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### A FIGURED OSTOTHEK LID FROM THE ROMAN PERIOD

### ROMA DÖNEMİNE AİT FİĞÜRLÜ BİR OSTOTHEK KAPAĞI

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#### Abstract

This study focused on Ostothek lid with Lion and woman figure from today's fire institution department area in the Ilgın district center. This Ostothek lid is made of local limestone with the front part finished. On the lid of the Ostothek, a standing lion figure depicted from the front is seen. When style criticism is made with the likeness of the lion figure on the lid; It is thought that it is designed for protective and frightening purposes. The schematized female figure between the front legs of the standing lion figure is also interesting. Giving this female figure dressed as Peplos vs Hymation between the feet of a lion is a symbol that the owner of the tomb is protected from evil and is under protection. The dress folds of the figure, which are given as a superficial relief, provide clues to the find and date of the lid. This find should probably have been brought from ancient settlements near Ilgın. Because this archaeological find in the Ilgın district has close stylistic and iconographic similarities in Antiquity with the female figures of the Mountain Phrygia region. The style and iconographic features that emerged as a result of the comparison made with the similar figures of both the lion and the female figure show that this Ostothek lid belongs to the second half of the 2nd century AD.

**Keywords:** Ilgın, Ostothek, Lion and Woman Figure, Stylistic, Iconography.

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## Öz

İlgın ilçe merkezinde yer alan günümüzde itfaiye kurumu olarak faaliyet sürdüren binada korunan aslan ve kadın figürlü ostothek kapağı çalışmaya kaynaklık etmektedir. Bu ostothek kapağı, yerel kireç taşından yapılmış olup ön cephesi işlenmiştir. Ostothek kapağı üzerinde ayakta ve cepheden betimlenmiş aslan figürü görülmektedir. Kapak üzerinde yer alan aslan figürünün benzerleri ile stil kritiği yapıldığında; koruyucu ve korkutucu amaçla tasarlandığı düşünülmektedir. Ayakta betimlenmiş aslan figürünün ön ayakları arasında şematize işlenmiş kadın figürü de ilgi çekicidir. Peplos ve himation giyimli bu kadın figürünün aslan ayakları arasında verilmesi mezar sahibinin kötülüklerden korunduğunu ve koruma altına alındığının da bir simgesidir. Alçak kabartma olarak verilen figürün elbise kıvrımları, kapağın buluntu yerine ve tarihlendirilmesine yönelik ipucu sağlamaktadır. Bu buluntu, muhtemelen İlgın yakınlarındaki antik yerleşimlerden getirilmiş olmalıdır. Çünkü ilçede görülen bu arkeolojik buluntunun, Antik Dönem’de ilçenin içinde yer aldığı Dağlık Phrygia bölgesi kadın figürlü eserleriyle stilistik ve ikonografik yakın benzerlikleri saptanmıştır. Tarih olarak da gerek aslan gerek de kadın figürünün benzerleri ile yapılan kıyaslama sonucunda ortaya çıkan stilistik ve ikonografik özellikler, bu ostothek kapağının MS 2. yüzyılın ikinci yarısına ait olduğunu göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İlgın, Ostothek, Aslan ve Kadın Figürü, Stilistik, İkonografi.

## Introduction

The concept of Ostothek was formed from the combination of the words Osteon (bone) - theke (crate, box, enclosure) and was generally called a bone storage container.<sup>1</sup> The word Ostothek is also used as the opposite of the word Samotetek to mean the sarcophagus where the dead are buried directly without being cremated.<sup>2</sup> The material used in the construction of Ostotheks, which can also be considered as bone drawers and ash urns,<sup>3</sup> varied on the region where it is made, personal demand, and the financial situation of the owner. It is known that mostly used materials of Ostotheks are limestone and marble followed by terracotta, metal, and wood.<sup>4</sup> The Ostotheks, which appear as square, rectangular<sup>5</sup> and vase-shaped, are divided into two groups as rock-bound and free-standing.<sup>6</sup> Small, portable and independently standing<sup>7</sup> ones may be the reason for preferences. As a matter of fact, Ostotheks had been one of the most preferred tomb types for cremation burials from the end of the Hellenistic Period<sup>8</sup> to the Roman Period.<sup>9</sup>

The Ostothek consists of two separate parts, the body and the lid. Form features and decoration elements are of particular importance for Ostothek bodies as well as lids. For example, an Ostothek lid obtained from the İlgın fire station, which is the subject of the study, contributes to this importance. The lid of the Ostothek, made of local yellow limestone, is generally preserved.<sup>10</sup> The facial features of the lion on it, whose head is facing from the front, are not evident due to the ruptures (Fig. 1). The lion's tail passes between the right hind leg and forms a tasseled fold over the hip. Dense and thick feathers at the tip of the tail are stylistically detailed with thick, superficial lines. Fore and hind paws preserved. The claws are given almost in the form of a comb. The legs and hips of the lion are appearances quite strong. The separation of the hip part from the body is evident. The muscle details are quite well rendered and the eyes were made massive. Manes in semi-spiral form, which give a fluffy and majestic appearance with wire-processed wire, extend from the neck to the back. The feathers on the back of their forefeet are also carefully noted.

<sup>1</sup> Çelgin 1990, 463.

<sup>2</sup> Asgari 1965, 16

<sup>3</sup> Koch 2001, 219.

<sup>4</sup> Çelgin 1990, 504.

<sup>5</sup> Köse 2015, 11-15.

<sup>6</sup> Çelgin 1990, 480.

<sup>7</sup> For detailed information on the concept of portable ostothek, see. Altun 2016, 497-506.

<sup>8</sup> Earliest Ostothek (4th century BC) example was found in the tomb of Alketas. For detailed information see. Toynbee 1971, 39-43; Çelgin 1990, 129-144.

<sup>9</sup> Korkut 1999, 381-389; Koch 2001, 219.

<sup>10</sup> Height: 79 cm, width: 29 cm, depth: 61 cm; figure length: 28 cm, width: 10 cm, depth: 1.7 cm.

Body sharper than profile and it's been pretty long.<sup>11</sup> Four rib-shaped lines on each side of the abdomen are given as rib detail (Fig. 2). In addition, the measured ratio between the flattened body is not accomplished at all. In the space between the front and hind legs of the lion, a female figure is depicted in superficial relief, standing and from the front. The figure is dressed in a mantle that lids the head, leaving the front part of the hair exposed.

### Evaluation of Lion Figure

Mankind has sanctified the powers that it has not been able to defeat since its existence, and has given meaning to them. Lions are one of these creatures.<sup>12</sup> The lion also appears as a symbol of the earth, the underworld and fertility.<sup>13</sup> The fact that the lion is also a strong and powerful being has also been very effective in this.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the lion is an enviable creature in terms of feeling its power, feeling its power and protecting and guarding the borders of the region where it lives. This feature is very evident in the art of tombs. The ostothek lid in the form of a standing lion, which is the subject of the study, must have been produced for these reasons, as mentioned above. As a similar example, many lion-shaped ostothek lids belonging to the Roman Imperial Period were also found in the Lykaonia<sup>15</sup> and Isauria<sup>16</sup> Regions. However, as seen in the Ilgin example, it is not depicted standing, on the contrary, lions are generally depicted lying on the lid with their feet on one side, or lying on their sides.<sup>17</sup> Another difference arises from the directional position of the head. While the head of the Ilgin lion's<sup>18</sup> is given from the front, in the examples of Lykoania and Isauria, the head is generally given from the right or left-facing profile. According to Köse, this head position points to the path the ostotheks face. It is intended that the lion figure be seen by passers-by on the town road. Thus the image of the Lion's terrible face is designed to deter passers-by.<sup>19</sup>

Lion tombs appear as a protective design element in both Lycaonia, Isauria, and Pisidia sarcophagus roof lids<sup>20</sup> and rock tombs. Lions are depicted standing in an aggressive position, as in the examples of Aslantaş and Kümbet<sup>21</sup> and Aslankaya tombs<sup>22</sup> in the Phrygia region. Particularly most of the Lion figures in the tomb iconography of this region, appear young and dynamic. According to Ferguson,<sup>23</sup> this living structure, reflects the power and majesty, of the feature of revival based on the belief that young lions are born dead and come back to life after three days.

The ostothek lid, which is the subject of the study, presents an integrated design with a human and a lion figure. In addition to the similar iconographic design in the ostotheks seen in the Isauria Region, they are also depicted<sup>24</sup> as lying on their sides rather than standing or holding various animal and human figures<sup>25</sup> between their claws. However, there are examples with similar forms and iconographic designs preserved in the garden<sup>26</sup> of Konya Archeology Museum. Between the feet of the

<sup>11</sup> This position is related to the exhibition of the work and its main aspect.

<sup>12</sup> Although ancient sources do not mention the existence of lions in Anatolian geography, archaeological findings claim the opposite of this view. Because lion bones were found in the II, III, IV early and V late layers of Troy. (Taşkıran 2018, 66).

<sup>13</sup> Gorecka-Smolinska-Kleparski 2008, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Ferguson 1954, 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> Baldıran 2005, fig. 32-35.

<sup>16</sup> Yılmaz 2005, 114-116, fig. 16, 21a-b, 35a-bc, 36a-b-c.

<sup>17</sup> Koch 2001, 228.

<sup>18</sup> Half or fully sculpted lions are common in tomb art in Anatolia until the end of the Roman Period. (Köse 2005, 42).

<sup>19</sup> Köse 2005, 42.

<sup>20</sup> Köse 2005, 42.

<sup>21</sup> Işık 2006, 51.

<sup>22</sup> Işık 2006, 51.

<sup>23</sup> Ferguson 1954, 21.

<sup>24</sup> Doğanay 2009, 155.

<sup>25</sup> In the human figures killed, trampled or ridden in such scenes, it was probably intended to show the emphasis of "superiority-power".

<sup>26</sup> Buckler 1924, 31-32, pl. III, no, 11-13.

standing lions<sup>27</sup> on the lid, there is a female figure dressed in Peplos and Hymation in a similar stance and position to our example. Another similar design is seen in the Tashkent - Avşar ostotheks<sup>28</sup> located in the Lykaonia region. However, the prevailing shaping aspects of the lion figures in the Lykaonia and Konya Museums<sup>29</sup> are inconsistent and superficial, and dated to the 3rd century AD.<sup>30</sup> Although the distinctive facial details and manes of the lion figure on the lid seen in the Ilgin sample consist of fine lines and inward-turning embossed flame manes. According to Baldiran,<sup>31</sup> the manes processed in this style are reminiscent of classical period hair curls. Due to the style features of the Ostothek lid which is dated to the 2nd century AD, It brings to mind the classicist<sup>32</sup> fashion of the Hadrian Period. In addition, considering that the production of these ostotheks in Anatolia became widespread in the 2nd century AD,<sup>33</sup> it can be predicted that the ostothek, which is the subject of the study, was also produced during this period. Another point of comparison is the tail decoration. In our example, the figure of the tail creates a fold on the hip. In Isaurian lions, the tails are usually left behind the right hind leg (Fig. 4).

However, the ends of the tails are plastic and linear, as in the Ilgin lions, and are processed in the form of a comb.<sup>34</sup>

### Evaluation of Woman Figure

Another source that can help with the dating and comparison is seen in the female figure<sup>35</sup> depicted from the front and standing between the lion's feet (Fig. 3). The figure here is the soul of the deceased and is under the protection of the lion against evil.<sup>36</sup> In addition, the duty of lions is to protect the deceased, who is the owner of the tomb, from evil.<sup>37</sup> According to Doğanay,<sup>38</sup> it is depicted as a protective animal, which is a friend of the tomb owner to protect him from his enemies. The female figures standing in front of the lion's paws, dressed in a dress should be related to whether the tomb was made to indicate that it belonged to a woman. Although there are abrasions and ruptures on the figure's face, the full face is noticeable. The figure is dressed in hymation on a round-necked chiton. Hymation liss the whole body, including the arms, except the hands. The right hand, which was broken at the elbow under the hymation, is removed from the hymation in a diagonal manner and rises on the left chest, while the left hand is slightly bent at the elbow and stands on the left leg. This position stance reflects the characteristics of the Palliatus<sup>39</sup> type. Pfuhl-Möbius used the term "normal type" instead of "Palliatus",<sup>40</sup> The depictions of women in this Palliatus typology appear as a very common figure on tomb steles<sup>41</sup> from the Hellenistic and Roman Periods. However, the female figure, which is the subject of the study, is very characteristic for the Mountainous Phrygia Region,<sup>42</sup> due to stylistic features such as the solidification of the movement, the superficial or schematized rendering of the figure, and the disappearance of the arm and leg movement. For this reason, when evaluating

<sup>27</sup> It is stated that these covers, which are said to be from the Konya region, were designed as tomb monuments. (Buckler 1924, 31).

<sup>28</sup> Baldiran 2005, 84-85, fig. 33, 35.

<sup>29</sup> Ayrıntılı bilgi için bkz. Mclean 2002, cat. 7, fig. 7; cat. 10, fig. 12; cat. 11, fig. 14; cat. 22, fig. 31; cat. 191, fig. 225; cat. 193, fig. 226; cat. 194, fig. 228.

<sup>30</sup> Baldiran 2005, 86.

<sup>31</sup> Baldiran 2005, 84.

<sup>32</sup> Baldiran 2005, 84.

<sup>33</sup> Koch 2001, 14, 219.

<sup>34</sup> Yılmaz 2005, kat. no. Osk2, osk3, Osk6, Osk8, Osk10, Osk11, Osk13, Osk14, Osk 22.

<sup>35</sup> Apart from these symbols, we also see male figures on ostothek covers with lions. The male figures on these lids are depicted under the right front paw of the lion. In some examples, the male figure is depicted with his feet pulled towards his stomach and raising his hands upwards as if asking for help. (Daylan 2021, 114, fig. 51).

<sup>36</sup> Yılmaz 2005, 28.

<sup>37</sup> Er-Scarborough 1991, 348.

<sup>38</sup> Doğanay 2009, 155.

<sup>39</sup> Palliatus, derived from the Latin word Pallium (mantle), is known as hymation in Greek. (Şahin 2000, 71, dn. 86).

<sup>40</sup> Pfuhl-Möbius, 1977, 90, 148, taf. 34-75.

<sup>41</sup> Pfuhl-Möbius, 1977, 90, 148, taf. 34-75; Şahin 2000, 71-73.

<sup>42</sup> MAMA VII, 1956, no. 14, 37, 46, 52, 63, 343, 369, 384, 447, 500, 518.

the female figure on the ostotheke lids, it would be more accurate to look at places that show closer parallels for comparison works. For example, both the posture position and the pattern and schematic processing of the dress folds of the female depictions on a tomb stela from the Roman Imperial Period in Sarayönü Çeşmelisebil<sup>43</sup> are stylistically similar to the ostotheke figure. There are other figures that are rendered in a similar fashion in terms of dress and posture. The dress and posture details, facial physiognomy and schematic processing of the female figure in the vaulted niche of the tomb stele in Ladik<sup>44</sup> are exemplary. Considering the stylistic similarity of the lion and female figures examined, we can date the work to the second half of the 2nd century AD.

### Conclusion

The style and appearance of the lion-figure ostotheke brings to mind the provincial imitation of Roman sarcophagi of Anatolian origin. The poor quality of the material used in the construction of the Ostotheke and the talents of the masters who made them show a provincial or local style, which strengthens this imitation situation.

This lion figure, probably found in the entrance structures of the necropolis structures, took on the role of "gate guards" in the sense of protective and frightening.

During the survey we conducted in the region, no finds that could be the ostotheke lid with a lion figure were found. Probably the main factor that causes the necropolis areas to be perceived as independent from settlements is the detection of almost no architectural elements. This situation has been explained by some researchers with the establishment of temporary settlements by the people of the region.<sup>45</sup>

Although the stylistic and iconographic features of the lion and human figure on the lid differ from the Lykaonia and Isauria regions, it has been seen that it is also used as a popular decoration element in the tomb structures due to the high cultural interaction between the regions. The Ostotheke lid find will contribute to the dating and burial tradition of the burial finds in Iğın and the surrounding provinces in the light of the style evaluation and comparison.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

There is no financial conflict of interest with any institution, organization, person related to our article titled "A Figured Ostotheke Lid From The Roman Period" and there is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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<sup>43</sup> MAMA XI, 1957, 202-204

<sup>44</sup> MAMA XI, 1957, 261.

<sup>45</sup> Doğanay 2016, 400.

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Fig. 1: General View



Fig. 2: Profil View



**Fig. 3:** Woman Figure and Detail



**Fig. 4:** Tail Detail