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DIOCLETIAN AND THE PURPLE MILE OF APERLAE

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The site of Aperlae in Lycia is, at first encounter, strangely grand. It has mighty walls, augmented and patched with long use. It has imposing buildings constructed both in immaculately quarried ashlar, and in Byzantine brick and rubble masonry. There is evidence of a long habitation: the first curtain walls are Hellenistic; a patch in one of the defensive structures is in a masonry style characteristic of the Late Byzantine period. For all this, it is a small town. Perhaps only a thousand or so people crowded in and around its walls at any given time. The town is isolated, facing a small and narrow bay which broadens out to a little gulf, headed, at its western end, by the perilous cape of Uluburun. Like many of the towns of this part of Lycia, Aperlae is water-poor. This is a dry coast. The only permanent watercourse west of Myra is the creek which flows from the spring at Sura. Even today, the inhabitants of Kaleköy, Uçagiz, and the hinterland hamlets depend upon cisterns fed by winter rains, supplemented by the bounty of trucked water.

Aperlae, moreover, is not a natural port. Although it faces the sea, the narrow bay which it faces was even narrower in antiquity. Earthquake action has caused subsidence: about a hectare of the ancient city is now submerged and the bay is, as a result, half again as broad where Aperlae once stood. In addition, the bay has its own hazards. From about mid-morning, a strong current begins to flow into it and continues all day. That means that, but for a small window of opportunity, no vessel can easily sail out of the bay in daylight hours. Even small coasters with a few men on the oars would have had difficulty on most days in propelling their boats out of Asar Bay. No doubt there was coastal traffic, perhaps coming from Antiphellos, Megiste or from the east if wind and current were favourable. These were serviced by a quay and, in the late antique period, a jetty.¹ The earliest phase of the wall features a south-facing gate overlooking the waterfront, and no doubt, linked with it by a path.

The secret of Aperlae's wealth was identified in the early 1970's by Robert and Cynthia Carter. They noted the existence, to the west of the town site, of a large midden of the crushed shells of *murex trunculus*, the source in antiquity of a prized variety of purple dye.² The dye itself was first manufactured in Crete, although the principal centre in antiquity was

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¹ Hohlfelder, Robert L. and Vann, Robert L. (2000), p. 133.

² Carter, Robert (1978), The Submerged Seaport of Aperlae in Turkey, *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, 7, 177–185, p. 183 f.

Phoenicia.³ Its value derived from its rarity: the raw dye derives from a secretion from the hypobranchial gland of the murex shellfish. Each murex produces a tiny spot of raw dye, so it takes many thousand to manufacture a commercial amount. While cheaper varieties of purple dye came to be developed, either vegetable or mineral based, the traditional form of the dye, known as “sea-purple” retained its prestige and its value as the colour of kings.⁴ The major source of sea-purple were the colonies of a number of murex species off the coast of ancient Phoenicia. It is no surprise therefore that the most prized form of purple dye was known as “Tyrean purple” and was manufactured from a number species of murex, one of which, the “banded murex” (*murex trunculus*) produced a dye which was most highly prized because of its versatility. It could be used for double dyeing to produce the deep “blue purple”; it could be blended with vegetable dyes to make pale purple (*hysgine*); it is also possible to manufacture more reddish purple from the banded murex.

Aperlae, clearly, was a town built on purple. *Murex trunculus* are still to be found in the bay. Aperlae was therefore rather like a mining town. Located beside a rich marine seam of purple-producing shellfish, its people endured the privations imposed by the landscape until growing wealth gave them the resources to (in part) adapt their environment to their needs. There remain a large number of cisterns visible to the contemporary visitor to the site, and no doubt more remain to be identified by a future generation of archaeological surveyors.⁵ There are also two bathhouses (although it is likely that they operated consecutively rather than concurrently), whose potentially profligate use of water indicates that the Aperlites must have solved the water problem, at least for a time, perhaps through the employment of salt water.⁶

The use of purple dye as a status symbol in the ancient Mediterranean world dates back to the middle of the second millennium BCE. Therefore, from that time onwards, new sources of purple were constantly sought. A number were identified outside Phoenicia.⁷ Pliny identifies the best sources of purple outside the Levantine coast as Meninx and Gaetulia in North Africa and Laconia in the southern Peloponnese.⁸ Other sources are known, one of which was in Lycia. It is not known precisely when the purple industry first commenced in Lycia, or where it flourished, but it was certainly well advanced by the third century BCE when the Ptolemies could expect revenue from Lycian purple. A papyrus from Tebtunis, in the Zenon archive,

³ On the earliest unambiguous centres for the production of purple dye, see Stieglitz, Robert R. (1994), *The Minoan Origin of Tyrian Purple*, *Biblical Archaeologist* 57.1, 46–53; on the Phoenician industry, see Meyer (1970), chapter VI.

⁴ Meyer (1970), pp. 59–61.

⁵ Bucko, Janes S. (2002), *A study of water management by the ancient inhabitants of Aperlae in Turkey: the Application of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to Archaeological Survey data from Aperlae*, unpublished MA (Interdisciplinary Studies) thesis, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, pp. 41–51.

⁶ Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 1.2.3 mentions seawater baths (*marinae*) at Ostia; although these seem to have been for medicinal rather than routine bathing. A similar seawater baths is attested at Pompeii by an inscription only (*CIL* X. 1063 = *ILS* 5724). Yegül briefly discusses the use of seawater in baths for medicinal purposes (Yegül, Fikret [1992], *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge Mass. and London, p. 93). Bathhouses also feature in environments equally as water-poor as Aperlae, for example at Simena (*IGRR* 3.690), and even hyper-arid ones, for example at Mons Claudianus (Jackson, Robert B. [2002], *At Empire's Edge: Exploring Rome's Egyptian Frontier*, New Haven and London, p. 38 f.), although these made have been fed by a well (Valerie Maxfield, pers. comm.).

⁷ Meyer (1970), p. 69.

⁸ Pliny, *Natural History*, 9.126–7.

refers to the income to the Ptolemaic treasury in Egypt derived from the contract to manufacture purple dye in Lycia. The annual income is a modest one talent, 1800 drachmas, which indicates a small but profitable operation.⁹

It is tempting to identify this source of Ptolemaic purple, and the centre of Lycian purple production, as Aperlae. While murex shells have been found elsewhere in the region, notably at Andriake, Aperlae provides both a vast accumulated midden of shattered murex, and also holding tanks (*vivaria*) to keep the harvested shellfish alive until a commercial quantity could be gathered. While the extant *vivaria* observable on the site are clearly of Late Roman date, antecedents are likely. The earliest urban structures at Aperlae are of the Hellenistic period. This sets Aperlae apart from its immediate neighbours which seem to have been settled earlier. Apollonia, to the north, has a number of quite distinctive rock-cut tower tombs; Simena, to the east, has a number of rock-cut chamber tombs, including one on a high point of the classical acropolis; and Teimussa, to the northeast, also possesses a number of chamber tombs, some of which feature inscribed epitaphs in Lycian.¹⁰ Evidence for interments of this style at Aperlae is slight. The threshold of a smashed small rock-cut chamber has been identified at the floor level of a defensive tower of early Hellenistic date in the northern wall.¹¹ Thus far, the feature is unique and insufficient to suggest pre-Hellenistic settlement.

Aperlae may not have been founded specifically to exploit the purple colony. After the death of Alexander, the Lycian coast came to hold considerable economic and strategic value in the wars of the Diadochoi.¹² Its rich timber resources were a prized source of wood for ship-building, and its geographical position meant that it offered an opportunity to monitor and control sea traffic between the Aegean and the Levant and Egypt. Both the Antigonids and the Ptolemies were aware of this, and so Lycia became an important prize of war between them. Between 310 and 301, control of its coastal cities swung between Ptolemy and Antigonos, being ultimately decided by Antigonos' defeat and death at Ipsos in 301. It is probable that this struggle for thalassocracy in the eastern Mediterranean provides the context for the foundation of Aperlae. Nevertheless, the long period of Ptolemaic control led to the transformation of the region from a frontier to an important link in a maritime trading network. The beginnings of the purple industry at Aperlae, in all probability, belongs to the Ptolemaic period, and was certainly sustained after Ptolemaic control failed, firstly under the Seleucids and, subsequently, during the period of Lycian independence.

The Roman insistence upon graduated social rank with carefully differentiated rules about the amount of purple, which might be deployed at any level provided a constant demand for sea-purple into the first century BC and later. This lucrative market plus well-established

⁹ Bagnall, Roger S. (1976), *The Administration of the Ptolemaic Possessions Outside Egypt*, Leiden, pp. 108 f., 227.

¹⁰ For Apollonia, see Würster, Wolfgang (1976), *Antike Siedlungen in Lykien. Vorbericht über ein Survey-Unternehmen im Sommer 1974*, *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, 23–49, pp. 40–43, Bean (1978), p. 104; for Teimussa, see Zimmermann, Martin (2000), *Teimussa – Ein zentrallykischer Hafenplatz als Mittler kulturellen Wandels*, *Antike Welt*, 31, 333–342, pp. 335 ff.; Bean (1978), p. 116; Simena has never been systematically surveyed, but see here Bean (1978), p. 117.

¹¹ Hobbs, Justine Adele (2001), *The Tombs of Aperlae in Ancient Lycia: a Catalogue and Discussion*, unpublished Honours Thesis held by Edith Cowan University, pp. 22 f.; tomb # 86.

¹² Keen, A. (1993), *Gateway from the Aegean to the Mediterranean: the Strategic Value of Lycia Down to the Fourth Century B.C.*, *Akten des II. Internationalen Lykien-Symposiums*, Wien, 71–79.

maritime trade routes meant that Aperlae flourished during the Roman period. Even when much of the rest of the Empire was in recession, Aperlae did well. Such onomastic and typological evidence as can be teased from the eroded inscriptions of the Aperlae sarcophagi indicates a vigorous economic life during the second and third centuries.¹³ The latest datable epitaphs, however, belong to the middle of the third century. While Aperlae continued to thrive (no fewer than five churches of respectable size were constructed in the town during the fourth and fifth centuries) the sepulchral texts, which are its principal written record, seem to evaporate.

There is, however, a text of a different type and quality which survives on the site and provides some helpful clues. It is a milestone, no longer standing in its original place but relocated to a defensive tower and serving as a door lintel (Fig. 1). First recorded in the nineteenth century by Bailie, then republished by Le Bas and Waddington in their comprehensive epigraphic survey, it has most recently been catalogued by David French in his magisterial study of the Roman milestones of Asia Minor.¹⁴ The text of this inscription can largely be discerned, although a part is hidden by masonry. Any lacunae can be readily filled through the formulaic nature of the text. During the 2000 and 2001 field seasons at Aperlae, this text was examined by the present author. The milestone sits transversely over a doorway. It is a cylinder 142 cm in length, and the ligatures are clearly and regularly incised, with the letters averaging 2 cm x 2 cm. The following reading was taken:

	ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΣΙΝΚΕΣΑΡΣΙΝ	Αὐτοκράτορσιν Κέσαρσιν
	ΓΑΙΩΑΥΡΗΛΙΩΔΙΟΚΛΕΤ[Γαίῳ Αὐρηλίῳ Διοκλετ[ιανῶ]
	ΚΑΙΜΑΡΚΩΑΥΡΗΛΙΩΟΥΑ[καὶ Μάρκῳ Αὐρηλίῳ Οὐα[λερίῳ]
4	[. . .]Μ[.]ΑΝΩΕΥΣΕΒ[[Μαξι]μ[ι]ανῶ εὐσεβ[έσιν]
	ΕΥΤΥΧΕΣΙΝΣΕΒΑΣ[εὐτυχέσιν Σεβασ[τοῖς]
	ΚΑΙΦΛΑΥΙΩΟΥΑΛ[καὶ Φλαυίῳ Οὐαλ[ερίῳ]
	ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΩΚΑΙΓΑ[Κωνσταντίῳ καὶ Γα[λερίῳ]
8	ΟΥΑΛΕΡΙ[.]ΑΞΙΜΙΑΝΩ	Οὐαλερί[ῳ Μ]αξιμιανῶ
	ΤΟΙΣΕΠΙΦΑΝΕΣΤ[τοῖς ἐπιφανεστ[άτοις]
	ΚΕΣΑΡΣ[Κέσαρσ[ιν]
	ΑΠΕΡΛΕΙΤΩΝΗΠΟ[¹⁵	Ἀπερλειτῶν ἡ πό[λις]

“To the Emperors, the Caesars Gaius Aurelius Diocletian and Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus, both dutiful and blessed Augusti: and to Flavius Valerius Constantius and Galerius Valerius Maximianus, both most manifest Caesars. The city of the Aperlites ...”

¹³ *IGRR* 3.692; 693. These complementary texts are the epitaph of an Aperlite worthy, Herpidase Sarpedon and a dedication to him (now lost).

¹⁴ Bailie, J. K. (1849), *Fasciculus Inscriptionum Graecarum potissimum, ex Galatia, Lycia, Syria et Aegypto, quas apud sedes celeberrimas chartis mandatas et nunc denuo concinnatas notisque et inducibus amplissimis instructas*, Dublin and London, p. 38, CCLXXIV.b; *IGRR* 3.691; French, David (1988), *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor, Fascicle 2: an interim catalogue of milestones, Part I*, British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara Monograph No. 9, BAR International Series 392 (i), #185.

¹⁵ The text is as read and transcribed. Underdotted text indicates uncertain (although likely) readings. Square brackets indicate lacunae which are restored in the minuscule version.

The milestone is clearly dated to the period of the First Tetrarchy (293–305); the names of the tetrarchs, beginning with Diocletian, can be clearly discerned. At one level, this is scarcely surprising. Having taken power in abrupt circumstances late in 284, Diocletian was much concerned with the renovation of dilapidated imperial infrastructure. One clear priority, as set out in the preamble to the Edict on Maximum Prices, seems to have been to ensure the readiness, proper equipment and status of the soldiers upon whom the security of the Empire rested.¹⁶ He had regulated the Empire's tax base for the first time in three centuries, encouraged and regulated long-distance trade, established and developed state monopolies.¹⁷ These latter included the armaments industry, and most probably also the purple industry. Eusebius refers in passing to the imperial dye-works at Tyre, whose manager was Dorotheus, a Christian priest, who was later executed during Diocletian's "Great Persecution" of the Christians.¹⁸

This makes sense of a peculiar and unique detail of the stone. There is no military garrison at Aperlae, no major highway for it to mark (*vide infra*). Nor is it of the copious local limestone. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Bailie, the author of the *editio princeps* of this text, described the milestone as a *columella porphyretica colouris subrubi* "a porphyry column of reddish hue".¹⁹ Exposure, dust, and the smoke of shepherds' fires have faded the colour somewhat (although still visible in places) since the 1840's when the stone was first autopsied, but the symbolism remains clear. This was a purple milestone on a road which was for the purple industry. Aperlae, as a source of purple was now locked into the state purple monopoly.

There is evidence too of considerable capital investment in Aperlae in the late antique period. A number of extant public structures have been plausibly dated to the late antique period by Foss and, more significantly for our purposes, there are a number of large brick and tile structures, now mostly submerged, but antiquity above the waterline. These have been identified as vast *vivaria*, holding tanks for live shellfish.²⁰ If these tanks belong to the fourth century, as is probable, they also furnish evidence for significant imperial investment in purple production at the site.

The milestone itself, in all likelihood, stood at the east gate of Aperlae, not far from its findspot, as the *caput viae* of a short but significant road. The identity of this roadway was a puzzle for a time. Foss suggested that milestone was evidence of a longer Roman road

¹⁶ *Edictum de maximis pretiis*, praef. II.2; Lauffer, Siegfried (1971), *Diokletians Preisedikt*, Berlin, p. 93.

¹⁷ On Diocletian's economic policies, see Jones, A. H. M. (1964), *The Later Roman Empire 284–602*, Oxford, pp. 59–66, although Jones' statement that factories were worked by imperial slaves (p. 65) can no longer go unchallenged (see below); on the new tax system, see Goffart, Walter (1976), *Caput and Colonate: Towards a History of Late Roman Taxation*, Toronto, pp. 31–40, 93–99; on long-distance trade, see most recently Bill Leadbetter, Galerius and the Revolt of the Thebaid, 293/4, *Antichthon* 34 (2000), 82–94; Galerius and the Eastern Frontier, *Limes XVIII. Proceedings of the XVIIIth International Congress of International Roman Frontier Studies held in Amman, Jordan* (September 2000), Vol I., edited by P. Freeman, J. Bennett, Z. T. Fiema and B. Hoffman, British Archaeological Reports 1084 (I), Oxford 2002, pp. 85–90.

¹⁸ Eus. *HE* 7.32.2; *PLRE* I, p. 269.

¹⁹ Bailie (1849), p. 38 f.

²⁰ Foss, Clive (1994), The Lycian Coast in the Byzantine Age, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 48, 1–52, p. 17 on the visible structures; on the *vivaria*, see Hohlfelder, Robert L. and Vann, Robert L. (1998), Uncovering the Secrets of Aperlae, a Coastal Settlement of Ancient Lycia, *Near Eastern Archaeology*, 61.1, 26–38, p. 34.

connecting Aperlae with other towns of the interior, particularly Apollonia and Cyaneae – a reasonable inference, inasmuch as Romans did not waste inscriptions.²¹ Milestones universally indicate both the existence of a road of some kind and, when carrying an imperial name, the date either of its construction or renovation. While subsequent surveys have identified a number of tracks of various kinds to farmlets and over the ridge to the neighbour town of Apollonia, none of them could be dignified with the name of a road.

The exception to this is a short road which was identified and traced during the field seasons at Aperlae in 1998 and 2000. In 1998 Professor Robert Hohlfelder had already found clear evidence of ancient stone jetties below the contemporary waterline at the head of Ölüdeniz Bay, the sheltered anchorage at the south-western end of the waterway of Kekova Roads. Nearby, on land, the survey team identified a number of large paving stones used for top dressing roadways (Fig. 2). The team traced the road south-west, across an isthmus, towards Aperlae. Occasionally the paving stones disappeared, either under an overburden of soil or dry-stone walls, or at points at which the road had simply been cut out of bedrock (Fig. 3). The road did not take the easiest course. It is highly likely that in antiquity this region would have been under cultivation (it is now over-grazed by goats, cattle and camels). Instead, the road ran along the slope of the northern ridge, in an area where the road might also have served as an agricultural terrace. Significantly, this road is known to contemporary inhabitants of the area who refer to it as “the winter road”, which indicates that it still provides a dry route across the isthmus during the heavy winter rains.²²

The function of the road is not difficult to establish. The murex shellfish from which the Aperlites drew their living proliferated in Asar Bay. The strong currents of the bay make the navigation of this waterway quite difficult. The industrial area of the city is in this less favoured western quarter, which means that the town faced east across the isthmus, rather than west to the open sea. The principal city gates of the Hellenistic and Roman period pierced the eastern and southern walls, not that of the west. In that direction lay the noisome industrial area (Pliny notes the stench)²³ now marked by large dumps of pottery and murex middens (Fig. 4). This means that the orientation of the town was towards the east rather than the west, and it is in this direction that the dyestuffs were transported over land to the still and sheltered waters of Ölüdeniz Bay. The trans-isthmian road, while not being the only route out of Aperlae, did provide a secure trail which could be employed regardless of sea conditions, weather or season. This ensured that Aperlae could export its purple fleeces to the nearby small port at Simena, or sail them in the lee of Kekova island (ancient Dolichiste) to Andriake, the bustling port of Myra.²⁴

The construction or renovation of this road by Diocletian represents an unusual and non-military imperial investment in this region. The known Roman milestones of Asia Minor have been catalogued by David French. Over one hundred belong to the period of the first tetrarchy; only one, this one, comes from this region. That indicates very clearly that the renovation or construction of this road this was not an incidental aspect of a wider program of road

²¹ Foss (1994), p. 16.

²² R. Hohlfelder, pers. comm.

²³ Pliny, *Natural History*, 9.127.

²⁴ Hohlfelder, Robert L. and Vann, Robert L. (2000).

building in Lycia. It was a deliberate enhancement of the infrastructure of Aperlae in order to ensure, even control, the safer transport of purple dyestuffs from Aperlae to imperial works and mills elsewhere. The link with the purple trade is confirmed by the unusual porphyry milestone. It is worth noting that at least one other place in the Empire, a purple sign was used to denote officials and offices connected with the purple trade. A text above an ancient lintel now stored at Hermopolis Magna, and which once stood over the doorway of a resthouse for *tabularii* of *Mons Porphyrites* is picked out in purple paint.²⁵

Diocletian had always prized such purple very highly. In his Edict on Maximum Prices, he valued purple dyed wool at 50,000 denarii per pound, whereas undyed best quality wool fetched a mere 175 denarii per pound. Purple silk was even more exorbitantly priced at 150,000 denarii per pound.²⁶ It was of course in Diocletian's interest to ensure that purple was beyond the resources of all but a few. It had become the leitmotif of the apparatus of power on which he insisted.²⁷ He wore purple shoes, robes entirely of purple wool or silk. In battle, he wore a purple cloak which, when he abdicated in 305 he threw over the shoulders of Maximin Daza, the new Caesar.²⁸ He was even buried in a purple robe, which later became the cause of a scandal. The fourth century writer, Ammianus Marcellinus, in his depiction of the suspicious nature of Constantius II, cites two instances of in succession about charges arising from purple garments. In the first, an imperial slave named Danus was accused of the theft of the purple robe from the tomb of Diocletian. While this particular accusation proved unfounded, it is plain that someone removed the robe, perhaps for plunder, perhaps for a more nefarious purpose. In his second instance of a purple related accusation under Constantius II Ammianus tells of a wealthy household in Aquitania brought to ruin for its excessive use of purple-bordered tablecloths.²⁹ For Ammianus these were egregious examples of the misuse of authority by Constantius' secret police. What they do illustrate is the continued, indeed increased, significance of the colour purple.

By that time the lives of the purple harvesters of Aperlae were even more rigidly regulated than they had been in the time of Diocletian. The Theodosian Code, the digest of legislation compiled in Constantinople at the order Theodosius II in the early fifth century records a significant number of laws and imperial edicts which make it clear that by that time the

²⁵ Cockle, W. E. H. (1996), An inscribed architectural block concerning the imperial quarries, in Donald M. Bailey (ed.), *Archaeological Research in Roman Egypt: the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Classical Colloquium of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum, JRA Supplementary Series 19*, Ann Arbor, 23–28, p. 23.

²⁶ Only the Greek text is here preserved. See Lauffer, *Diokletians Preisedikt*, p. 167.

²⁷ Avery, William T. (1940), The *Adoratio Purpurae* and the Importance of the Imperial Purple in the Fourth Century of the Christian Era, *MAAR*, 17, 66–80; Stern, H. (1954), Remarks on the 'Adoratio' under Diocletian, *Journal of the Warburg and Courthauld Institutes*, 17, 184–190; Bridgeman, Jane (1987), Purple Dye in Late Antiquity and Byzantium, in Ehud Spanier (ed.), *The Royal Purple and the Biblical Blue: argaman and tekhelet*, Jerusalem, 159–168.

²⁸ Aur. Vict. *De Caes* 39.1–4; Eutr. Brev., 9.26; Amm. Marc. 15.5.18; Jerome *Chron.* Sa 292; the similarity of the wording makes it plain that this is a paragraph from the lost *Kaisergeschichte* (Avery [1940], p. 69 f.). On the ritual of Diocletian's abdication, see Lactantius, *de Mort. Pers.* 19.5.

²⁹ On Diocletian's purple shroud and the unfortunate fate of Danus, see Amm. Marc. 16.8.3–9; on Aquitanian table-cloths, Amm. Marc. 16.8.8.

harvesters of the most valuable sea-purple were little more than chattels of the state.³⁰ The snail trail of Aperlae was still being employed to move raw purple dye, but it would be fair to suggest that those fourth century harvesters of purple who commenced the construction of the many churches of Aperlae were much less happy people than had been their wealthier and freer ancestors.

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Özet

Yazıda, Lykia'daki küçük bir liman kenti olan Aperlai ve onun antik devirde kralların sembolü haline gelen erguvanî renkteki boya üretim ve ihracatındaki önemi anlatılmaktadır. Aperlai kentinin varlığını, borçlu olduğu bu boya, bitki ve minerallerden de elde edilebiliyorsa da, denizlerde yaşayan dikenli salyangozdan (*murex*) çıkarılan erguvanî boya çok daha yüksek fiata alıcı buluyordu. Bugün de Aperlai sahiline vuran büyük miktardaki dikenli salyangoz kabukları buranın erguvanî boya üretimi için uygun bir mevki olduğunu göstermektedir. Nitekim bazı kaynaklar bize, antik devir boyunca yoğun ticareti yapılan erguvanî boyanın önemli bir kısmının doğu Akdeniz kentlerinde üretildiğini göstermektedir.

19. yüzyıldan beri bilinen ve halen Aperlai kalıntıları arasında bulunan bir miltaşını Aperlai tarihi bakımından önemlidir. Diocletianus dönemine (Birinci Tetrarşi: İ.S. 293–305) tarihlenen ve kentin adını kaydeden bu miltaşının, herhangi bir askerî garnizon ya da yakınından geçen herhangi bir önemli anayol bulunmayan Aperlai'da dikilmiş olması önemlidir. Yine erguvanî renkte boya üretilen somaki taşından yapılmış olan bu kırmızımsı miltaşını, büyük olasılıkla erguvanî boya ticareti için kullanılan ve kenti iç kısımlara bağlayan bir Roma yolu üzerine dikilmişti ve kentin bu endüstri kolundaki tekeli simgeliyordu.

³⁰ Purple-fishers, *murileguli*, were still sufficiently free to pay taxes on their produce in 372 (*C.Th.* 13.1.9), but their status was already described as inferior in 371 (*C.Th.* 10.20.5). By 385, the collection of purple dye fish can be described as state service (*C.Th.* 10.20.120, and by the end of the century, legislation prevents *murilegi* from escaping their status through ordination (*C.Th.* 9.45.3). In 427, their status is described as hereditary (*C.Th.* 10.20.15) and locked into state service (*C.Th.* 10.20.16–17). This was underpinned by an edict of 424 finally and definitively prohibiting private possession of purple garments (*C.Th.* 10.21.3).



Fig. 1 The milestone *in situ*, looking south (photograph: the author)



Fig. 2 Visible paving stones on the road (photograph: the author)



Fig. 3 Continuation of the road in smoothed bedrock (photograph: the author)



Fig. 4 Murex nidden to the west of the city (photograph: the author)