

Labrys and Ears on the Orthostat Block in the Southern Cella Wall of
Zeus Lepsynos Temple at Euromos: An Iconographic Approach

Euromos Zeus Lepsynos Tapınağı'nın Güney Sella Duvarının Orthostat
Bloğu Üzerindeki Labrys ve Kulaklar: İkonografik Bir Yaklaşım

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Abstract

A depiction of a labrys is flanked with an ear motif on either side within tabula ansata on an external orthostat block on the southern cella wall of the Zeus Lepsynos Temple at Euromos in Caria. Although labrys, i.e., double-axe motif is encountered across a vast geography in Antiquity, it is known that this sacred symbol was identified with Zeus especially in Caria. Nevertheless, Zeus of Euromos holds a labrys in one hand and a scepter in the other. This article aims to attain a plausible conclusion through comparison with similar examples and iconographic interpretation of labrys symbol executed together with ear motifs. While attempting such a study, the difference in organs executed for health from the cultic organs, such as the eye or ear of the deity, is also addressed.

Keywords: Euromos/Euromus, Zeus Lepsynos Temple, Tabula Ansata, Labrys, Ears, Cult.

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Öz

Karia'nın önemli kentlerinden biri olan Euromos'taki Zeus Lepsynos Tapınağı'nın güney cella duvarının dış yüzünde, tabula ansata içinde iki kulak arasında labrys betimi yer almaktadır. Antik çağlar boyunca pek çok coğrafyada çift yüzlü balta yani Labry'se rastlanmasına rağmen bu kutsal sembolün Zesu'la özdeşleşmiş olarak Karia Bölgesinde yoğunluklu olarak kullanıldığı bilinmektedir. Nitekim, Euromos Zeus'un bir elinde labrys diğer elinde ise asa vardır. Bu makalenin asıl amacı ise kutsal bir yapıda labrys'in kulaklarla bir arada betimlenmiş olmasına ikonografik bir yorum yüklemek ve bunu benzer örneklerle karşılaştırarak mantıksal bir sonuca bağlamaya çalışmaktır. Bunu yaparken farklı amaçlar için, örneğin sağlık için yapılmış organların farkı ile daha çok kültüsel yani doğrudan tanrının kulağı, gözü arasındaki ayrıma da değinilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Euromos, Zeus Lepsynos Tapınağı, Tabula Ansata, Labrys, Kulaklar, Kült.

Introduction

Zeus Lepsynos Temple, where the labrys and ears constituting the scope of this article are found, is located at a secluded point on the foot of the hill exploited as a quarry in the southern section of Euromos. That it is encircled with a temenos wall outside the city walls certainly depends on the very deep-rooted cult of ancestors. Extant ruins attribute the temple belonging to the Roman Period and the altar to the Hellenistic Period. The temple in Corinthian order has a peripteral layout with 6x11 columns¹. The stylobate measures 14.40x26.60 m; the pronaos has a prostyle layout, whereas the opisthodomos has *an antis* layout. What distinguishes this temple from others is the depiction of a pair of ears flanking the labrys within tabula ansata, rendered in relief on the external face of an orthostat block (Fig. 1). This interesting depiction has been mentioned with a few words or sentences and the present study aims to cast light onto it from a wider perspective and propose new iconographic interpretations².

1 For detailed information on the Temple of Zeus Lepsynos see Taylan Doğan, *Euromos Zeus Lepsynos Tapınağı*, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Institute of Social Sciences Unpublished PhD dissertation, Muğla 2020.

2 The ancient city of Euromos is located within the territory of Selimiye Neighborhood about 12 km to the northwest of Milas in Muğla province.

Labrys (Double-Axe) and Caria

It is clear from all historical and archaeological data that the cult of Zeus was widespread in Caria, especially at and around Mylasa, and that Zeus was the chief deity of Mylasa³. It is possible to link the depiction of Zeus holding a labrys⁴ in one hand and a scepter in the other, particularly in the Hekatomnid Period directly with a historical event⁵. In addition, the depiction of labrys as cult object is frequently encountered in the ancient settlements⁶. Especially the Carian cities with local cults built up new cults through identification of their local deities with Zeus during the Hellenization process.

Labrys, or double-axe, is not a symbolic object that emerged from the narration of Plutarch⁷. It is attested in various forms since very ancient times. For instance, Teshup of Hittites standing on a bull holds labrys⁸; it is attested in the wall paintings of Cretan palaces⁹; Zeus Dolichenus, i.e. Zeus of Hittite Kummuhu or Hellenistic and Roman Commagene Kingdom holds labrys¹⁰. It is very interesting

- 3 Epithets of Zeus peculiar to the region are usually linked with the names of the settlements.
- 4 *Labrys* was accepted sacred in many regions and functioned as special symbol of the deity in religious rituals and sacrificial ceremonies and sometimes was an object offered as a votive.
- 5 Plutarch, *Moralia, Quaestiones Graecae*, transl. F. C. Babitt, Harvard University Press 1936, 301F-302A; Koray Konuk, "Hekatomnoslar Henadam", *Antik Anadolu'nun Tanıkları: Muharrem Kayhan Koleksiyonu*, Izmir 2015, pp. 31-39, The most common cults of Zeus at Mylasa were Zeus Karios, Zeus Labraundos, Zeus Zenoposeidon, and Zeus Osogoa. The double-axe, i.e. labrys, is encountered the most in Caria during Antiquity and this may be linked with the narrative of Plutarch as follows: *asked why the deity carried the pelekos instead of the thunderbolt or sceptre, and his answer traced the origins of the double axe to the Amazons. When Herakles had slain the Amazon queen Hippolyte, he gave her double axe to the Lydian queen Omphale; it was then passed onto successive Lydian rulers before arriving in the hands of Kandaules. When Kandaules was defeated in battle after the revolt of Gyges, the double axe passed into the possession of a certain Arselis of Mylasa, who took the double axe to Karia: 'he constructed a statue of Zeus and placed the axe in its hand, and called the god Labraundeos; for the Lydians call the axe 'labrys'.*
- 6 Alfred Laumonier, *Les Cultes Indigenes en Carie*, Paris 1958, pp. 85-86, *Labrys* is attested as a cultic symbol in many civilizations and in various time periods, (M. Usman Anabolu, "Zeus Labraundos ve Apollon Lairbenos'un Simgesi olarak Labrys", *Arkeoloji Dergisi*, III, 2014, pp. 225-226).
- 7 Plutarch *ibid.*, 301F-302A.
- 8 Oliver Robert Gurney, *The Hittites*, London 1952, pp. 143; Alfred Laumonier, "Complément aux recherches sur la chronologie des prêtres de Panamara", *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 62, 1938, p. 172; Hittite deities are attested holding labrys and standing on deer; some Roman period coins of Euromos have types of deer and labrys and this supports the thought that the Zeus cult at Euromos was of Anatolian origin.
- 9 Arthur John Evans, "Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult and its Mediterranean Relations", *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 21, 1901, pp. 106.
- 10 Michael Speidel, *The Religion of Iuppiter Dolichenus in the Roman Army*, Leiden 1978.

to see the labrys on the coins of Tenedos in the distant region of Troad¹¹. In general, looking at depictions of labrys in various cultures and regions it can be said that labrys represented the heavenly power¹². Indeed, the one-sided axe as a symbolic weapon may have the same function. Then, the question of why the double axe but not the regular axe was preferred arises. As an answer to this query, it may perhaps be proposed that the double-axe as the symbol of Zeus, assuming a variety of epithets represented both powers together¹³. Certainly, other interpretations may be proposed as well¹⁴. The advantage is that both sides can be used in battle, and the other edge can be used when one edge gets blunt, which seems to be a possibility far away. This is a functional case. Actually, the metal double-axes uncovered among votive offerings at the Temple of Artemis Astias at Iasos in Caria are very small¹⁵. That the labrys is mostly identified with Zeus can be interpreted as the ultimate transformation version of the thunderbolt, another reflection of the heavenly power.¹⁶ Although not recorded in written documents, based on the fact that labrys is mostly encountered in sanctuaries, it is claimed that labrys sometimes represented the deity symbolically, i.e. it was the depiction of the deity¹⁷. Evans stated that this divine symbol was the Minoan Mother Goddess¹⁸.

Depiction of Labrys and Ears at Zeus Lepsynos Temple

On the outer face of an orthostat block on the southern cella wall of the temple is the relief depiction of a labrys flanked with an ear on either side, all within

- 11 Barclay Vincent Head, *Historia Numorum, A Manual of Greek Numismatics*, Oxford 1911, pp. 551.
- 12 Evans, *ibid.*, p. 584; Baki Satuş, *Çifti Balta Labrys*, Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, İstanbul 2008.
- 13 Labrys was used as the symbol of the sky god and earth goddess in the Minoan culture; therefore, it may have symbolized this duality in the iconography of Carian Zeus. Furthermore, it is also possible that it may have replaced the thunderbolt of the deity.
- 14 William Henry Denham Rouse, "The Double Axe and The Labryrith", *JHS. Vol. 21*, 1901, pp. 268-274.
- 15 Fede Berté, "İasos, Çifte Balta ve Zeus", *Mylasa Labraunda: Archaeology and Rural Architecture in Southern Aegean Region/Milas Çömakdağ: Güney Ege Bölgesi'nde Arkeoloji ve Kırsal Mimari*, eds. Figen Kuzucu-Murat Ural, İstanbul 2010, pp. 63-68; Daniela Baldoni-Carlo Franco-Paolo Belli-Fede Berté, *Karia'da Bir Liman Kenti İasos*, transl. Gürkan Ergin, Homer Kitabevi, İstanbul 2004, p. 74.
- 16 The handle of the labrys may be interpreted as the arm of Zeus and both edges of labrys as the thunderbolt.
- 17 Matthew Haysom, "The Double-Axe: A Contextual Approach to the Understanding of a Cretan Symbol in Neopalatial Preiod", *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* Vol. 29/Issue 1, 2010, pp. 41.
- 18 Evans, *ibid.*, p. 584, Please refer to the work by Rouse for comparisons regarding the function of the labrys (Rouse, *ibid.*, pp.168-274).

tabula ansata¹⁹. This orthostat block is located at the middle of the first row of the southern wall. The tabula ansata is located at equal distance from the vertical edges of the block but slightly higher than its middle. The ansatae flanking the tabula are triangular and equal in size²⁰. The ears and the labrys within the tabula²¹ have the same height, and the ears rendered somewhat sketchy lack details²². The ears have their lobules and helices in relief but the conchae are concave (Fig. 2).

This depiction on the cella's southern wall has been known for quite a while; however, during arrangement work on the fallen blocks of the cella's northern wall an orthostat block having a raised rectangular part, not fully executed in the middle was discovered (Fig. 3). Ensuing restitution attempts showed that this block was originally positioned on the same axis as the southern one²³. Thus, it can be said that this incomplete ear depiction was the ear of the deity just like its southern counterpart.

Sacred Symbols and Organs

During Antiquity, the depiction of organs either together with sacred symbols or alone had various purposes. Within this frame, it is possible to categorize the organ depictions into two according to their places of use and attributes. Indeed, both categories reflect some wishes. However, one attempts to find a cure for an illness and for this purpose, the organ to be healed is depicted clearly. In case the feet ached, feet were depicted; in case hands needed attention, then hands were depicted²⁴. When organs were depicted together with divine symbols on temples, altars or stelae²⁵ the wish covers a general wish for all. And, this is the coming true of wishes. When someone came to the temple and made a wish it was only him/her who knew that wish²⁶. Yet, the ear is the ear of the deity and it is capable of hearing everyone's wish²⁷.

19 The orthostat block *in situ* measures 116x127x76 cm.

20 Triangular ansatae have an outer height of 6 cm.

21 The tabula containing the labrys and ears measures 26x16 cm.

22 The ears have a height of 7 cm and a width of 4 cm.

23 On the outer face of the block is an ear motif in relief measuring 9.2 cm high and 4.5 cm wide.

24 Şenkal Kileci "Uşak Müzesi'nden Meter Leto için Yeni Bir Adak Steli", *PHASELIS*, Issue V, 2019, pp. 149-150.

25 The ear depictions on stelae may be interpreted as the prayers said for the deceased may be heard by the deity.

26 Bonnet et al. *ibid.*, pp. 41-71.

27 Efrichia Stavrianopoulou, "From the god who listened to the god who replied: Transformations

Ear Depictions for Cultic Purposes

Ear depictions on the orthostat blocks in the northern²⁸ and southern cella walls should be related with the cult function of the temple because labrys was connected to the cult of Zeus and known to have been used for cultic purposes at many temples dedicated to Zeus. Based on this context, the earliest evidence for the cult of Zeus Lepsynos is attested by coins attributed to the fifth century BC²⁹ and inscriptions from the Hellenistic period³⁰. Types of Zeus holding a labrys, standing, are found on Hellenistic and Roman period coins of Euromos, while coins from the early second century BC have a bearded head of Zeus as the obverse type and a double-axe within a wreath on the reverse³¹. The labrys, particularly in the Caria region, was the most significant cult symbol of Zeus and its depiction on both the wall of the Temple of Zeus Lepsynos and the city's coins underscores the importance of this cult for the city³² (Fig. 4). An example that includes the name of Zeus Lepsynos and a depiction of the labrys is an inscribed altar recorded in the village of Kızılçakuyu, just south of Euromos. Published by Schaefer in 1912, the current whereabouts of this altar is unknown³³. R. Descat, who has published significant studies on the ancient history of the region, states that Zeus Lepsynos was a unique cult associated with Caria, particularly peculiar to Euromos³⁴.

Labrys as a cult symbol is frequently used at many sanctuaries at and around Mylasa (Anadolu, 1995). Both the labrys and the ear are known to have been depicted on architecture, architectural elements and coins across Caria. At Euromos, the labrys is

in the concept of *epekoos*", *Dieux des Grecs - Dieux des Romains: Panthéons en dialogue à travers l'histoire et l'historiographie*, eds. Corinne Bonnet- Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge Gabriella Pironti, Rome 2016, pp. 79-97.

28 The ear depiction on the orthostat in the northern cella wall was left unfinished. As no trace of a labrys is attested around it, it would be more plausible not to elaborate much about it.

29 Laumonier, *ibid.*, p. 174, Among the attributes of *Zeus* are *labrys*, spear, ear and eye depictions.

30 Doğan, *ibid.*, p. 316.

31 Barclay Vincent Head, *British Museum Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Caria, Cos, Rhodes (BMC Caria)*, London 1897.

32 Alfred Laumonier, "Complément aux recherches sur la chronologie des prêtres de Panamara", *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 62, 1938, pp. 166-168, Among the attributes of *Zeus* are *labrys*, spear, ear and eye depictions.

33 Joannes Schaefer, *De Iove Apus Cares Culto: Dissertatio Inauguralis*, Halle, Academia Fridericiana Halensi, 1992, p. 364.

34 Raymond Descat, "La géographie dans les listes des tributs attiques: Lepsimandos et Kasôlaba en Carie", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik (ZPE)*, 104, 1994, p. 65.

attested on the statue base at the pronaos of the temple, on the keystone of a Roman bathhouse and on the coins of Euromos³⁵. At the Zeus Temple at Labraunda, there is the depiction of a labrys and ear in relief within a meander motif on the ceiling coffer, and this has been interpreted as, “*Zeus hears all*” (Fig. 5)³⁶. Furthermore, on a votive stele of the second century AD at Hierapolis is a labrys with a long handle flanked with an ear on either side (Fig. 6)³⁷. The inscription on the stele reveals its dedication to Apollo Klarios. The ear depiction on this stele is also interpreted as the deity hearing the prayers of humans³⁸. Taking into consideration the oracle center of Apollo at Hierapolis, it is thought that the ear depictions were used to emphasize the prophecy feature of Apollo³⁹.

A votive block from Aphrodisias from the third century AD bears information regarding gladiators Sarpedon and Hermos. This work of art depicts a palm frond flanked with an ear on either side and a crown relief to the right⁴⁰. To the left of the relief is the inscription stating that Sarpedon (dedicated this to the goddess hearing to fulfill a vow) and adds that Hermos (dedicated this) to fulfill an oath. The votive was offered to an unnamed goddess, who was most probably Nemesis⁴¹. The phrase of “goddess hearing” in the inscription beside the reliefs of ears can be said to express the same as the ear reliefs at the Zeus Lepsynos Temple at Euromos.

A total of thirty ear reliefs have been attested on various architectural elements attributed to a time span ranging from the second century BC to the second century

35 Arthur B. Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion, II*, Cambridge 1925. p. 575 Fig. 480; Theodore Mionnet, *Description de médailles antiques, grecques et romaines*, tome 6. Graz 1972, pp. 250-265.

36 Lars Karlsson, “Labraunda: The Sanctuary of the Weather God of Heaven”, *Mylasa Labraunda/ Milas Çomakdağ Archaeology, Historical and Rural Architecture in Southern Aegean*, eds. Figen Kuzucu-Murat Ural, Istanbul 2010, p. 53.

37 Ali Ceylan- Tullia Ritti, “A New Dedication to Apollo Kareios”, in *Epigraphica Anatolica* 28, 1997, pp. 57-67.

38 Tayyar Gürdal, “Gülşınar Apollon Smintheus Tapınağı Kült Heykeli”, *PATRONVS, Coşkun Özgünel’e 65. Yaş Armağanı*, eds. Erhan Öztepe-Musa Kadioğlu, İstanbul 2007, pp. 106-107; Zafer Taşhkoğlu, *Apollon Kültü ile İlgili Kaynaklar*, İstanbul 1963, p. 47.

39 Francesco D’Andria, “Hierapolis 2003”, *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı* 26, Vol. 2, 2004, p. 149.

40 Palm frond and wreath represent the victories of Gladiator Sarpedon (Angelos Chaniotis), “Aphrodite’s Rival: Dedication to local and other gods at Aphrodisias”, *Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz* 21, 2010, pp. 240-241.

41 Chaniotis *ibid.*, pp. 240-241.

AD in Miletus⁴². These ear motifs should not be linked to the human anatomy but rather put there in the sense of “hearing the prayers epekoos/ἐπηκόο”⁴³. Large size ears from the period of the 20th Dynasty of ancient Egypt are assessed as the ears of the deity and step forth as the concrete expression of a deity hearing the wishes of humans⁴⁴. The relief of double ears from the Island of Delos is considered a form of referring to the deity hearing⁴⁵. A marble votive stele in the Collection of the Wellcome Institute in London is attributed to the second or third century AD and it has a depiction of large size ears flanking the bust of Sarapis, underlining the hearing feature of this deity⁴⁶. At many sanctuaries, depictions of ears and eyes are offered as votives to show that the deity hears or sees⁴⁷. At the Temple of Isis in Pompeii there is a niche holding the statue of Dionysus Osiris. On the wall behind it are two ears of plaster. There are holes for hanging “ears” on the temple wall⁴⁸. People sometimes prayed before the ears fixed on the temple wall⁴⁹. That is, they whispered to the ear of the deity there⁵⁰. The ears flank the attributes of a deity because this deity hears the people and listens to them. For instance, on a bronze plaque uncovered at Delos is a tabula ansata with a pair of ears flanking the ram horn crown of Isis⁵¹. A relief discovered near Mylasa in 1935 by Robert depicts a figure flanked with an ear, and this relief also bears an inscription dedicated to the goddess Demeter⁵². Sometimes,

42 Norbert Ehrhardt-Wolfgang Günther-Peter Weiß, “Funde aus Milet XXVI. Aphrodite-Weihungen mit Ohren-Reliefs aus Oikus”, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1, 2009, pp. 187-203.

43 Stavrianopoulou, *ibid.*, pp 79-98; It is noted that the ear motif is found on architectural elements in many cities.

44 Geraldine Pinch-Elizabeth A. Waraksa, “Votive Practices. In Jacco Dieleman”, *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, ed. Willeke Wendrich, Los Angeles 2009, pp. 1-9; Valentino Gasparini, “Listening Stones. Cultural Appropriation, Resonance and Memory in the Isiac Cults”, *Stuttgart: Steiner*. 2016, pp. 556-557.

45 Van F. Straten, “Gifts for the Gods”, ed. Henk Versnel, *Faith Hope and Worship Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World*, 1981, p. 128; Fig. 53; Gasparini, *ibid.*, p.557.

46 Straten, *ibid.*, p. 83 Fig. 12; Hist. Med. R. 6665/1936 The priest of Serapis speaks in place of the deity as follows: “...My head is the skies of paradise, my waist is the ocean; my feet are the creator of the terrain; my ears suspend in the skies; my far-sighted eyes are the light of the shining sun” (Reginald Eldred Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World*, New York 1971. pp. 52-53). That many of the ears left as votive offerings in temples have a hole for hanging is in conformity with the expression “my ears suspend in the skies”.

47 Otto Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*. Gießen 1909, p. 46.

48 Weinreich, *ibid.*, p. 59.

49 Weinreich, *ibid.*, p. 57.

50 Straten, *ibid.*, p. 30.

51 Weinreich, *ibid.*, p. 50.

52 Louis Robert, “Rapport sommaire sur un premier voyage en Carie”, *American Journal of*

the presence of ear-shaped carvings on altars may be associated with this belief⁵³. The fact that these ears were carved exclusively on the walls of sanctuaries recalls a belief that the deity was present there and that voices could penetrate through the walls. Ear depictions mounted on or carved at specific points of temples were used to mark the spots where the people would pray. Furthermore, places considered to be spots where the deity's voice was heard were marked with ears to signal where to pray and make one's voice heard by the deity⁵⁴. The iconography of the labrys and ear symbolizes the gods powers in both the physical and spiritual realms. In the ancient world, the combined use of these symbols, particularly in relation to the gods interactions with humans, emphasizes their all-seeing and all-hearing attributes. This iconography signifies the gods responsiveness to prayers on both cosmic and human levels, highlighting their ability to perceive even the inaudible. This is especially evident in the case of Euromos.

At the National Museum of Athens, a stele on display features inscriptions on the upper and lower bands, depicting two ears facing each other with the crown of Isis between them on ram's horns⁵⁵. These examples suggest that the ear depictions in Egypt might have played a role in the use of the epithet "ἐπίκοος" (he who hears prayers) in the ancient world. This hypothesis is supported by the data connecting the labrys symbol representing Zeus at the Euromos Lepsynos Temple with ear depictions. The depiction of Lepsynos resembles the representation on the stele of Isis, both thought to symbolize the gods' capability to hear and respond to prayers⁵⁶. This belief was not only a visual depiction but also frequently cited in written texts. Hieroglyphic inscriptions and prayers mention epithets such as "hearing the prayers" or "giving an ear" attributed to gods⁵⁷. On a wooden coffin from Egypt, dating to the first or second century AD, double ears and eyes are depicted within the scales of justice, symbolizing the sun god Ra's capability to see and hear⁵⁸.

Archaeology, Vol. 39/No. 3, 1935, p. 337.

53 Otto Weinreich, "Theoi epekooi", *MDAI(A)*, 37, Amsterdam 1912, pp. 58-59 The altar at Apollonia has depictions of ears on it.

54 Weinreich, *ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

55 Weinreich *ibid.*, pp. 49, 57.

56 Gasparini, *ibid.*, p. 562 Isis also has a feature of prophecy.

57 Weinreich, *ibid.*, pp.46-47.

58 Albert Mudry, "The ear in the Visual arts of ancient Egypt", *The Mediterranean Journal of Otology*, 2006, p. 87, Fig. 11.

Ear Depictions Offered for Health

In addition to ear depictions for cultic purposes, it is known that ear depictions were offered to sanctuaries to wish for health or as thanksgiving. Especially, individual ear depictions were offered for health, and it can be said that fixed ear depictions as part of the temple construction also had a cultic function. In general, ears offered for health have accompanying inscriptions; however, the ear depictions of cultic function are accompanied by a symbol of the deity but not an inscription. On the other hand, depictions for health or cult purposes can be distinguished according to the function of the sanctuary or the deity. For instance, ear and other anatomical depictions found at Asclepieia were generally offered for health purposes.⁵⁹ According to the inscriptions and reliefs from Asclepieia, visual objects depicting the organs with problems were offered to the temple to wish for healing⁶⁰. These votive offerings, usually related to health were produced as a representation of the organ with problems and left in the sanctuaries so that the deities would heal⁶¹. Objects representing the ears of a person, who suffered from an ear problem, were offered to the deity⁶². The holes in the middle of the ears allowed for fixing or hanging them on a wall⁶³. Ear depictions made for pain or deafness could have been offered as a thanksgiving after the person got healed⁶⁴.

On a marble votive stele of the Roman Period at the National Museum in Athens is a pair of ears in relief within tabula ansata. The inscription states that it was offered by a person suffering from ear pain⁶⁵. At the Athenian Asclepieion, depictions of single ear or a pair of ears made from different materials were uncovered and many of them have inscriptions. Vows were made either by people seeking health or as thanksgiving after the sick person got healed. At the Pergamene Asclepieion is an ear offering made as a marble plaque to hang on a wall or a column⁶⁶.

59 For anatomical votive offerings in Antiquity, see Björn Forsen, *Griechische Gliederweihungen. Eine Untersuchung zu ihrer Typologie und ihrer religions und sozialgeschichtlichen Bedeutung*, Helsinki 1996, pp. 105-131.

60 Weinreich, *ibid.*, pp.26-28.

61 Sometimes people asked from the deity for a cure by drawing images of the organs on steps or blocks in sanctuaries.

62 Straten, *ibid.*, pp.10-15.

63 Sami Patacı, "Ear Votives in The Greek and Roman Eastern Mediterranean", *Anemon Mus Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol. 9/No. 1, 2021, p. 76.

64 Mabel Lang, *Cure and Cult in Ancient Corinth: A Guide to the Asklepieion* (Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens), 1997, p. 19.

65 Patacı, *ibid.*, p. 79.

66 Weinreich, *ibid.*, p. 65

The ears were usually offered to deities hearing, “Θεοὶ ἐπηκόοι (Theoi epēkōoi)”⁶⁷. It can be surmised that anatomical votive offerings were related to the cults of Asclepius, Sarapis, Harpocrates, and Isis, which became popular in the Aegean world as of the 350s BC⁶⁸. These offerings should have been made sometimes after recuperation and sometimes with the hope of getting healed⁶⁹. Sometimes, they were offered so that the ears would get healed or as a copy of ears that already got healed⁷⁰.

General Evaluation

Consequently, it was aimed to connect with the deity and to reach the deity using his/her symbols so that one may be heard. Especially ear depictions were used as a concrete way to express that the deity saw and heard the people, and they step forth as an image showing the deity gave an ear to the mortals. That is, ear depictions are tangible visual versions indicating that the deity heard the people. Votive offerings of ear depictions were used as a form of requesting for prayers to be accepted or just for healing wishes. They were also offered as a thanksgiving to the deities who healed the ears⁷¹. Ear depictions fixed on temples or altars indeed marked the location of the deity and facilitated that the people went there to pray to the ears of the deity and these depictions solidly symbolize the hearing phenomenon of the deity⁷². Ears and eyes are interpreted as divine symbols in a cultic sense. The epithet *epēkoos* used for the deities that “hear” and “listen” points to the deities listening to the prayers of the people supplicating⁷³. The term of “ears that hear” was used to state that the deity would listen to the prayers and answer them at certain areas of a temple⁷⁴. The epithet “epekoos” (he who hears prayers) was attributed to certain deities, though literary evidence for the use of

67 Weinreich, *ibid.*; Thomas Galoppin- Sylvain Lebreton “The Listening of the Gods (Epēkooi) in Egypt and the Islands of the Aegean in the Hellenistic Period: Sanctuaries and Agents”, *Cahiers du Centre d’Études Chypriotes*, 51, 2021, pp. 121-124.

68 Pataci, *ibid.*, p. 77

69 Thomas Drew Bear, “Phrygian votive steles in the museum of Anatolian civilizations”, *XVI. Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı, Vol. I*, 1999, p.394; Weinreich, *ibid.*, p. 55.

70 Weinreich, *ibid.*, p. 49

71 Roebuck, Carl, *Corinth Vol. XIV: The Asklepieion and Lerna*, (Princeton, NJ: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens) 1951, p.120.

72 Weinreich, *ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

73 Galoppin-Lebreton, *ibid.*, pp. 121-124.

74 Frederick E Brenk, “Zeus’ Missing Ears”, *Kernos* 20, 2007, pp. 213-214.

this term is not frequent. Therefore, there is limited information on their usage within the cult practices. Praying to the gods, offering gratitude, and seeking their assistance were vital religious practices for the ancient Greeks. In ancient Greek religion, gods were perceived as beings who listened to prayers and showed mercy to the supplicants. The term “epekoos” was used in the context of prayer, sacred invocation, or a lofty and impactful style of speech. In ancient Greek beliefs, Hermes Psithyristes, known as the god of prayers whispered, was an important figure for the fulfillment of wishes. Worshipers would whisper their wishes into the ears of his statues, believing that the god would hear them and grant their requests⁷⁵.

The divine ears used at temples constitute a tangible example of establishing communication with the deity, and it was thought that those praying in the niches of the temple could whisper their deepest secrets to the ears of the deity. Those who were not allowed inside the temple proper would pray before such reliefs on the gates or outside the temple proper⁷⁶. For instance, at the Temple to Isis in Pompeii, there once stood the statue of the goddess in the niche on the rear wall, and there were the ears in relief on the upper two sides of the niche. People who were not allowed inside the temple proper would go before this niche and express their prayers and supplications⁷⁷. Thus, people who could not get inside the Temple of Zeus Lepsynos should have prayed before the reliefs of labrys and ears on the cella wall of the temple.

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75 Weinreich *ibid.*, p. 57; At Pharai, those praying by the statue of Hermes Agoraios whispered their wishes to the ears of the deity.

76 Gasparini, *ibid.*, p. 557.

77 Gasparini, *ibid.*, p. 565.

78 Gasparini, *ibid.*, p. 557.

express their prayers and supplications⁷⁹. Thus, people who could not get inside the Temple of Zeus Lepsynos should have prayed before the reliefs of labrys and ears on the cella wall of the temple.

That the attributes of Zeus are found in relief on the long cella walls of the Zeus Lepsynos Temple and that they reflect an integral part of the Roman period construction program of the temple call for attention because there are no other examples worked directly on the walls of a temple⁸⁰. Parallel depictions are usually found on stelae or as individual offerings at sanctuaries. There are also ear depictions meant to hang on the walls. The example at Euromos was produced in relief as part of the architecture, which indicates that it was for cultic purposes. Furthermore, its position meets the eyes at height, and this should have aimed to transfer the prayers or wishes made before these ears directly to the deity because inscriptions accompanying the ear depictions at various sanctuaries refer to “deity hearing, listening,” and this reveals that Zeus Lepsynos too was a “hearing deity.” As it is possible to deduce the feature of Zeus to see from the eyes over the labrys on the northern keystone of the Baltalı Kapı in Mylasa, it should also be possible to infer the feature of Zeus to hear from the ears at the Zeus Temple. Divine qualities such as listening to, hearing and seeing people are linked to prophecy and thus, this underlines the prophecy feature of Zeus Lepsynos (Fig. 7)⁸¹.

A spolia block in the northeast wall of Belen Mosque in Milas bears the depictions of a double-axe and eyes engraved above it. The use of this eye motif on miniature double-axes from the Archaic period (such as those found in the Lousoi Artemis Sanctuary in Arcadia and finds from Olympia) indicates that this symbolism persisted throughout Greek antiquity⁸². While double-headed axe symbols were widespread in the sanctuaries across Caria, their depiction together with an organ is rare⁸³. Thus, the combined use of double-axes and ear depictions at the Temple

79 Gasparini, *ibid.*, p. 565.

80 Labrys was the symbol of Carian Zeus. The wish that Zeus hear the supplications made in the temple is intended with ears here. Regarding craftsmanship, both the ears and the labrys are understood to have been rendered in conformity with the construction process of the temple.

81 Abuzer Kızıl, “Das Baltalı Kapı in Mylasa, die Labrys und die Augen des Zeus”, *Anatolia Antiqua*, XVII, 2009, pp. 260-261.

82 Banu Büyükgün, *Anadolu’da Çifte Baltalı Tanrılar: Phrygia, Lydia, İonia, Karia, Lykia ve Pisidia Kaynaklı Taş Eserler Üzerine Bir İnceleme*, Istanbul University Institute of Social Sciences, Unpublished PhD dissertation, 2022, p. 551

83 Anabolu *ibid.*, p. 225

of Zeus at Euromos holds significant cultic importance. Depictions outside of Euromos are generally found on portable blocks and are personal in nature. Ear depictions made for individual votive offerings or health purposes are not known to be typically fixed within sanctuaries. However, examples of ear depictions visible to everyone and used alongside the deity's symbols are found in sanctuaries. Given that the ear depiction on the wall of the Lepsynos Temple was rendered as part of the temple's construction program and is located in a public space, it should not be considered personal or health-related.

Considering all the data available, the reliefs of labrys and two ears at the Temple of Zeus Lepsynos in Euromos constitute unity with the area and the structure where they are found, and this reveals its cultic purpose; this may be interpreted as a concrete form of making people's voices heard by the deity. The position of the tabula ansata is easily accessible by visitors and its vertical position meets the eyes of an average person and this shows that people could pray comfortably. Furthermore, the placement of the labrys and ear depictions on the mountain-facing side of the temple is a detail carefully premeditated for the privacy of the worshippers. Another point is that the ears embody an anatomical organ for communicating with the deity. This practice is essentially an attempt at anthropomorphism. Thus, the labrys and ear depictions at Zeus Lepsynos Temple in Euromos may be interpreted as "Zeus hears all". These prophetic aspects of Zeus recall Apollo and this is entirely related to the deity's *epokoos* character. The existing temple belonging to the Roman Imperial period is not directly linked to the cult of Apollo; nevertheless, the naked *kouros* statue holding a lion in his lap of the Archaic period, uncovered in 2021, may point to the presence of an Apollo cult at the time. It is not disputable that the Zeus Temple was located within a sanctuary; however, it is open to discussion whether or not it served as an oracle center during the Roman Imperial period. Indeed, each temple priest was also a prophet. It is possible to speak of an oracle center in the Archaic period with regard to the uncovered Apollo statue.

However, it seems very unlikely to link the iconography of labrys and ears at the temple here with the cult of Apollo. That the symbol is executed vertically together with ears but without the deity's depiction reflects Carian influence.

In addition, it is likely that the iconography of the labrys and ears here is the outcome of an effort to communicate more effectively with the deity, conveying personal wishes and desires, and ensuring that the supplicants' voices are heard

by the god. Since direct access to the cult statue located within the temple proper might have been challenging, these ears carved on the wall of the cella housing the statue may be interpreted as a means to enhance the likelihood of being heard by the deity. Moreover, the ears serve as an intermediary between the worshipper and the deity⁸⁴. This new form of communication transformed the connection between the individuals and the deity to a more intimate one, making it no longer strictly necessary to communicate through a priest⁸⁵.

⁸⁴ Mudry, *ibid.*, p. 81.

⁸⁵ Mudry, *ibid.*, p. 84.

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FIGURES

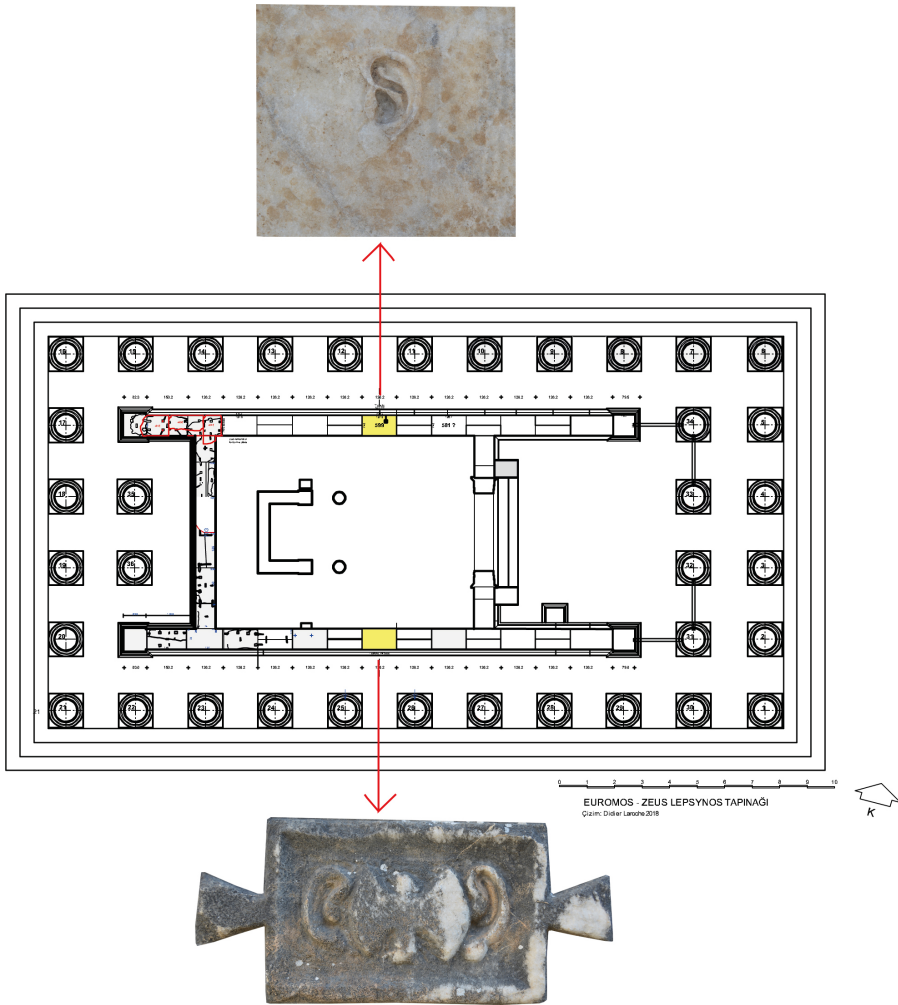


Fig. 1: Depictions of labrys and ears on the orthostat block of Zeus Lepsynos Temple.



Fig. 2: Relief of a labrys flanked by an ear within tabula ansata on the outer façade of southern cella wall.



Fig. 3: Ear relief on the orthostat block of the northern cella wall.

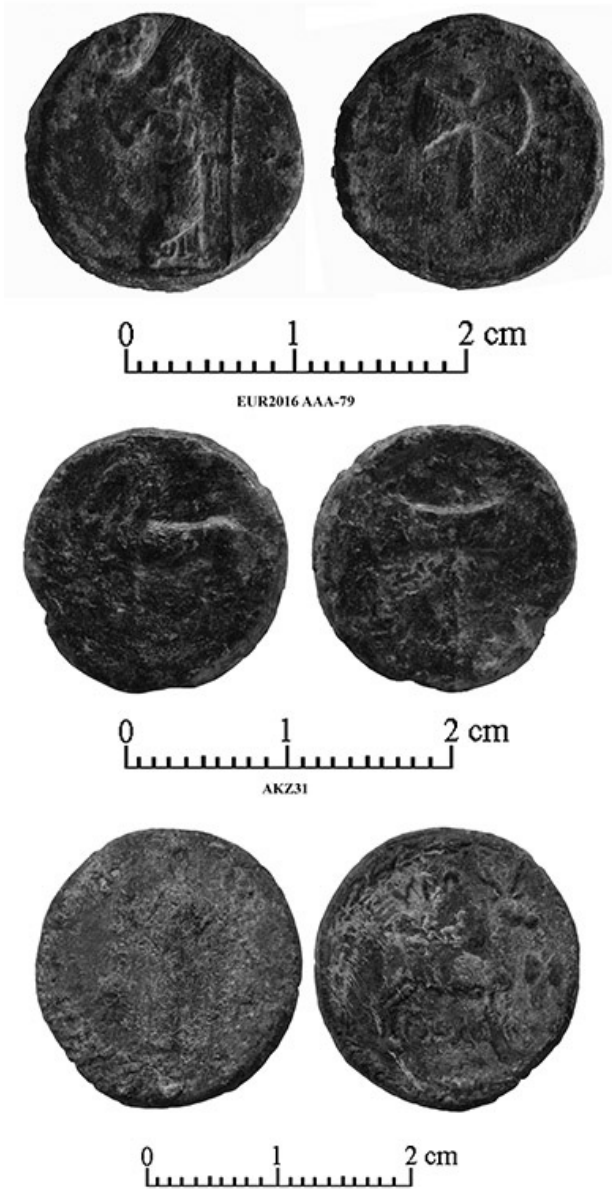


Fig. 4: Coins of Euromos with labrys.

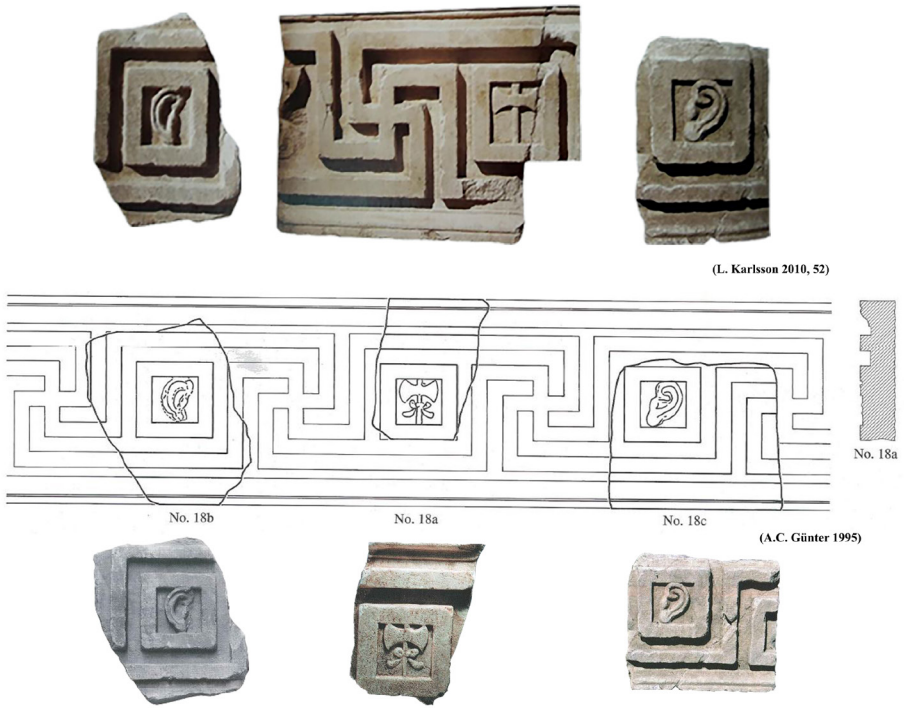


Fig. 5: Depictions of labrys and ears on the ceiling coffers of the Zeus Temple at Labraunda (Karlsson, 2010: 52; Günter, 1995: No. 18).



Fig. 6: The votive stele from Hierapolis (Gürdal, 2007: Res. 24).

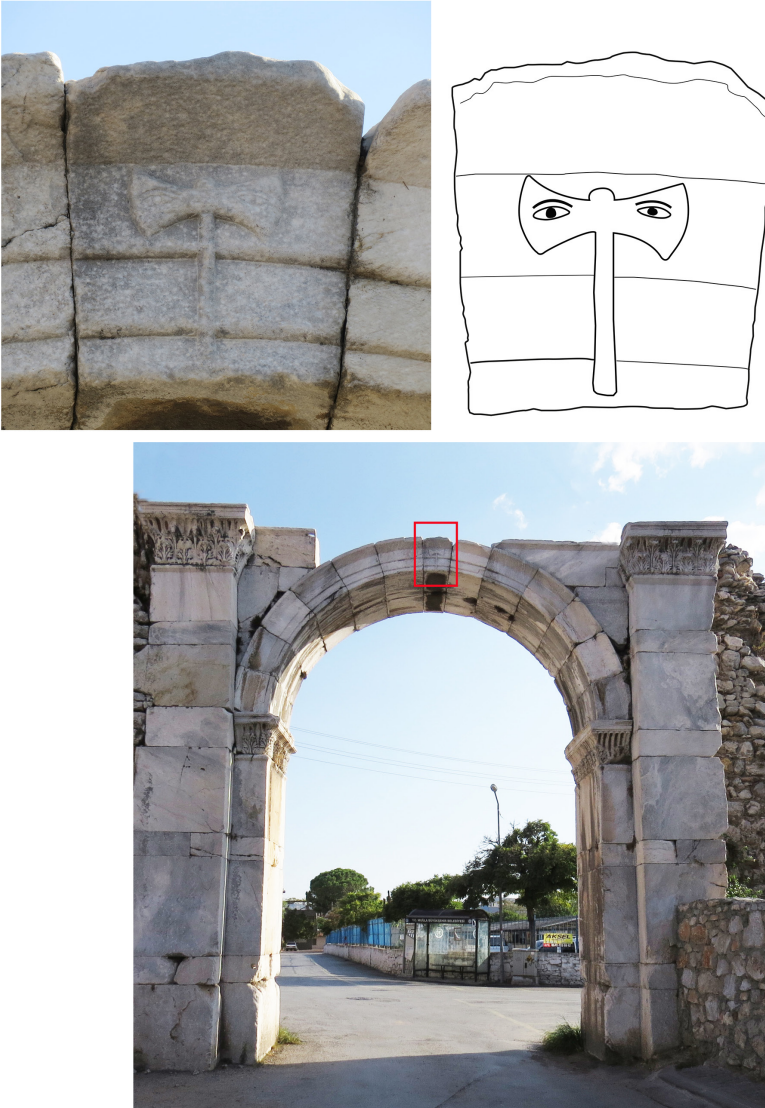


Fig. 7: The labrys and eye on the Baltalı Kapı in Mylasa.

