible existence of Jewish society has an important role for the acceptance of Christianity in era<sup>21</sup>. The multiple stories of St. Paul and Thecla ended in this region and Thecla began for an individual fight against paganism.

Thecla is considered the first woman martyr of Christianity and revered both by the Eastern and Western Churches. She was one of the first missionaries of the new religion that was trying to attain to its position in the world; Thecla naturally found place in various elements of the Early Christian art. She was usually depicted between wild beasts (lion or bull) or holding a cross, palm leaf, burning globe, whip or snake<sup>22</sup>.

### Ivory Plaque with Relief of Thecla from Laodiceia ad Lycum (Figs. 4-6)

Inv. Nr.	: L.07.TA.GBP.04
Findspot and date	: Temple A, western portico (Fig. 4), 22 June 2007
Deposit	: Early Byzantine
Find altitude	: 284.12 m.
Dimensions (cm.)	: Plaque: H. 9.7 W. 5.4 Th. 1.2; Fig.: H. 7.32 W. 4.97

<sup>16</sup> This sanctuary located to the south of Seleuceia is also known as Aya Tekla in Turkish. Comprehensive excavations and surveys in this area were conducted in 1907 by Herzfeld and Guyer, who dated the abovementioned structures to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. See Herzfeld - Guyer 1930, 1-89; Gough 1972, 199.

<sup>17</sup> A pilgrim named Egeria tells about his visit to Meryemlik in AD 384. See Davis 1998, 38.

<sup>18</sup> Myra was the civil and ecclesiastical capital of Lycia (it was made metropolis by Emperor Theodosius II, 408-450). The Church of St. Nicholas in Myra was a popular pilgrimage center attracting pilgrims from home and abroad. See Harrison 1963, 120; Foss 1994, 23-37.

<sup>19</sup> Harrison 1963, 119.

<sup>20</sup> Harrison 1963, 118; Hirschfeld 1990, 25.

<sup>21</sup> Except the literary evidence such as the letter written by the Seleucid king Antiochus III, the Great, in c. 210-205 BC, about transporting 2000 Jewish families to the southern region of Anatolia (see Schalit 1960, 289-290, Şimşek 2007b, 66), the excavations of Myra-Andriake provide the first archaeological evidence for Jewish worship in this region. (Special thanks to Prof. Dr. Nevzat Çevik, Head of Myra Excavations for this information in his conference at Pamukkale University, Department of Archaeology on 02.12.2009)

<sup>22</sup> Leibbrand 1974, 432-33.



The ivory plaque has extensive calcareous residue covering it and it is worn away due to time. There is a broken part at the bottom and two very small pieces are missing. Cracks are observed in the center and left top part.

The rectangular plaque depicts a dressed woman figure facing and standing. The woman is flanked with a male lion on the right and a female lion on the left, whose only heads and front sides of their bodies are executed. The woman figure stands in front of an architectural setting with spirally fluted columns and topped with an arch. On top is a panel of 1.06 cm. in height divided into six raised parts (two on the sides are wide and the two in the middle are narrower). This panel both borders the figure on top and enhances the composition by adding motion.

The woman's weight is carried with her right leg which stands upright while her left leg is slightly bent at knee and placed out giving support. The arms are bent upward at elbows in orant position and her big hands are open – this gesture points to praying. The figure is dressed with chiton with sleeves and a mantle over it. The long draped dress underneath falls down in drapes and holds around the left leg revealing the outline; the figure wears a belt around her waist. The mantle worn on top wraps the figure over and across her chest and falls freely over the elbows to the back in vertical drapes. The figure wears a headgear with a two-leveled band on the front that covers her hair entirely. Transition from the dress collar to the neck is stressed with a deeply carved curve. The full face has a flat nose, deep eyes, closed lips, and the lower chin and neck muscles are rendered. The gap between the mantle falling from the arms and the spirally fluted columns forming the architectural setting is enhanced with a wide deeply carved canal. Breasts are rendered with two horizontal lines under the mantle. Posture of the figure and her draped costume display Classicistic influence. The lions flanking her are depicted very calm reflecting the mystic air. Ears, eyes and chests of the lions are executed in incision. The lion on the right is given with his mane showing its sex as the male.

The woman figure is given before an arched setting as inferred from the arch being concealed behind her head. The side profile of the plaque features a slightly puffy appearance.

## Evaluation and Dating

St. Thecla is depicted on the Laodiceian plaque in full figure, facing and in orant position in front of an arched setting, perhaps representing her sanctuary in Seleuceia. The male and female lions flanking her represent the lions that protected her from other beasts at the arena of Antioch on the Orontes. In Christian art, Thecla is not the only figure depicted flanked with lions. Like Thecla, Daniel of the Old Testament, who was also punished for his faith and was miraculously saved, is also depicted in such a composition in art<sup>23</sup>. According to the Old Testament (Daniel 6.1-28), Daniel prayed to his God every day despite the prohibition exerted by King Darius; thus, he was betrayed and arrested and convicted with a punishment of throwing into a pit full of lions. When Daniel was thrown into the pit, lions did not touch him; thus Daniel was saved from punishment<sup>24</sup>. On one

<sup>23</sup> Deonna 1949, 122-24

<sup>24</sup> For the ivory pyxis with a depiction of Daniel in the Lions' Den see Weitzmann 1979, 485 no. 436.

side of a wooden comb uncovered at Panopolis<sup>25</sup> Daniel is depicted between lions while on the other side it is Thecla between the lions<sup>26</sup>.

On many works of art, St. Menas, who has a sanctuary bearing his name at Abu Mina<sup>27</sup>, is depicted between camels<sup>28</sup>. In addition to depictional similarities there exist more important common points between St. Menas and St. Thecla. Excavations at Abu Mina brought to light ampullae with depictions of St. Menas on one side and St. Thecla on the other side<sup>29</sup>. On one ampulla dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>30</sup> Thecla is depicted standing but with her hands tied at the back and there is a large lion head to her right and possibly a lioness or a bull to her left. Although its craftsmanship is of low quality, it is an important example because the inscription (H ΑΓΙΑ ΘΕΚΛΑ(α)) around the scene identifies the figure in the center as St. Thecla.

It is not a surprise that there exist compositions with a human figure flanked with animal figures in the Early Christian art which is rooted in classical art. The origins of such compositions go back to the Mother Goddess of Çatalhöyük depicted with lions flanking her<sup>31</sup>. Artemis Potnia holding animals on either side of her was frequently depicted on metalwork, pottery and sculpture in Ionia and Aegean islands<sup>32</sup>. In Phrygia, on the other hand, Cybele with her lions on either side of her was very popular<sup>33</sup>. This type is also found as Cybele (local Meter Adrastos) depicted standing and flanked with her lions at the neighboring Attouda<sup>34</sup>. The earliest and the deepest-rooted cult at Hierapolis in the Lycus valley was also for the mother goddess<sup>35</sup>. Furthermore, as in entire western Anatolia, and as inferred from the coins and reliefs from Hierapolis, Artemis of Ephesus with her deer on either side was a venerated goddess<sup>36</sup>.

Apart from the abovementioned Panopolitan comb and Menas ampulla, there are other examples comparable iconographically with the Laodiceian Thecla depicted flanked with

<sup>25</sup> Ancient Panopolis, modern Achmim is located by the Nile in Middle Egypt.

<sup>26</sup> Deonna 1949, 133 Fig. 1; Davis 1998, Fig. 30.

<sup>27</sup> Abu Mina is located to the southwest of Alexandria, in the region called Mariotis in Antiquity. Emperor Arcadius built a basilica, monastery, baths and a well here. This complex at Abu Mina was frequently visited by pilgrims who went to the Holy Land. In 1905 C. M. Kaufmann uncovered the remains of these buildings. See Wilber 1940, 86-103. Also see Paton 1907, 76. Many inscriptions and thousands of ampullae relating to St. Menas were also found at the same site. For St. Menas ampullae see Leclercq 1924, 1722.

<sup>28</sup> Menas was martyred in the reign of Emperor Diocletian about AD 295/6. Menas, an Egyptian Christian, joined the Roman army when Tribune Firmilian was in office. The army camped at Cotyeum in Phrygia on a campaign and there Menas heard the convictions and punishments indicted on the Christians by Diocletian and Maximianus and thus he left the army, secluded himself in a mountain and started to worship God there all alone. However, he was tormented and killed by pagan Romans. His body was taken on a camel to Egypt and was buried where the camel stopped and refused to continue.

<sup>29</sup> Davis states that 15 of total 16 Menas ampullae with Thecla depictions are dated to AD 480-560. See Davis 1998, 135.

<sup>30</sup> Weitzmann 1979, 576-77 No. 516; Davis 1998, 137-38 Fig. 12

<sup>31</sup> Mellaart 2003

<sup>32</sup> Boysal 1979, 52, Fig. 192; Akurgal 1993, 171 Fig. 83 Dwg. 158; Boardman 1995, Fig. 205; Johnston 1997, 33 Fig. 13; Boardman 1998, 130, 191 Figs. 253, 370

<sup>33</sup> Akurgal 1993, Figs. 66-68

<sup>34</sup> Ramsay 1895, 166; Head 1911, 611; Sheppard 1981, 24-25/5, Pl. IIIa; Şimşek 2009b.

<sup>35</sup> D'Andria 2003, 142-44; Ritti 2006, 132-33

<sup>36</sup> Head 1906, 233 no. 34, 254, no. 150, Pl. XXIX-10, XXXII-3; D'Andria 2003, 147-181, Fig. 150b/5. For Artemis of Ephesus see Fleischer 1973; LIMC 1984; Seipel 2008.



lions. A limestone disk found in Egypt depicts Thecla flanked with a male and a female lion<sup>37</sup>. However, on this disk Thecla, with her hands tied at the back, holds the ropes tied to the lions' necks, controlling them. The lions have a heraldic posture with their heads turned towards the saint between them. The angel busts right above the lions are unique but they should have been placed there to fill the empty spaces for the item is round in shape. This composition resembles the Laodicean example with respect to the thought of control and obedience which are stressed with the depictions of lions tied with ropes. In the Laodicean example, the lions lying by the feet of the saint look very obedient and submissive; thus, the scene looks not like a scene of combat but rather like a scene depicting the victory of Thecla, thus, of Christianity, over paganism.

A wall painting from ancient Athribis in Egypt also depicts Thecla between two lions<sup>38</sup>. This painting with low quality craftsmanship depicts the lion on the left licking the foot of Thecla in accordance with Thecla's iconography. A similar iconography is also observed on a bezel of purportedly Istanbul origin<sup>39</sup>. This two sided bezel depicts Thecla on one side and an angel on the other side. Here too, Thecla stands between two lions.

Not many early examples of icons have survived to the present both due to the fragility of their wood and to the Iconoclastic controversy of 726 to 843. The most important early icons are those of the 6<sup>th</sup> century in the collection of St. Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai<sup>40</sup>. One such icon, very poorly preserved, depicts Thecla together with Saints Peter and Paul and a bull figure turned toward her is seen behind her<sup>41</sup>.

All the examples given above are comparable to the Laodicean example with respect to iconography but they are not helpful for the dating and stylistic analysis. Here the stratigraphic context of this excavation find must be taken into account first and then the time slice thus obtained must be supported with other ivory works of art from the Early Christian period.

The ivory Thecla figure from Laodiceia must be related with the Early Byzantine chapel (Fig. 7) unearthed in 2005 within the complex of Temple A. The chapel rising on the stylobate in the middle of the west portico is dated to after the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>42</sup>. The unguentaria uncovered at Temple A have two types and those with flat bottom are dated to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and 5<sup>th</sup> century while those with pointed bottom are dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century and early 7<sup>th</sup> century<sup>43</sup>. A total of five ampullae uncovered

<sup>37</sup> Weitzmann 1979, 574-75. Authenticity of this work is still debated. See Davis 1998, 238 Fig. 35 n. 5

<sup>38</sup> Davis 1998, 184 Fig. 25

<sup>39</sup> Weitzmann 1979, 326-27 no. 305. St. Thecla was very beloved in Egypt and Syria and she assumed the same level of popularity in Istanbul with the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>40</sup> Yılmaz 1992, 6. As this monastery on Mt. Sinai is in an arid region and as it was under Islamic rule during Iconoclasm, its collections have survived to the present.

<sup>41</sup> Weitzmann 1981, 44-5 B.19-20 Pl. LXVI-LXVIII

<sup>42</sup> Şimşek 2006, 427; Şimşek 2007c, 465-67; Şimşek 2007b, 241-43 Fig. 82a. The exterior of the chapel apse on the west portico of temple A is at the same level with the first step of the portico. Coins from the reigns of Probus (276-82), Constantine I (307-37), Julian II (361-63) and Magnentius (350-53) uncovered in and around the apse show that the structure was built soon after the legitimization of Christianity. The chapel was built in the courtyard of Temple A, which was a sanctuary during paganism, in order to show that paganism was over and that the new and strong religion was Christianity.

<sup>43</sup> Şimşek – Duman 2007b, 285-302 Figs. 2-22.

in the portico and around the chapel are categorized under Type 1 and dated to end of the 4<sup>th</sup> through end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>44</sup>

Arrangements in the porticoes of Temple A for use by the new religion indicate that this area was used from the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> through the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. In light of this dating based on stratigraphic evidence, the date of Laodicean ivory must be placed between the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Stylistically, posture and costume drapes of Thecla on the Laodicean ivory plaque resemble those of the Classical period sculpture of particularly 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>45</sup> Thus, our item continues the Classicist influence in Late Antiquity. Similar features can also be observed on the ivory reliefs of two women figures, namely personifications of Rome and Constantinople, at Kunsthistorisches Museum's Antikensammlung in Vienna, dated to the late 5<sup>th</sup> - early 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>46</sup>. The architectural setting is given very superficially on the Laodicean plaque but it is closely parallel to those seen on the ivory pyxis with four miracles of Christ at Museo Cristiano<sup>47</sup>, on Youlgrave ivory panels at Cambridge<sup>48</sup>, and St. Menas pyxis at the British Museum<sup>49</sup>. Similar stylistic features are also seen on the ivory relief panel depicting the healing of the blind, from Sancta Sanctorum at the Vatican Museum. Besides, the partitioned panel on top of the plaque from Sancta Sanctorum is found on the Laodicean plaque as well<sup>50</sup>. These works of art closely parallel to the Laodicean plaque are all dated to the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. Thus, both stylistic analysis and stratigraphic evidence point to a date about the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

The Laodicean ivory plaque very probable has belonged to a reliquary casket (maybe a sliding lid?). The style and iconography of the plaque closely related to Egyptian provenance especially to Alexandria or at least to an atelier of Alexandrian style and tradition operating in elsewhere. Laodicea has always been important as offering the easiest route from Aegean coast to the Anatolian plateau and had an importance with its church in Early Christianity. It's possible to say that the Laodicean Plaque was brought to Laodicea, by a pilgrim (maybe a citizen of Laodicea) and seems therefore to be an item of pilgrimage-trade, doubtless sold to the pious who visited the shrine of St. Thecla in Isauria or in Alexandria<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> Şimşek – Duman 2007a, 77-80, 83-84 Figs. 3-6, 13-14.

<sup>45</sup> Boardman 1995, Figs. 23-24, 28, 30, 46-47.

<sup>46</sup> Weitzmann 1977, 30-31 Figs. 26-27.

<sup>47</sup> Capps 1927, Figs. 2-3.

<sup>48</sup> Capps 1927, Fig. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Morey 1941, 47 Fig. 7.

<sup>50</sup> Capps 1927, 334-39 Fig. 8.

<sup>51</sup> There is no archaeological evidence about a shrine of St. Thecla in Alexandria but in a text relating to the miracles of S. Menas, mentioned about a church which was dedicated to St. Thecla close to the shrine of St. Menas in Alexandria. See, Deonna 1949, 133.



## Abbreviations and Bibliography

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## Öz

### Azize Thekla Fildişi Kabartmalı Levhası

Azize Thekla fildişi kabartmalı plakası; Phrygia Bölgesi'nin batı ucunda yer alan Laodikeia ad Lycum antik kentinde Tapınak A kazılarında bulunmuştur. 7 yıldır yapılan kazı çalışmaları Laodikeia antik kentindeki yerleşimin Geç Kalkolitik Çağ'dan (İ.Ö. 3500), İ.S. 7. yy. başına kadar kesintisiz devam ettiğini ortaya koymuştur. Böylece antik kaynakların sözünü ettiği, Diospolis ve Rhoas olarak adlandırılan eski kutsal yerleşimin verileri Asopos Tepesi'nde elde edilmiştir.

Laodikeia en gelişmiş zamanını İ.S. 1-5. yy. arasında yaşamıştır. İncil'de adı geçen Yedi Kilise'den birinin bu kentte yer alması nedeniyle, erken Bizans Dönemi'nde dini yönü ile ön plana çıkmıştır. Laodikeia'daki mevcut kiliseler, erken Bizans Dönemi (İ.S. 5-7. yy.) yapılarıdır. İ.S. 4. yy.'da ise daha çok yeni dine özgü şapeller inşa edilmiştir. Antik kentte devam eden kazı çalışmalarında ele geçen dinsel mimari unsurlar dışında unguentariumlar, ampullalar ve minyatür cam şişecikler de kentin bu dinsel niteliğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Erken Hristiyanlık Dönemi'nde Anadolu'da yaşamış en önemli azizelerinden biri olan Thekla'nın yaşamı ile ilgili bilgiler Yunan, Latin, Arap, Ermeni ve Koptik dillerinde yazılmış metinlerle günümüze aktarılmıştır.

Laodikeia'da bulunan ve fildişinden yapılan kabartmalı plakada Azize Thekla, belki de Seleukia'daki kutsal alanını simgeleyen sütunlu bir mimari cephe önünde, ayakta ve iki iri elini yukarı kaldırmış şekilde betimlenmiştir. Azize'nin her iki yanında cepheden ön kısımları gösterilen erkek ve dişi aslan betimleri, Antiockheia arenasında Azize'yi diğer vahşi hayvanlardan koruyan aslanları temsil etmektedir.

Laodikeia kabartmalı plakası üzerinde betimlenen Azize Thekla'nın duruş tipi ve elbise kıvrımları tamamen Klasik Dönem yontu (özellikle İ.Ö. 4. yy.) sanatına benzemektedir. Bu yönüyle eser geç Antik Dönem'de, Klasistik etkiyi devam ettirmektedir.

Tapınak A, Güneybatı Portikosu üzerinde ortaya çıkarılan eser, bu alanda yer alan ve İ.S. 4. yy. sonlarına tarihlenen Erken Bizans Şapeli ile ilişkilidir. Tapınak A'da Azize Thekla kabartmasıyla aynı kodda ele geçen unguentariumlar, ampullalar ve sikkeler eserin tarihlendirilmesini, İ.S. 4. yy. sonu ile İ.S. 5. yy. sonu arasına koymaktadır. Bu tarihllemeye benzer ikonografik özelliklerde yapılan diğer fildişi kabartmalar da uyum sağlamaktadır.

Hristiyanlar için kutsal hac güzergahı içinde yer alan Laodikeia'da, Azize Thekla kabartmalı gibi dinsel konuların işlendiği plakaların bulunması çok doğaldır.



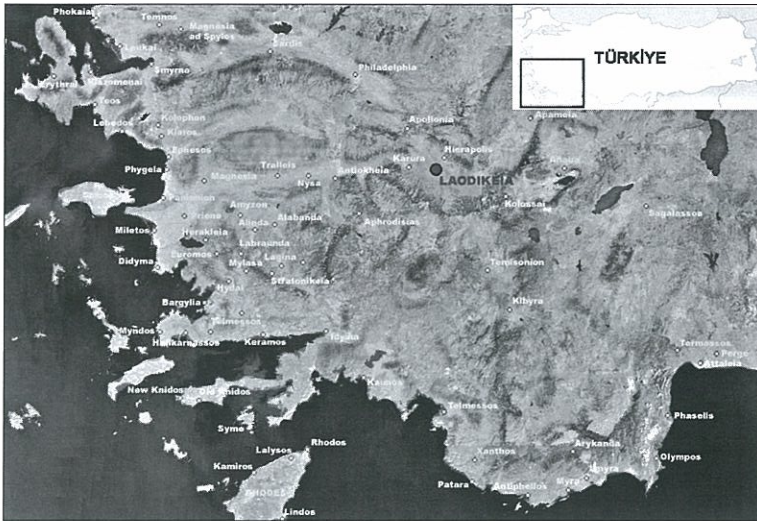


Fig. 1  
Map of Southwest Anatolia.

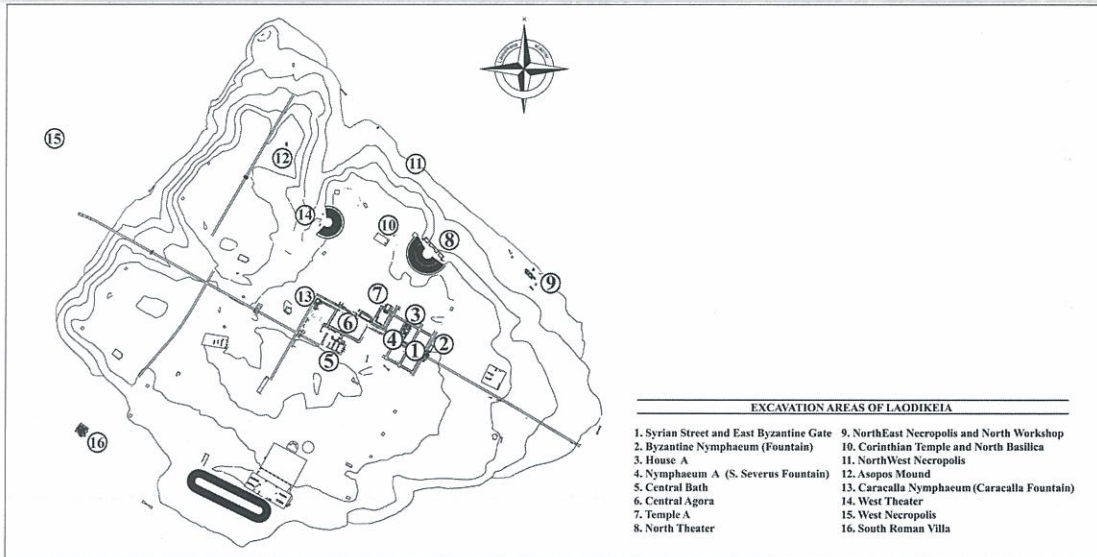


Fig. 2  
Plan of Laodiceia.

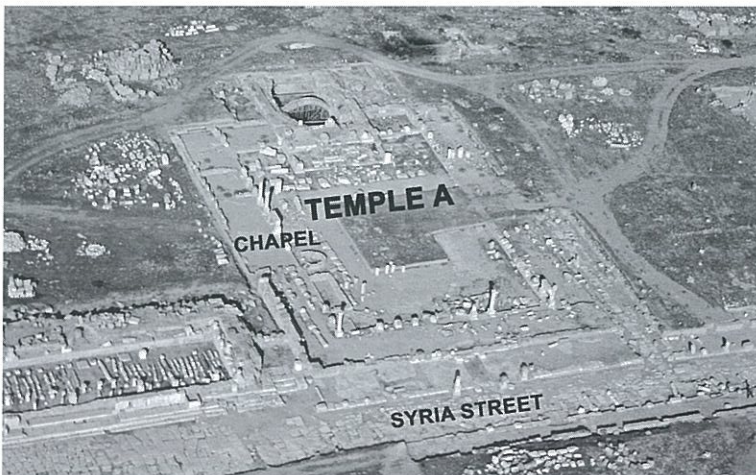


Fig. 3  
Aerial View of  
Temple A.



Fig. 4 The Ivory Relief of St. Thecla (Frontside).



Fig. 5 The Ivory Relief of St. Thecla (Drawing).



Fig. 6 The Ivory Relief of St. Thecla (Backside).

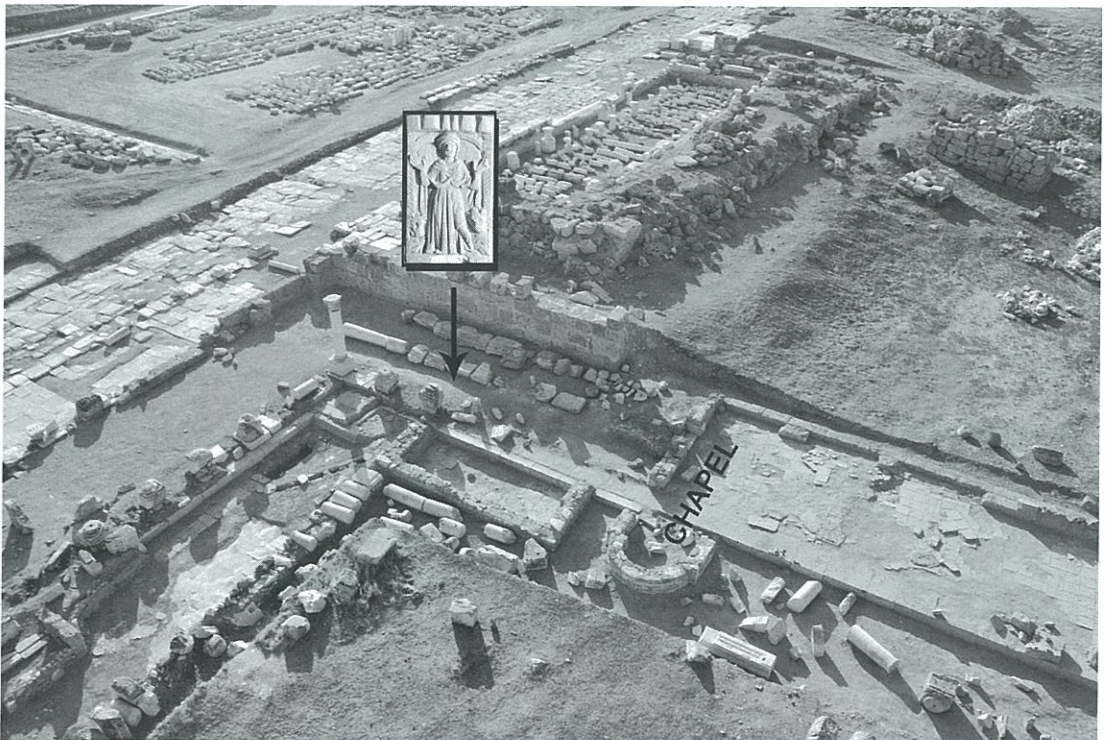


Fig. 7 Southwest Portico of Temple A.