



CITY OF ETERNAL LOVE AND **GLADIATORS**

Why don't you come and see the city of love, gladiators,
pain, blood, wealth, hope, happiness and death?



While travelling to Milas and Bodrum from Yatağan by car, you encounter a small hill in the 7th km called Kadıkulesi, both sides of which are full of ornamented marbles, the silent eyewitnesses of history. When you see a water way, it means that you are in the heart of Stratonikeia, a city that consisted of more than 70,000 people many years ago.



STRATONIKEIA

"Near the city, there was a temple of Zeus Khrysaoreos in which donations were served and daily political and social events were discussed regularly. Temple was common of all people of Karia region"
Strabon

By
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bilal SÖĞÜT
Pamukkale University, Science and Art Faculty
Department of Archaeology
Director of the Stratonikeia Excavations

Photos
Bilal SÖĞÜT

Stratonikeia, a city in the interior of Caria, is located at Eskihisar Village, in the Yatağan district of the Muğla province. The settlement was known as Atria in the Hittite Period. The ancient writers Herodotus (v, 118), Strabo (xiv, ii, 25), Pausanias (5, 21, 10) and Stephanus of Byzantium (Ethnica 696) mention a settlement here called Chrysaoris/Idrias. After 281 B.C. the Seleucid King Antiochos I changed the name of the city to Stratonikeia, the name of his former stepmother and later wife. Stratonikeia and the surrounding region changed hands between the Seleucids, Ptolemaics, Macedonians, Rhodians and Romans. The city maintained its importance in the Roman Imperial Period and developed continuously. It benefited greatly from constructions carried out during the Early Imperial Period, especially in the 2nd century A.D. In the Byzantine Era, like other cities in the region, the sea of

Stratonikeia was a dependent of Aphrodisias.

It is known that with the Anatolian conquest, the Emirates extended as far as southwestern Anatolia. Stratonikeia continued to be settled in the Emirates Period in the 14th-15th centuries and afterwards. Many ağas (landowners) were present in the village in the late Ottoman Period. Although the Eskihisar village has moved to a new area, today five families still remain in the historic village homes within the territories of the ancient city.

The borders of Stratonikeia are known thanks to its fortification walls, and its size can be easily determined. However, within the city only certain structures have been excavated. Therefore, our knowledge of the number of structures on the city plan is limited. Based on the excavated structures and the street system, it is likely that the city was built on a grid plan. The structures in the city are the fortification walls,

Above
Silver coin from Stratonikeia,
ca. 120-80 BC

The gladiators fought in the arena of Stratonikeia.

Bloody and deathly plays of ancient times



"Droseros, from the third category. Achilles killed me with the games of the Faith Goddess. Once I was on the scene, now Achilles is"



A Hellenistic terracotta bust



Terracotta head of a panther from Hellenistic Period



Apulla, 5th – 6th century AD



Terracotta mask from Late Hellenistic – Early Roman Period

a city gate with its monumental fountain, the colonnaded street, gymnasium, bouleuterion, bath, theater, temple and a water structure. In addition, a bath from the Emirates Period (14-15th centuries A.D.), a mosque from the 19th and the 20th century, a coffeehouse, dwellings, streets and shops can be found in the ancient city.

Stratonikeia is one of the places where one can see buildings from the ancient period as well as the Ottoman and Turkish Republican Periods. Thus, a visitor has the opportunity to see many structures belonging to different periods.

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On the north side of Kadıkulesi Hill, a town called Eskihisar welcomes you. People of this town lived here until earthquakes in the 1950's resulted in the establishment of a new town,

again called Eskihisar, near the old settlement area and later on they immigrated there. Now few people are living in old Eskihisar (Stratonikeia).

Eskihisar is like a time machine. The middle point of the time scale of the machine is Stratonikeia, a fairy tale of old times. Endless and eternal love, wealth, fidelity, slaves and free men, gladiators and their bloody struggles to live maybe one more day, a big sports school called a gymnasium, a multi-functional and well-designed theatre, cultural and scientific activities, and a big building of the city's parliament members all belonged to cities near to Stratonikeia, a wonderful settlement place with olive trees and fertile agricultural areas.

In fact, the fairy tale of Stratonikeia didn't come to exist in only one day. According to Pausanias, there was a city before Stratonikeia in the same area and its name was Khrysaoris. Another writer, Stephanos the Byzantinos said that name of Khrysaoris was changed to Idrias. Later on, traveler and historian Strabon gave important and detailed information about the city: *"Near the city, there was a temple of Zeus Khrysaoreos in which donations were served and daily political and social events were discussed regularly. Temple was common of all people of Karia region"*.

Not only the Temple, but also the city had great importance to the people of the region. Because of high standards of living and wealth, Stratonikeia was like a pioneer of development. It was one of three cities that belonged to the Attic Navy Union and it gave important financial support to the union.

Stratonikeia was a well-developed and rich city. But sometimes, because of its political importance, the rulers of the city received financial aid from members of the Hekatomnid family, like the Persian local governor (satrab) Maussolos and Ireus.

The city was important not only for the leaders of ancient times. Settlement continued for a long time and the prestige of city lasted. The sudden destructive effects of big earthquakes became the killer of "Great Stratonikeia", which had special relations with the Island of Rhodes.



The terracotta figurine of a woman knitting, 2nd century BC



The excavations conducted at the area, the North City Gate is seen behind.

Relations with other contemporary states and civilizations became the reason for long-term settlement in the city in different parts of history. Even today, someone can easily see the evidence of the immortal city of Stratonikeia. 600 meters from the road, near the city walls, a Turkish bath dated to the 15th century AD, the Mosque of Saban Aga that was built four centuries later, the Village Cafe (Kahve), and the stores, bakers and butcher shops of Eskihisar

Village are still suitable to visit. In the square of the village (Köy Meydanı), an old oak tree salutes the visitors and tells the story of “Great Stratonikeia” and its grand children. In other words, the voices of the past are changed into the mystic murmurs of living nature. Any visitor can hear them and realize the wonderful history of the area. Here, it is important to emphasize the role of civil people and state officials in saving and restoring houses and other constructions. Otherwise, hearing the silent screams of the city would be possible only by the help of archaeological excavations. Also, through the drawings of artist Aydın Erkuş, it may be easy and funny to understand past times in the city. He, in fact, reconstructed ancient times on paper carefully and methodically to describe Stratonikeia.

The 3D reconstruction drawing of the Augustus and Empires Temple



To describe the settlement of Stratonikeia, let's start with the road to the south, passing the village square. In the streets belonging to the road, some big houses welcome the visitor. These are the houses of the rich people of the settlement, called “Aga Evleri (houses)”. Owing to the presence of the Aga Evleri, the streets were called Aga Sokakları (Streets). If you continue to walk, in the north side of the village monumental buildings of the antique period



The mosaic from Early Byzantine Period, 5th century AD



Pelike dating to the 4th century BC

start to talk you. On one of the lower terraces, the Temple of Augustus and the Emperors sits awaiting new visitors. It is to the south of the theatre, with a peripteral plan measuring 12.55 x 18.54 m. By using methods of 3D reconstruction, all parts of the temple are visible.

To the north of the Temple of Augustus and the Emperors, on a natural terrace, a theatre in the Greco-Roman style salutes you. It is possible to say that 15,000 people could easily sit here and watch the plays and games. Here, however, one of the unsolved secrets of Stra-

tonikeia makes people think. According to archaeological excavations, there is no doubt that gladiators of the antique period fought in the arena to live. Of course, a special place or building had to be used for this purpose. But the lower platform of the known theatre was not suitable for gladiators' games. So, instead, this construction was possibly used for the cultural and scientific aims of the people. But for such aims, the theatre is too large. In other words, the citizens of rich Stratonikeia were also curious about something apart from bloody and deathly plays, featuring gladiator versus gladiator, a wild animal versus gladiators or a wild animal versus another wild animal. It shows that Stratonikeia was also a center of science and culture. 2000 years later, the theatre of Stratonikeia became the host of a festival on 23rd August 2010. As part of the Karsanat Baroque Festival of Stratonikeia, a concert was organized. People listening the concert enjoyed it very much, because the singers didn't need to use a microphone or any other technological devices. It is possible that the ancient people of Stratonikeia heard something similar to these audience members.

Another important building of Stratonikeia is the Bouleuterion, the building of parliament. As was mentioned previously, Stratonikeia was an administrative center in the antique period. Parliaments came from different settlement areas near to the city and they were called the Boule. They met in the Bouleuterion to decide upon issues relating to the people of the area. The building of parliament measured 24.95 x 29.80 m. According to its size, it may be said that multiple boules were convened there.

The Bouleuterion was not only a decision-place. There are also some important inscriptions placed on the inner and outer walls of the structure. An easy-to-use calendar on the wall can still be used today. 2000 years ago, the citizens of Stratonikeia also used the same calendar, which was made by Menippos at the beginning of the 1st century AD. Other inscriptions on the wall, which is known as Decides of Diokletianus, the Roman Emperor, are list of goods and prices from 301 AD. It shows that to prevent inflation, the governors of Stratonikeia decided



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to practice a kind of monopoly on commercial activities.

The gymnasium was another important part of the city. It is possible to say that the sports school gymnasium was a product of the Hellenistic idea of architecture. Divided into 5 parts, measuring 105m x 180 m, the gymnasium was not only for physical education, but also for mental education.

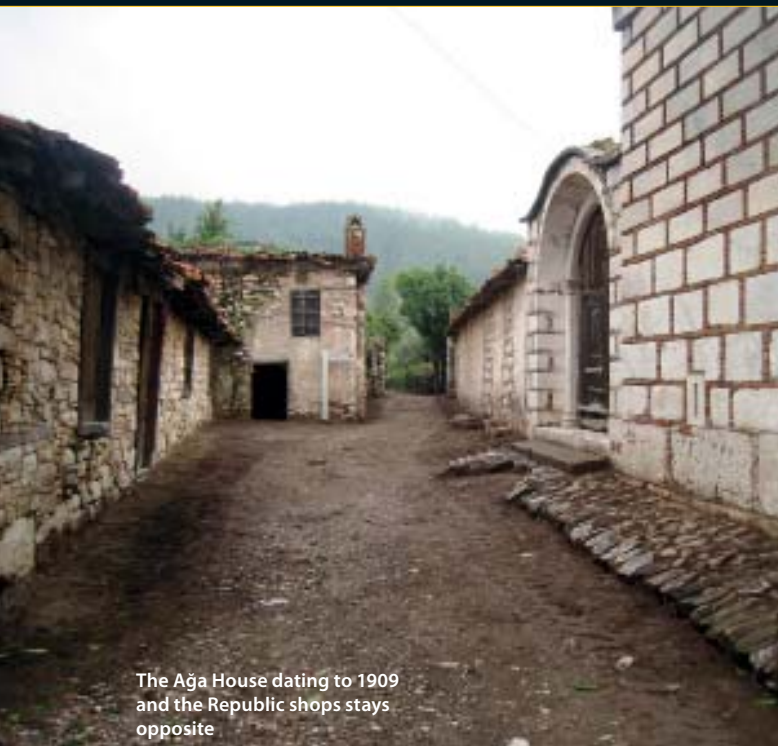
The archaeological and epigraphic finds indicate that the gymnasium was built in the 2nd quarter of the 2nd century B.C., and during the Augustan and Antonine periods new arrangements and reconstructions were made.

The northern city gate and fountain located on the northern fortification wall is where the sacred road that comes from the Lagina Hekate sacred precinct meets the city after passing the necropolis. Therefore, the Northern City Gate is of great importance both as an entrance and as a ritualistic place.

Above
Theatre with the seating capacity of 15000 people

Below
The marble bust of the Emperor Neron, dating to 55-59 AD





The Ağa House dating to 1909 and the Republic shops stays opposite

On the north side of Kadıkulesi Hill, a town called Eskihisar welcomes you. People of this town lived here until earthquakes in the 1950's resulted in the establishment of a new town, again called Eskihisar, near the old settlement area and later on they immigrated there. Now few people are living in old Eskihisar (Stratonikeia).

The northern city gate is quite large and has a monumental arched entrance on either side. The exterior façade of the gate is of the Doric order. The façade facing the city, with its monumental fountain of semi-circular pools between the two entrances, is decorated with two-tiered columns and statues and is of the Corinthian order. Based on the remains and the architectural features, the gate must have measured 42.5 m wide and 14.20 m high.

The Colonnaded Street, measuring 8.70 m wide, begins from the south middle section of the open area in front of the northern city gate and continues towards the city center. A monument of an unidentified important figure of the city was found at the beginning of the colonnaded street.



The ancient city can be wandered by walking on the stone paved roads of Ottoman Empire. The Ağa Houses of Ottoman Period and the ancient structures stay side by side on the two sides of a street.

In Stratonikeia, a waste water system was used to keep the city clean. In other words, the waste water system is the last ring of a chain known as Stratonikeia Pritaneion. The Baths, Temples, Agoras, Stadium and other buildings are not yet excavated.

Although archaeological excavations lasted from 1977, a great amount of the city remains beneath the soil because of various destructive earthquakes. 40 years ago, Prof. Dr. Yusuf Boysal started the excavations and his team worked in the area for more than 20 years.

Finally, many words can be used to describe Stratonikeia. Why don't you come and see the city of love, gladiators, pain, blood, wealth, hope, happiness and death? You can be sure that Stratonikeia is worth seeing and feeling. Red-tailed squirrels, the last settlers of the city, will act as your guides to the city.



North Road, Restoration works on the columns

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