

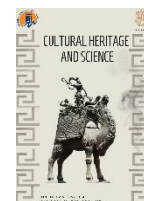


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# A Unique Ionic Cymation from Theater of Diocaesarea (Uzuncaburç) in Rough Cilicia

Okan Özdemir\*<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>University, Mersin University Faculty of Arts and Sciences Department of Archeology, Mersin, Turkey

### Keywords

Diocaesarea  
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Ionic Cymation  
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### ABSTRACT

The ancient city of Diocaesarea (Uzuncaburç) which is within the borders of the Eastern Rough Cilicia (Olba Region), draws attention with its Hellenistic, Roman and Late Antiquity ruins. Among these ruins, the theater is one of the few preserved examples in the city. The Monument can be dated precisely thanks to the inscription of *scaenae*. During the excavations conducted in 2017, several architectural blocks belonging to the *scaenae* of the theater, previously unknown, were unearthed. They present a rich picture with the architectural ornaments they carry, as well as gaining new data in the architecture of the especially Cilicia region and Asia Minor. In this study, the ionic cymation on a frieze piece obtained during excavations in the theater will be evaluated. Thanks to the "bead-and-reel" on the ionic cymation tongues, it appears as a unique ornament that has not been published before in Cilicia, Asia Minor and Syria. In this respect, it is understood that it differs from the ionic cymations used in buildings in other cities and a new style is used, and this is probably done by local workshops.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ancient city of Diocaesarea (Uzuncaburç) is within the boundaries of Uzuncaburç neighborhood, ancient city located approximately 25 km north of Mersin's Silifke (Seleukeia Kalykadnos) district. The ancient city attracts attention with its well preserved archaeological remains. Diocaesarea, developed around the Zeus Olbios Sanctuary (Wannagat 2005: 128-140; Wannagat 2007a: 1); Hellenistic, Roman and Late Antiquity ruins can be traced today (Aydınoglu 2021: 211). The well-preserved theater in the ancient city was visited by many explorers at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (De Tchihatcheff 1854: 123-124; Bent 1890: 459; Bent 1891: 221; Heberdey & Wilhelm 1896: 81-90; Bell 1906: 7-36; Herzfeld 1909: 32; Herzfeld & Guyer 1909: 438; Keil & Wilhelm 1915: 34-42; Keil & Wilhelm 1931: 56.; Boysal 1963: passim; Hellenkemper & Hild 1990: 239.). During these visits, an inscription was found on the *fascia* of the architrave-frieze block belonging to the *scaenae* of the theater, and thanks to the title of "Armeniacus" on the inscription, it

was determined that the *scaenae* was built in 164 AD, in other words, during the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus (Bent 1891: 221; Hicks 1891: No 52, 264; Spanu 2011: 105; Borgia 2013: 118). The first excavation and cleaning works on the theater were conducted in 1993 under the presidency of the Silifke Museum by Museum Director Ş. Başal (Başal 1995: passim). During excavations the *cavea* of the theater was unearthed, and many architectural blocks belonging to the *scaenae* were found *in situ*. Between 2001 and 2006, a German team under the direction of D. Wannagat conducted surveys at Diocaesarea (Wannagat 2003; Wannagat 2005; Wannagat et al. 2005; Wannagat et al. 2006; Wannagat 2007b; Wannagat et al. 2008). During this survey, the theater, on the other hand, was documented in detail by M. Spanu and his team, with remains on the surface, architectural blocks and *cavea*. The results of this research were presented in a book titled "The Theater of Diokaisareia" (Spanu, 2011: passim). Excavations started in the ancient city and the

\*Corresponding Author

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\*okanozdemir@gmail.com) ORCID ID 0000-0003-2829-3290

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theater in 2017 was carried out by the team under the direction of Ü. Aydınoglu.

Theater excavations were carried out in the *aditus* and south *analemma* walls to the east and west, and in the *orchestra*. It was observed that the whole of the *scaenae* of the theater completely collapsed into the *orchestra* and almost all parts of the *scaenae* were preserved. In the western part, a part of a *cryptae* to which *vomitorums* are connected was unearthed (Aydınoglu, 2019: 347-348). 434 architectural blocks were identified during detailed documentation on the theater<sup>1</sup>.

A piece of frieze was unearthed during excavations in the theater of Diocaesarea in 2017. The ionic cymation on

## 2. DEFINITION of IONIC CYMATION<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 1).

During the theater excavations, a broken frieze with a unique ionic cymation on it was found in the part connecting the *vomitorium* to the *cryptae* in the west of the *cavea* (Fig. 2). The local limestone frieze block is broken and it is preserved measures 23cm high and 34cm wide. The ionic cymation and the dentils on frieze block are preserved. The flat frames descending from the dentils on the ionic cymation have a sharp surface and ridge line. They are made in the arch form. They end in the section where the egg touches the bottom molding. Eggs come out of dentil in a cut and blunt form. Eggs have a rounded U-shape. They become oval towards the ends.



**Figure 1.** Ionic Cymation and terminology (1. Egg 2. Frame 3. Tongue 4. Bead 5. Reel (Disc-shaped))

## 3. INIC CYMATION: ASSESSMENT and DATING

Ionic cymation reveal unique design features in style and form. Exact parallels have not yet been found (Strong 1953: 121; Karaosmanoğlu 1996: 24-51; Vandeput 1997: 143; Mattern 2001: 50; Köster 2004: 141; Cavalier 2005: 82)<sup>3</sup>, though this ionic cymation must have all the features of local craftsmanship's style. In recent years, the style features of local workshops have been identified in the decorations on many buildings in the Cilicia region and around city of Diocaesarea in the Antonine and especially Severan Period<sup>4</sup>. However, ionic cymation is not encountered in this style with the decorations of the monuments examined. The ionic cymation styles used on the frieze belonging to the Diocaesarea theater are separated by the fact that the tongues are attached to the

this frieze is the only example of this style in the city and theater of Diocaesarea so far. The lack of an ionic cymation specimen preserved on the frieze of the theater from Cilicia and Asia Minor makes this cymation unique. Many examples of ionic cymation with different styles are encountered from the Archaic Period to the end of the Roman Imperial Period. However, the ionic cymation example offers a unique style feature with its tongues made in the style of "bead-and-reel". In this study, this ionic cymation on the frieze piece will be evaluated stylistically. Also, dating suggestions will be made for this unique example based on the decorations of the *scaenae*.

Eggs are attached to the frames and separated by a flat groove. Between the frames, the smooth-faced tongues emerge from the empty part of the dentil and end by touching the lower molding. Non-symmetrical stylized disc-shaped reel are embrodered on it and the appearance of a bead-and-reel view is given. It is seen that the tongues between the frames are not symmetrical. Some are made relatively narrow and some are wider than others. On the other hand, there is an axial harmony between ionic cymation and dentil. Eggs and frames come out of the dentil; tongues come out of the empty space between dentil.

frames, the tongues narrow towards the bottom molding where the frames begin to separate, and the bottom of the frame is open and the frames end on both sides of the egg. This style is reminiscent of the ionic cymations that appeared from the beginning of the Hellenistic Period and are repeated in Early Roman Imperial Period monuments. Similar examples can be seen on the architrave of the Temple of Dionysos Satenaios in Teos (Uz 1998: 58 Fig.7; Uz 2013: *passim*; Rumscheid 1994: Taf. 185) and also, architrave of the gates of the Temenos of the Temple of Apollo Klarios in Sagalassos (Vandeput 1997: 50 etc. Fig. 17. 3). On the other hand, ionic cymation does not have as much quality workmanship as the counted samples. This situation can be distinguished from the distortion of the shape of the tongues. The tongues that make the ionic cymation unique are in the

<sup>1</sup> The *scaenae* and its architectural blocks are discussed within the scope of my PhD dissertation. The aforementioned ionic cymation is one of the first results of this PhD study.

<sup>2</sup> In the definition of ionic cymation, the terminology in L. Vandeput's *The Architectural Decoration in Roman Asia Minor Sagalassos: a Case Study* has been followed. See Vandeput 1997: 28-32.

<sup>3</sup> For the Roman Imperial Period ionic cymations.

<sup>4</sup> See data on local artists and workshops in second century on wards: For instance, Demircili (Imbriogon Kome) Temple tombs Machatscheck 1974; 260-261; Elaiussa Sebaste & Korykos Necropoli Machatscheck

1967: 88; Karaüzüm 2005: 60; Elaiussa Sebaste Theater Spanu 2003a: 139; and Elaiussa Sebaste Agora Giobbe 2010: 365-366. Important local sculptors names on the rock-cut reliefs in Cilicia see Durugönül 1987: 116; Durugönül 1989: 50; Arhcitectural decoration of many monuments in Eleaiussa Sebaste, Korykos, and ancient rural settlements around the Seleukeia Kalykadnos and Diocaesarea see Kaplan 2006: *passim*; Spanu 2011: 81; Spanu 2013a: 107 et al; Mörel 2016: 127 et al; Kaplan 2013: 201-218; Kaplan 2014: 58-59; Kaplan 2019: 64-72; Colananded Street of Soloi Pompeiopolis see Kaya 2016: 148; Arch of Anazarbos Kadioğlu, 2013: *passim*.

form of a “bead-and-reel”. Bead-and-reels, on the other hand, do not contribute to ionic cymation in terms of style, since they do not contain a special style (Wesenberg 1972: passim) Although they have a determining role as a form, they are unfortunately not a determining element in terms of style. It would not be wrong to say that there are motifs made by imitating bead-and-reel, which are defined as disc-shaped by L. Vandeput (Vandeput 1997: 148). Bead-and-reels on the tongues also points to the styles applied in the Syrian-Palestinian regions (Freyberger 1988: passim; Schmidt-Colinet 1992: 68; Ovadia & Turnheim 1994: 85-122; Pensabene 1997: 293; Spanu 2013a:106-107; Türkmen & Peker 2013: 154; de Jong 2017: 187), which are close to the Cilicia Region, where different styles of motifs are processed between the eggs. While the eggs and frames in these structures generally exhibit the classical design of ionic cymation, they are used in the form of lozenges, folded branches and even inverted or straight dart on the same ionic cymation. As a matter of fact, it is possible to see with the ionic cymation made in the Cilicia region in this effect. For instance, we can see on the architrave friezes of propylon of Diocaesarea dated Severan Period (Kaplan 2019: 60-63) on the architrave frieze of the arch of Anazarbos dating around 150-175 AD<sup>5</sup>, which is close to the Syrian-Palestinian geography. Also, the Temple dating Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus Period (Giobbe 2013: 139), Colonnaded Street and Arch dated to the Severan Period (Kaplan 2010: 173-174; Aşkın 2012: passim; Spanu 2013b: 626 etc.) in the city of Korykos, reused architrave blocks of the North Church in Hierapolis Kastabala (Kortanoğlu & Barut Kermirtlek 2020: 265), on the Collonaded Street of the city of Soloi-Pompeiiopolis dated Severan Period (Peschlow & Bindokat 1975: 389; Kaplan 2006: 101; Kaya 2019: 48-52). In addition, it has been determined both in previous studies (Spanu 2011: 33, 84 Fig. 26; Kaplan 2013: 121 etc) and in our ongoing studies that different styles of ionic cymation were used in the *scaenae* of the Diocaesarea theater. Based on these types, it has been suggested by M. Spanu that they are different types derived from a single design<sup>6</sup>. Although this is a correct

interpretation at first glance, we have obtained important evidence that the craftsmen try to apply different styles in the styles they use. At the same time, it was also suggested by M. Spanu that the craftsmen in the city of Diocaesarea, especially in terms of architectural decoration, followed a conservative style of the generations that came after them (Spanu 2013b: 630). D. Kaplan, on the other hand, argued that he continued with radical transitions and was decorated in this way (Kaplan 2019: 72). Although the excavations of the buildings of the city are still incomplete, the idea that the craftsmen working at Diocaesarea or the workshops they are subject to are trying to create their own style identity thanks to this ionic cymation has started to prevail<sup>7</sup>. The observation of ionic cymations used in different styles in the same structure has been interpreted as the “baroque effect” of the Antonine Period (Lyttelton 1974: passim; Can 2005: 92; Thomas 2007: 116). Thanks to the inscription of the *scaenae*, these different types of ionic cymations are dated to 164 AD (Spanu 2011: 84; Kaplan 2013: 121 etc.). The example in this study should have a similar date. There are no similar examples of palmettes, flutes-acanthus, and lesbian cymations in the decorations of the *scaenae* of the theater<sup>8</sup>. These are thought to be the motifs of local workshops in Diocaesarea (Kaplan 2013: 156; Spanu 2011: 84; Spanu 2013b: 634). In this case, it can be said that the local workshops used their own styles by obeying the canonical rules (Ward 1896: 48; Freyberger 1989: 72, Taf. 22b; Gogräfte 1993: 55: Lev. 12b; Theodorescu 1994: 107-122; Frey 1994: 152) to some extent and practicing them freely. On this basis, it brings to mind the possibility that it has ionic cymations with different uses in the *scaenae* and that the decoration craftsmen may have tried different styles of ionic cymation in different parts of the theater. For this reason, the ionic cymation must have been decorated during or after the construction of the *scaenae*, understood to have been built in 164 AD. It would be appropriate to suggest that ionic cymation was ornamented between 164-180 AD, as it was found in the western *vomitium* part of the theater.

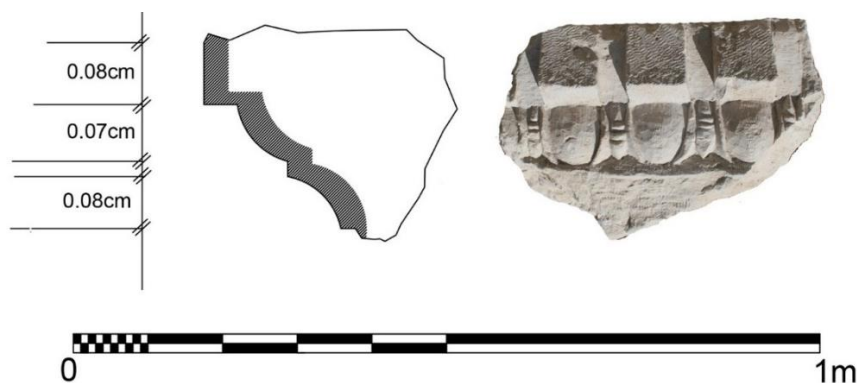


Figure 2. Frieze Block and its Section

<sup>5</sup> M. Kadioğlu states that effect of Syrian architectural decoration can observables arch of Anazarbos. Kadioğlu 2013: 248; M. Spanu also refers the same effect on the decoration Cilicia and theater of Diocaesarea Spanu 2003b: 18; Spanu 2011: 83.

<sup>6</sup> Spanu 2011: 84. I have increased the number of the mentioned types to 6 within the scope of my PhD.

<sup>7</sup> It should not be a coincidence that we do not encounter such published decorations in Syria, Africa, Levant and Asia Minor regions.

<sup>8</sup> These ornaments were evaluated in detail within the scope of my PhD.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In the last two decades, we see that architectural decoration publications have increased in Cilicia and provided important data. It is understood from the inhabitants of a difficult geography, such as Rough Cilicia, that it decorates monuments such as large Mediterranean coastal cities. It is reported that the craftsmen and workshops carrying out decoration activities in Cilicia practice styles brought from Syria, which is a close region. These styles can be followed in many buildings both in city centers and in the hinterland of these areas. At the same time, another important point is that we witness that there is a period where the craftsmen started to apply these styles in Cilicia as well as put forward their own styles. The originality and unsymmetrical new styles in the decorations provide a significant basis for them.

It is not a coincidence that we see such applications in the architectural decorations in the buildings in the cities of the region such as Seleukeia Kalykadnos, Korykos and Elaiussa Sebaste, which are close to Diocaesarea. Especially in the 2nd century AD, it is understood that it was a city where investments were made in the Cilicia region as in all the Roman Empire regions. Therefore, the cities must have continued to receive investments, especially after this period (Durukan et al. 2013: 361-364). These direct financial supports should have increased the architectural decoration activities in the cities<sup>9</sup>.

Diocaesarea theater is an important building element in the city armature. The fact that it has a *scaenae* dated precisely with its inscription and offers a special architectural repertoire already provides valuable data for both the region and Asia Minor. The point that should be emphasized here is that, as stated above, a city 25 km away from the coast has such an architectural decoration. The unearthing of these ornaments through excavations made it possible for us to see important decorations and new styles that have not been encountered before. Eventually, ionic cymation, which was presented to the literature for the first time with in this study, must have been made within the construction program of the *scaenae* of the Diocaesarea theater, which is dated to the Antonine Period. Even though the study of the theatre at Diocaesarea has not yet been completed, some ornaments points out unique desing. Ionic cymations was found in the *scaenae*, which is dated precisely with its inscription. The use of different ionic cymations in the *scaenae* and the fact that it was known that in the Antonine Period, ionic cymations was used in the same building in the different parts shows that this ionic cymation must belong to the years 164-180 AD. As a matter of fact, ionic cymation is not encountered in this style in the Eastern Rough Cilician architecture during the Antonine Period. From this point of this style appears as a new application. The observation of decorations in various styles not only in the *scaenae* but also in different

parts of the building indicates that the building was decorated within the scope of the large building project. Therefore, the ionic cymation shows that it is not limited to the *scaenae* and that it is another example of the decoration works applied in different parts of the theater and is included in the decoration program here. It is also an important proof that local workshops eclectically apply their style<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> For instance, city of Aphrodisias see Stinson, 2008: *passim*.

<sup>10</sup> D. Kaplan emphasizes local workshops eclectic on the architectural decoration in Eastern Rough Cilicia middle of the second century AD and beginning of the third century AD. Kaplan, 2013: 201-218. S. Young

emphasizes the same situation on the Pamphylian architectural decoration in second century AD. Young 2003: 173-175.

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