



Summary :

Heraclea, city of Caria to the east of Miletus, founded around the middle or the end of the 4th century BC as the successor of the neighbouring city of Latmus. Until the early 2nd century BC Heraclea belonged interchangeably to the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, while later it came under the sphere of influence of Rome. The city was built in accordance with the Hippodamian System. Today significant architectural remains of religious and public buildings survive, dating back to the prosperous Hellenistic years. The fortification wall of the city is also preserved in excellent condition.

Other Names

Heraclea by Latmus, Herakleia of Latmos, Herakleia under Latmos, Pleistarcheia, [present day Kapikiri]

Geographical Location

Caria, Ionia

Administrative Dependence

The Seleucid Kingdom, the Ptolemy Kingdom, Province of Asia, Province of Caria

1. Location and Foundation

Heraclea by Latmus, city on the coasts of [Caria](#), has been identified with the remains of the ancient settlement on the southern side of Mount Latmus, in the present village of Kapikiri. It is very close to the ancient city of [Miletus](#) –about 24km to the east– and this proximity was catalytic for Heraclea, which was always in the shadow of one of the most powerful cities of antiquity.

The history of Heraclea is very short, since the city was founded in the middle or, according to others, towards the end of the 4th century BC. In the years of [Strabo](#) (1st century BC) the city was nothing more than a township.¹

Heraclea was founded as the successor of the Carian Latmus. The city of Latmus, bearing the same name with the mountain, was founded back in 1000 BC, in the period of large-scale immigration, was abandoned sometime in the 4th century BC and its inhabitants settled in the newly founded Heraclea. The old Latmus and the new Heraclea are very close to each other –within only 1km–, at the foot of the mountain. Researchers have not agreed yet on the exact time the old settlement was abandoned and refounded in a new location under a new name. According to the prevailing opinion, the transfer of the city is attributed to [Mausolus](#)², the dynast of Caria, who ruled between 375 and 355 BC. Besides, in his years the capital of the Carian satrapy was transferred from [Mylasa](#) to [Halicarnassus](#), in an attempt to consolidate his power in the region. It is possible that the transfer of inhabitants from the Carian Latmus to the newly built Greek city of Heraclea, named after the namesake mythical hero, was part of a policy of Hellenisation Mausolus followed. There are two more reasons why the city was possibly founded by Mausolus: Pseudo-Scylax of Caryanda³ mentions Heraclea but he makes no mention of Latmus and, since his work was written before 330 BC, the city must have existed before that year. The nationality ‘Ἡρακλεώτης’ (‘Heraklean’), appearing on a Panathenaeon amphora of the 4th century BC and proving the participation of a citizen of Heraclea in the Great Panathenaea festival of the 4th century BC, is believed to refer to Heraclea by Latmus, thus supporting the view that the city must have been founded around the mid-4th century BC.⁴

However, according to another version, Heraclea was founded later, around 300 BC by the Macedonian General Pleistarchus, brother of Cassander. After the [battle of Ipsus](#) (301 BC) and the redistribution of the empire of [Alexander the Great](#) among his successors, [Pleistarchus](#) was given a part of Caria. It was then that Heraclea was founded as the capital of his kingdom. At first, the city was named Pleistarcheia after its founder⁵. The new name Heraclea came later. The supporters of this view argue that the evidenced treaty between Latmus and Pedasa in 323-313 BC proves that Latmus was not deserted in the late 4th century BC.⁶ After the inhabitants were transferred, the old city was completely levelled and its building material was used for the building of the new city.



However, the complete devastation of Latmus had another reason as well: it made the return of its citizens impossible –an additional argument suggesting that it was Pleistarchus who transferred the city. In the early Hellenistic period the foundation of new cities and involuntary emigration were not rare. The successors of Alexander the Great founded numerous cities by concentrating the population of several neighbouring cities in a central area. A typical example is [Ephesus](#), transferred almost at the same time with Latmus.⁷

Until late antiquity Heraclea was a coastal city on the bay of Latmus with a quite profitable commercial port. However, the gradual additions of matter from Maeander River (Büyük Menderes Nehri) turned the bay into a lagoon (Bafa Gölü), thus changing the coastline and isolating the city from any access to the Aegean. Well into the Middle Ages the current geomorphological change was already completed.

2. History

Regardless of its year of foundation, the history of Heraclea by Latmus is identified with the history of the wider region of Caria. The 3rd century BC was a period of political upheaval, with Caria coming under different spheres of influence, depending on the successor who prevailed in the area every time. Pleistarchus soon lost his Carian possessions against [Demetrius Poliorcetes](#) (299/298 BC). Until 190 BC Heraclea by Latmus belonged interchangeably to the [Seleucids](#) and the [Ptolemies](#). In the early 2nd century BC (190 BC) the defeat of the Seleucid [Antiochus III](#) by the Romans played a decisive role in the prevalence of new balances among the powers of the time.

The [peace of Apamea](#) (188 BC) signalled the start of a new era for Heraclea by Latmus, recognised as a free city by the Romans. This meant that the city would be exempted from any contribution and tribute to Rome, the Roman guard would be withdrawn from the city and autonomous judicial authority would be granted. The 2nd century BC was a period of great prosperity for the city, as evidenced by the silver coins minted from 190 BC on.

In 173/2 BC Heraclea and Miletus were united by a bond of egalitarianism, each one maintaining its independence, though.⁸ From 129 BC Caria became a part of the Roman [province of Asia](#). Heraclea by Latmus continued to prosper until the 1st century BC.⁹ However, it soon fell into decline and in Strabo's years (63 BC – 24 AD) the city is mentioned as a township included in the cities that, according to Strabo, were dependencies of larger cities.¹⁰ Coinage continued and copper coins of the imperial years were in circulation from the years of [Augustus](#) (27 BC – 14 AD) until Publius Septimius Geta (211-212 AD).

After the administrative [reorganisation by Emperor Diocletian](#) (286 – 305 AD) Caria became an independent Roman province, while after the empire was divided into two parts, it came under the eastern state. In the early Christian and Byzantine years [Heraclea by Latmus](#) was the see of a [bishop](#) and one of the most important cities of the area. Mount Latmus became the cradle of Christian [monasticism](#) and asceticism, since from the 7th century AD persecuted monks from Mount Sinai and southern Arabia (Arabia Felix) started to settle on its inaccessible sides.¹¹

3. Economy

As mentioned above, the Hellenistic years –and mainly the 2nd century BC– was the only period of prosperity for Heraclea by Latmus. The port allowed the city to play a particular role in the sea commerce of the area. However, the city never became an important commercial centre because it was obscured by the nearby Miletus. The latter, thanks to its advantageous position at the inlet of the namesake bay, reaped most of the benefits from sea commerce. Heraclea earned small profits from overland commerce, for it was built far from the road from and to Ephesus. Stock breeding, agriculture and apiculture were the city's resources. An additional source of income was [marble](#) from Mount Latmus, where several sites of marble mines have been preserved.¹² Export of marble was a quite profitable activity for both Heraclea and Latmus, its precursor, thanks to the exceptional quality of marble, thus making it one of the best kinds of white marble in antiquity.

4. Regime



Little is known about the political system of Heraclea. In the period of its greatest prosperity the system was democratic and the main administrative bodies were the Boule and the Deme.¹³ A list of [Stephanephoroi](#), found in Heraclea, with the names of Augustus and his grandson Gaius appearing among other names, proves that the city had its own political system until the imperial years.¹⁴

5. Religion

The cult of the local hero [Endymion](#) held an eminent position in the religious life of the city. According to a version of the myth, Selene saw Endymion on Mount Latmus and fell in love with him during the ageless sleep Zeus had given him. Endymion was worshipped in Heraclea as the mythical founder of the city and his [sanctuary](#) has been positively identified.

Representations on coins¹⁵ prove the widely spread worship of [Heracles](#), the namesake hero of the city. His symbol, the club, his bearded head and his wholesome image are represented on Hellenistic coins, while the most common iconographical subject of copper coins in imperial years is Heracles standing. Finally, the sanctuary of [Athena](#), built in a dominant position, together with representations on coins are the absolute proof of the significant role the cult of the goddess played in Heraclea by Latmus.¹⁶

6. Buildings

The remains of Heraclea stretch from the northwestern coast of the lagoon, the once open bay, to the steep southern side of Mount Latmus. Nothing of the fortified port has been preserved because the lagoon level has risen. Despite the steep slope, the city was built in accordance with the Hippodamian system. Most of the scholars of the Hellenistic years believe that the impressive [fortification](#) wall dates from the early 3rd century BC.¹⁷ Its exceptional condition makes it one of the best examples of ancient defensive architecture; it is 6.5 km long, 2-3 m wide and 6 m high. Following the relief of the area, the wall climbs to an altitude of 500 m above the lagoon. Rectangular stone-blocks were used up to the level of the battlements, parts of which have been preserved today. A dense system of 65 defensive towers, at irregular intervals, reinforced the walls, while there were a big number of gates, the eastern archway being best preserved.¹⁸

The built area of the city was later restricted by a new fortification wall (diateichisma) connecting parts of the old wall and enclosing about the one third of the whole fortified area. The incomplete [Agora](#) of 110 x 60 m is in the upper city, in a flat area of the present village. It dates from the 2nd century BC, although it is possible that building started in the 3rd century BC. It is a so-called 'Ionic Agora',¹⁹ with a normal rectangular plan and a peristyle which, in the case of Heraclea, is in Doric order. Because of the sloping terrain a two-storey structure, used for storage, was made below the level of the southern part of the Agora. Unlike the rest of the Agora, this structure has been preserved in perfect condition. To the east and in close proximity to the Agora is the [Bouleuterion](#) of the 2nd century BC. It is a small rectangular building seating 300 people, whose architecture was based on the [Bouleuterion of Priene](#): the long southern part had two entrances, while inside the building the U-shaped benches were amphitheatrically arranged. An interior colonnade behind the highest row of benches was intended for supporting the roof. Only a few benches and parts of the exterior walls exist today. To the west of the Agora, on a rocky elevation, dominates the temple of Athena Latmia of the 3rd century BC. It is the only public building whose orientation and position were not suggested by the blocks of the Hippodamian system and was identified thanks to a preserved dedicative inscription on the left side of the entrance. It is a simple and small distyle [in antis](#) building, with almost equal [cella](#) and [pronaos](#). Apart from its religious function, it also acted as a city record, with carved inscriptions on its [pilasters](#), many of which are still preserved. The three walls of the cella are preserved in situ up to the level of the roof, while architectural components are scattered around.

In the least known part of the city, to the north of the Agora, there are the remains of the theatre of Heraclea. With the exception of Peschlow-Bindokat, who dates it back to the 2nd century BC, the majority of scholars believe that it is a Roman theatre.²⁰ Only a few parts of the [cavea](#) and the [skene](#) have been preserved. In the same area, to the north of the theatre, there are the remains of a [nymphaeum](#), as well as very few traces of the complex of the Roman [thermae](#), located between the theatre and the Bouleuterion.



On an elevation overlooking the sea, in the southern part of the city, stands the [sanctuary](#) of the local hero Endymion. Together with the sanctuary of Athena Latmia, they are the best-preserved public buildings in Heraclea. However, unlike the temple of Athena, the sanctuary of Endymion cannot be accurately dated. On the basis of its masonry, the sanctuary possibly dates from the Hellenistic period.²¹ It is a unique building, measuring 14 x 21 m. It consisted of a five-column pronaos and an apsidal in plan cella. The curved back wall of the cella incorporate quarry stones, in an attempt to imitate a cave where, according to legend, Endymion used to sleep. The western aspect of the sanctuary usually appears in buildings dedicated to heroes or demigods.

The remains of a small Hellenistic stronghold, rebuilt in the Byzantine period, lie on a cape to the southeast of the sanctuary. The rest of the cape down to the coast is covered by a part of the extensive necropolis, which includes simple rectangular Carian rock cut tombs.

Another series of buildings remains unidentified, while there are only a few traces of dwellings built mainly to the north of the eastern archway and to the north of the temple of Athena.²²

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1. Strabo 14. 635.
 2. See Hornblower S., *Mausolus*, Oxford (1982) pp. 319-323.
 3. Ps.-Scylax, *Periplus* 99.
 4. See Hansen, M.H., Nielsen, T.H. (ed.), *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (Oxford 2004) p.1127, see entry Latmos/Herakleia (P. Flensted-Jensen).
 5. Steph. Byz., entry Πλειστάρχεια.
 6. The supporters of the first view consider that the two cities possibly coexisted for a period of time. Hornblower S., *Mausolus*, Oxford (1982) p. 320
 7. There, Lysimachus applied the same practice of total destruction both in the case of Old Ephesus and in the two neighboring cities (Colophon and Lebedus) forcing their population to settle in New Ephesus and so reinforce its population.
 8. Magie, D., *Roman Rule in Asia Minor. To the End of the Third Century after Christ* (Princeton-New Jersey 1950) p. 113. 962 note 79.
 9. It was one of the cities which in 78 BC guaranteed the asylum of the sanctuary of the temple of Hecate in Lagina of Caria. Magie, D., *Roman Rule in Asia Minor. To the End of the Third Century after Christ* (Princeton-New Jersey 1950) p. 962, note 79.
 10. Strabo 14. 635, 14. 658.
 11. Regarding the city's history, see *RE* 8 (1913) columns 431-431, see entry Heraclea (Bürchner). *Der Neue Pauly* 5 (1998) column 365, see entry Herakleia (A. Peschlow – Bindokat). Hansen, M.H., Nielsen, T.H. (ed.), *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (Oxford 2004) pp.1126-1127, see entry Latmos/Heraclea (P. Flensted-Jensen). Lang, G., *Klassische antike Stätten Anatoliens* (Norderstedt 2003) p. 419-422. Peschlow-Bindokat, A., *Der Latmos. Eine unbekannte Gebirgslandschaft an der türkischen Westküste*, Sonderhefte der Antiken Welt (Mainz am Rhein 1996), pp.22-42.
 12. See Peschlow-Bindokat, A., *Der Latmos. Eine unbekannte Gebirgslandschaft an der türkischen Westküste*, Sonderhefte der Antiken Welt (Mainz am Rhein 1996) pp. 52-53.
 13. See Peschlow-Bindokat, A., *Der Latmos. Eine unbekannte Gebirgslandschaft an der türkischen Westküste*, Sonderhefte der Antiken Welt (Mainz am Rhein 1996) p. 30.



14. Magie, D., *Roman Rule in Asia Minor. To the End of the Third Century after Christ* (Princeton-New Jersey 1950) p. 963 note 79.
15. Regarding coins see *RE* 8 (1913) column 431 see entry Herakleia (Bürchner).
16. Also Wörrle, M., Inschriften von Herakleia am Latmos, 2. Das Priestertum der Athena Latmia, *Chiron* 20, 1990, pp.19-50.
17. According to another view, the fortification is dated from the 4th century BC, during the reign of Mausolus. The researchers also do not agree whether the city was fortified under Pleistarchus (300 -298 BC) or under Lysimachus in 287 BC.
18. See McNicoll, A. W., *Hellenistic Fortifications from the Aegean to the Euphrates*, (Oxford 1997) pp. 75-81. Hülden, O., Pleistarchos und die Befestigungsanlagen von Herakleia am Latmos, *Klio* 82.2, 2000, pp 382-408.
19. This term was used by Pausanias. For the Agora of this type see Wycherley, R.E., "The Ionian Agora", *JHS* 62 (1942), p. 21-32.
20. Peschlow-Bindokat, A., *Der Latmos. Eine unbekannte Gebirgslandschaft an der türkischen Westküste*, Sonderhefte der Antiken Welt (Mainz am Rhein1996) p. 37. De Bernardi Ferrero dates it in the 3rd century BC but without convincing argumentation: De Bernardi Ferrero, D., *Teatri classici in Asia Minore II* (Roma 1969) pp. 201- 204.
21. Peschlow-Bindokat, A., *Der Latmos. Eine unbekannte Gebirgslandschaft an der türkischen Westküste*, Sonderhefte der Antiken Welt (Mainz am Rhein1996) p. 37.
22. Analytically about the topography and the preserved buildings of Heraclea by Latmus see Peschlow-Bindokat, A., *Der Latmos. Eine unbekannte Gebirgslandschaft an der türkischen Westküste*, Sonderhefte der Antiken Welt (Mainz am Rhein 1996), pp. 22-42.

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Glossary :

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| | anta or pilaster, the A shallow rectangular feature projecting from a wall, having a capital and a base and architecturally treated as a column. |
| | cavea The auditorium or audience sitting of a theater. |
| | cella Interior enclosed part - nucleus of a temple or other temple-shaped building. |
| | nymphaeum, the Originally the sacred grotto dedicated to the Nymphs. During the Roman period the Nymphaea were monumental public fountain constructions, commissioned by wealthy citizens. During the Early Byzantine period they often adorned the fora (public spaces). |
| | pronaos The porch in front of the cella of a temple |



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|  | scene (lat. scaena -ae) |
| The stage building of the ancient theaters originally used for storage but provided a convenient backing for performances. | |
|  | temple in antis |
| Temple with two or more columns between the antae of the pronaos. | |
|  | thermae |
| Building complexes dated in the Roman Period housing the public baths. Within the building there were three rooms, the frigitarium, the tepidarium and the caldarium and several other facilities rooms. The Roman bath-houses were also used as meeting places and they often included a palaestra and a gymnasium. | |

Chronological Table

Middle of the 4th or possibly the beginning of the 3rd century BC: re-settlement of the citizens of Latmus in Heraclea.

Until 190 BC: Successive changes of power in Heraclea between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies.

190 BC - 129 BC: Heraclea is given free status. The first coins are issues. Financial heyday.

129 BC: Caria and Heraclea become part of the province of Asia.

297 AD: Heraclea part of the province of Caria.