

# A menorah with a cross carved on a column of Nymphaeum A at Laodicea ad Lycum

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Laodikeia ad Lycum lies on the W edge of Phrygia. The modern villages incorporated within its territory are Eskihisar, Goncalı and Bozburun. An important city of the Lykos (Çürüksu) valley, Laodikeia was founded by Antiochus II at some time before 253 B.C. and was named for his wife Laodike.<sup>1</sup> Pliny (*NH* 5.105) states that the Antiochian city of Laodikeia was formerly called Diospolis and then Rhoas.<sup>2</sup> Its geographical importance derives from its position at the crossroads of routes from central and southern Anatolia with routes leading west. The wealth of Laodikeia hinged also on its active rôle in the textile trade (Strabo 12.8.16). It was aided by a favorable climate and the fertility of the Lykos valley. The site is surrounded by three rivers, the Lykos, the Caprus (Başlıçay) on the southeast, and the Asopus (Gümüşçay-Goncalı-Deresi) on the northwest.<sup>3</sup> The city was founded on a high plateau between these rivers. Since there is no source of water on the plateau, water was a constant concern and a supply had to be brought from the Başpınar spring in Denizli, 8 km to the south. Built on a Hippodamian plan, the city suffered from frequent earthquakes throughout its history. Following the earthquake that also destroyed Aphrodisias and Hierapolis in the first half of the 7th c.,<sup>4</sup> the settlement moved to the district of Kaleiçi in Denizli.

The column which is the subject of this note belonged to the lower colonnade of the Composite order in the two-storeyed 'Nymphaeum A', which lies on the N side of the so-called Syrian road (fig. 1). An inscription on its architrave shows that the nymphaeum was dedicated to Septimius Severus (ruled 193-211).<sup>5</sup> It was repaired in the time of Diocletian and remained standing until it collapsed in the earthquake of A.D. 494.<sup>6</sup> During our excavations in 2003, a column fragment depicting a Christian cross above a menorah (7-branched lamp or *heptamyxion*) was exposed (fig. 1). It is the first known example of such a combination from Asia Minor.

The column (inv. no. AN.03.176; pres. ht. 45 cm) is of moderately porous marble, 45 cm in circumference. The twin depictions are incised on the shaft (figs. 2-3). Below is the menorah, while sitting atop the middle branch of the menorah are a globe representing the earth and a cross. To the left of the menorah is a palm frond (*lulav*) while to the right is an angular horn. The menorah with cross measures 29 cm in length and 19 cm in width. The menorah itself is 18 cm long and 11 cm wide, while the cross itself is 14 cm high, 9 cm wide, and the width of its incision is 1.7 cm. The diameter of the globe is 3.5 cm, the length of the palm frond is 13 cm, and the angular horn is 7 cm. The base of the menorah and the lowest section of the palm frond are

- 1 Several cities named Laodikeia were founded in the Hellenistic period; this one was distinguished from the others by its epithet 'ad Lycum'. See J. Des Gagniers, "Introduction historique," in *Laodicée du Lycos: le nymphée* (Québec 1969); K. Belke and N. Mersich, *Phrygien und Pisidien* (TIB 7, Vienna 1990) 323; G. Bejor, "Per una ricerca di Laodicea ellenistica," and G. Traversari, "La situazione viaria di Laodicea alla luce degli itinerari romani," in G. Traversari (ed.), *Laodicea di Frigia I* (Rome 2000) 9-24; V. Sevin, *Anadolu'nun Tarihi Coğrafyası I* (2001) 203; C. Şimşek, "2003 Yılı Laodikeia Antik Kenti Kazısı," *26. Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı I* (Ankara 2005) 305.
- 2 Diospolis was named after Zeus Laodikeus, the principal deity and founding god of the city. Rhoas is an ancient Anatolian name. In our recent surveys we have found pottery, flint and cutting tools of the Early Bronze age, indicating the area was settled well before Hellenistic times.
- 3 The Asopus and Capros rivers join the Lykos in the north below the town of Korucuk; the Lykos then goes on to join the Maeander in the west.
- 4 E. Guidoboni, *Catalogue of ancient earthquakes in the Mediterranean area up to the 10th century* (Bologna 1994) 349-51; D. De Bernardi Ferrero, *18. Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı II* (Ankara 1997) 87; F. D'Andria, *23. Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı I* (Ankara 2002) 100-1; id., *Hierapolis (Pamukkale)* (Istanbul 2003) passim; Şimşek (supra n.1) 312-13.
- 5 Şimşek (supra n.1) 308-18, figs. 9-13.
- 6 Şimşek (supra n.1) 308-10, 312-13.