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ROMAN FINE WARES IN CILICIA: AN OVERVIEW*



Fig. 1: Cilicia and the sites mentioned in the text.

Introduction

The location of Cilicia in the southeastern part of the Anatolian peninsula was one reason for it to play an important role in the history of ceramic production and trade within the eastern Mediterranean basin. The division of Cilicia into two regions, both geographically and from time to time administratively, may also have affected the way of life and the other customs concerning the use of pottery by the inhabitants. Cilicia Pedias or Flat Cilicia has a fertile alluvial plain watered by the rivers Pyramos, Saros and Kydnos, and so is favourable for agricultural activities and for other types of production¹ (fig. 1). Some of the most ancient towns of the region like Adania, Tarsus, Soloi-Pompeiopolis etc. were here. Among these, Tarsus is also known as the metropolis and administrative centre of Cilicia Pedias and, from time to time, of the whole of Cilicia and the neighbouring lands. The second region, Cilicia Aspera or Tracheia, as it can be understood from its name, has a mountainous topography, and so is not good for agriculture. On the other hand, it contains mines and forests, as well as being an area for olive cultivation and fishery, both of which were major sources of income for the inhabitants. Before the Roman period the foremost settlements were small coastal towns, such as Elaiussa-Sebaste, Kelenderis and Anemurium.

The most important feature of the towns in Cilicia mentioned here was that they were originally oriental towns. Later, especially in the Hellenistic period, when the region was under Seleucid control, their oriental lifestyle was

transformed to fit the model of Hellenic urbanization and social organization. Finally, Roman imperial culture was superimposed onto this Hellenic and Oriental intellectual synthesis. On the other hand, the geographical proximity of Cilicia Pedias to Syria and its metropolis Antioch led to development of shared common characteristics in the two regions. Likewise, Cilicia Tracheia, the other half of Cilicia, was also open to acculturative effects coming from its eastern, as well as its western and southern neighbours (Pamphylia and Cyprus).

Roman pottery in Cilicia

When the geographical and economic characteristics of Cilicia are considered, it would not be an exaggeration to speak of the richness in repertoire and quantity of locally produced and imported pottery. A rich variety of pottery – from coarse wares to the transport and storage jars, and from luxury tableware to plain cooking ware – is present in this

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¹ For the history of Cilicia in the Roman period and in Late Antiquity, see F. HILD/H. HELLENKEMPER, Kilikien und Isaurien. Tabula Imperii Byzantini 5 (Wien 1990) 30–127.

region, found both in excavations and in various surveys. I will here dwell only on the fine wares or, in other words, the red slipped tableware of the Roman period that has been found in several excavations in the region.

Chronology and pottery classes

Following the rule established by other colleagues, the Roman fine ware found in Cilicia may be divided into three successive periods². The first is the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman Imperial period, which corresponds roughly to the interval between the 2nd century BC and the late 1st century AD. This period also represents a time of cultural transition from Hellenic-Oriental customs to the Roman-Oriental ones. During this period the long-lasting tradition of black slipped pottery was replaced by red slipped wares. Especially the earlier part of this period, roughly the late 2nd and 1st centuries BC, a small proportion of the ceramic production still follows the older tradition with its elaborately painted and incised West Slope style³ over the red slip, but the dominant ware classes during this period are the plain red-slipped wares, like Eastern Sigillata A (ESA) and the so called “Cypriote Sigillata” wares. In addition, Eastern Sigillata B (ESB), Eastern Sigillata C (ESC) and western Sigillata were also imported to a lesser degree. Beside these, a few examples of Pontic Sigillata and Sagalassos Ware may also be mentioned⁴. Although not closely related to our subject here, lead-glazed pottery should be kept in mind as well⁵.

The Middle Imperial period with respect to the chronology of Roman ceramics in Cilicia coincides with the interval between the early 2nd and the end of the 3rd century AD. It is worth noting that some of the forms of ESA and “Cypriote Sigillata” seem to have been in the market. Especially in the late 2nd century AD, however, the Sigillata wares begin to disappear and almost at the same time the earlier forms of African Red Slip Ware (ARSW) appear in Cilicia.

The last period covers the Late Imperial period and the early phase of the East Roman (Byzantine) Empire – that is, a period between the early 4th and the 7th century AD. Habitation levels of the second half of the third and of the fourth centuries are poorly represented at excavated sites in Cilicia; finds are limited, and ARSW seems to be the only import but in limited quantity. The massive importation of ARSW, Late Roman C (LRC or Phocaean Red Slip Ware), and Cypriote Red Slip Ware (CRSW) started in the 5th and 6th centuries, and these continued in use up to the late 7th century AD.

Centres in Cilicia where Roman fine ware has been found and studied

As mentioned above, Cilicia Pedias was a homogenous, fertile land where the towns developed rapidly in the Roman period, and very high economic activity took place there. Consequently, from the Late Hellenistic and throughout the Roman periods, the demand of communities for the widespread luxury wares was concentrated especially in this region. One of the foremost *metropoleis* was Tarsus, where three excavation projects have been carried out so far. The first, oldest, and most well known of these excavations was

carried out on Gözlü Kule, a mound that is located at modern Tarsus. As is known from the reports, the excavator, H. Goldman, had principally aimed to investigate the prehistoric and proto-historic past of ancient Tarsus here. However, a rich collection of Roman ware unexpectedly came to light in the upper levels of the mound⁶. It is pointless to discuss here the various problems of the Gözlü Kule excavation and publication, but it should be stressed that the published material equates to only ca. 10 per cent of the total finds; in other words, the conclusions that are drawn and are commonly repeated by scholars working on the Roman pottery are based on a few selected finds. Nevertheless, it must also be accepted that Goldman's chronology brought about some important consequences for Tarsus and even for Cilicia as a whole.

The second excavation in Tarsus was carried out between 1985 and 1990 in the *cella* of a Roman temple, known as Donuktaş. Sadly, the material found here is not very significant in respect of its stratigraphic evaluation⁷.

The excavations that started at Republic Square in the centre of modern Tarsus in 1994 and are still continuing have, by contrast, revealed very interesting stratigraphical data extending from the Late Hellenistic period to Late Antiquity⁸. Here, a street, a portico with shops, a house, and several other remains were uncovered, all of which present the picture of (the western part) the ancient town. The finds,

² However, stratigraphic evidence for the Roman period at excavated Cilician sites is not as yet clearly defined, and the proposal given here is based mainly on the results of the excavations discussed below.

³ A few forms of red slipped pottery with painted decoration are attributed to ESA by J. Hayes (cf. HAYES 1985, 12, especially forms 15, 16, 102). — Two interesting examples of this type, a stamoid *pyxis* and a *hydria*, which seem to be new forms and absent from the form list of Hayes, were found at Kelenderis; see for these red slipped and painted examples, L. ZOROĞLU, Hellenistic Pottery from Kelenderis. *Praktika* 2004, 303–304, plate 109, 1.2.

⁴ For the distribution of these classes, see HAYES 1985, 83 (ESB); 71–72 (ESC); 92–93 (Pontic Sigillata). — For western sigillata from Cilicia see: JONES 1950, 187–188; 254–259 (Tarsus); WILLIAMS 1989, 22–24 (Anemurium). — A few imports from Sagalassos that have been discovered in Cilicia are given on a map in: J. POBLOME/M. WAELKENS, Sagalassos and Alexandria. Exchange in the Eastern Mediterranean. In: C. ABADIE-REYNAL (ed.), *Les céramiques en Anatolie aux époques hellénistiques et romaines. Actes de la Table Ronde d'Istanbul, 23–24 mai 1996. Varia Anatolica 15* (Istanbul, Paris 2003) 179–191 pl. CIV. — A few unpublished examples from Republic Square (Tarsus) and Kelenderis may be added to this list.

⁵ For the lead-glazed pottery from the workshops at Tarsus, see A. HOCHULI-GYSEL, Kleinasiatische glasierte Reliefkeramik (50 v. Chr. bis 50 n. Chr.) und ihre oberitalischen Nachahmungen (Bern 1977) 107–121. — EADEM, La céramique à glaçure plombifère d'Asie Mineure et du bassin méditerranéen oriental (du 1^{er} s. av. J.-C. au 1^{er} s. ap. J.-C.). In: F. BLONDÉ/P. BALLEST/J.-F. SALLES, *Céramiques hellénistiques et romaines: productions et diffusion en Méditerranée orientale* (Chypre, Égypte et côte syro-palestinienne (Lyon 2002) 303–319.

⁶ GOLDMAN 1950, 3–4. — JONES 1950.

⁷ N. BAYDUR/N. SEÇKİN, Tarsus Donuktaş Kazı Raporu (İstanbul 2001) 58–67 pl. 47–54.

⁸ For the published reports of the excavation conducted under the direction of the present author here, see Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı 19,2, 1997, 493–505. — Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı 20,2, 1998, 463–473. — The Late Roman pottery from Republic Square is being studied by I. Adak-Adıbelli, and the final report of this excavation including the remains and finds is being prepared for publication.

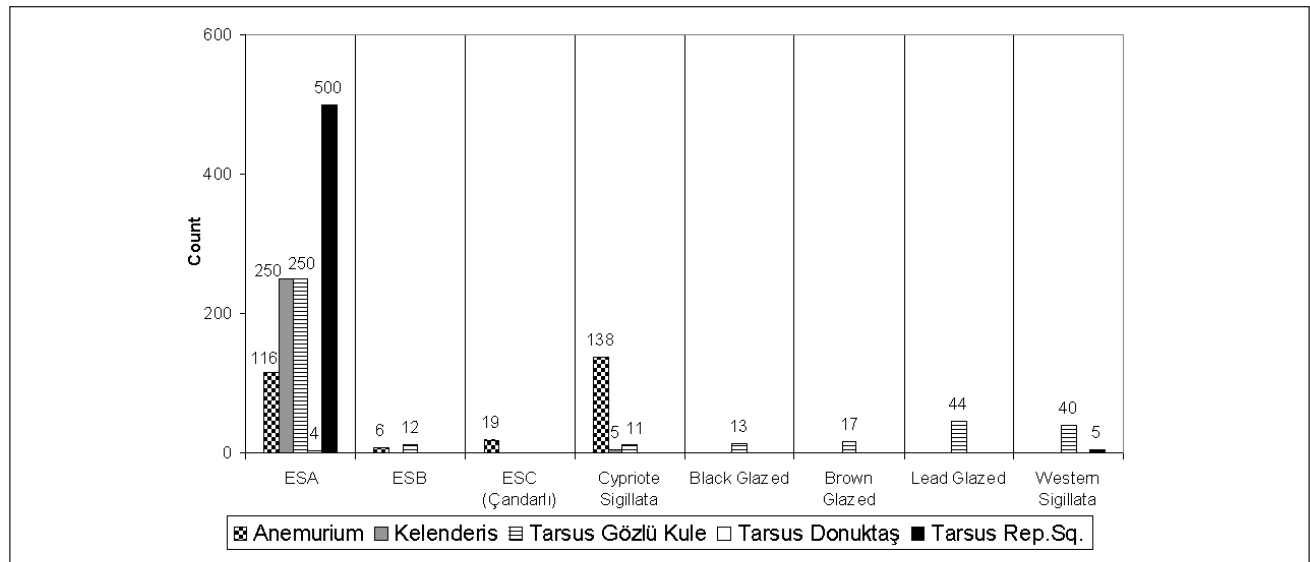


Fig. 2: Late Hellenistic and Early Roman wares in Cilicia.

e.g. the pottery, coins, and small finds, constitute the dating criteria of the remains uncovered here.

Drawing on the results from these three excavations in Tarsus, the following conclusions on the nature of the Roman fine pottery in the city and in Cilicia Pedias generally may be proposed.

ESA forms the main class of wares during the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods (fig. 2), suggesting that there were production centres either in Tarsus itself or in a place nearby⁹. “Cypriot Sigillata” seems to be the second largest class of early Roman wares, but when compared with the amount of ESA this is less numerous¹⁰. In addition, ESB, ESC, and Sagalassos Red Slip ware, as well as Italian Sigillata, are all represented, although in small quantities¹¹. The finds and stratigraphical evidence support the conclusion that Tarsus experienced another peak during the Middle Imperial period. The quantity of ESA drops roughly in the middle of the 2nd century AD¹², and during the early and mid-3rd century AD, the earlier forms of the ARSW, such as Hayes Forms 16, 32 and 45, appear. But generally in the 3rd century, when Cilicia experienced a series of disasters resulting from invasions from the East, the importation of this luxury pottery falls significantly (fig. 3).

In the early part of the Late Roman period, e.g. in the 4th and early part of the 5th century AD, very few examples of ARSW are attested, either as true imports or as locally-made imitations of the ware. As is the case at other centres, Form 67 is one of the most popular forms imported into the city¹³. Other forms of ARSW dated to the 5th century are scantily represented as imports, which could be explained by the low economic demand for these forms, but we also find the beginning of imports of LRC (Phocaeen RS) Ware. No subsequent forms of ARSW other than Hayes Form 109 and no closed shapes have been found as yet in Tarsus (see fig. 3). However, the earlier forms of LRC, like Hayes Forms 1 and 2, are imported into Tarsus in smaller quantities in the 5th century AD, but then, from the beginning of the 6th century AD, Hayes Form 3 and, in the late 6th and early 7th century

AD, Hayes Form 10 seem to be the most popular vases imported to the city¹⁴ (fig. 4). On the other hand, examples of the CRSW are very rare here¹⁵ (fig. 5). The reason for this situation may be discussed at length.

If we now turn to Rough Cilicia, we find that the pottery from Anemurium and Kelenderis has provided some very

⁹ It is to be regretted that this suggestion cannot be supported as yet by the results of clay analysis. However, these tests will be included in the programme of future work. G. Schneider (pers. comm.) has indicated that the clay properties of Tarsus ESA ware and finds from Syria closely resemble each other. — On this subject, see JONES 1950, 181 (proposed without analysis). — For a comparison of the finds from Gözlü Kule and from Republic Square in Tarsus, see L. ZOROĞLU, Problems on the Tarsian Hellenistic and Early Roman Pottery I: Red Glazed Pottery. Επιστημονική συνάντηση για την ελληνιστική κεραμική (Athen 2000) 199–203.

¹⁰ Although it has not been proved by means of analysis, it may be proposed that this ware was produced in Pamphylia instead of Cyprus. — On this subject see J. GUNNEWEG, Roman pottery trade in the eastern Mediterranean. RCRF Acta 25/26, 1987, 119–129, part. 122–123; J. GUNNEWEG, The Origin of Eastern Terra Sigillata-A and Hayes’ “Cypriote Sigillata”. RCRF Acta 23/24 1984, 111–115. — On Cypriot Sigillata generally, see HAYES 1985, 79–91.

¹¹ For ESB from Tarsus, see: JONES 1950, 186–187; 253–254 (“Samiian Ware”). — Hayes has identified only one piece of ESC at Tarsus, which was published under the title of “Roman Pergamene” Ware in: JONES 1950, 240–241 no. 368 fig. 192, and see HAYES 1985, 77 (Form 26). — There are also very few examples of ESB and ESC from the Republic Square excavation. For the other earlier classes, see also above notes 4 and 5.

¹² The date of the last examples of ESA is obscure. It is generally accepted that ESA went on through the 3rd century AD: see HAYES 1972, 419, where he proposed that the earlier examples of ARSW replaced the latest examples of ESA in the eastern provinces. I regard a 3rd-century dating as too late for this luxury ware and believe that ESA only lasted into the 2nd century AD, a fact that seems to be proved by the finds from the Republic Square excavations. See also HAYES 1985, 12–13.

¹³ HAYES 1972, 112–116.

¹⁴ The accounts given here are mainly based upon the excavation reports of Gözlü Kule and the Republic Square.

¹⁵ In addition to Tarsus, recent excavations at Soloi-Pompeipolis in Cilicia Pedias have brought to light a very important assemblage of Roman pottery. This has yet to be published, but it seems to parallel the situation in Tarsus.

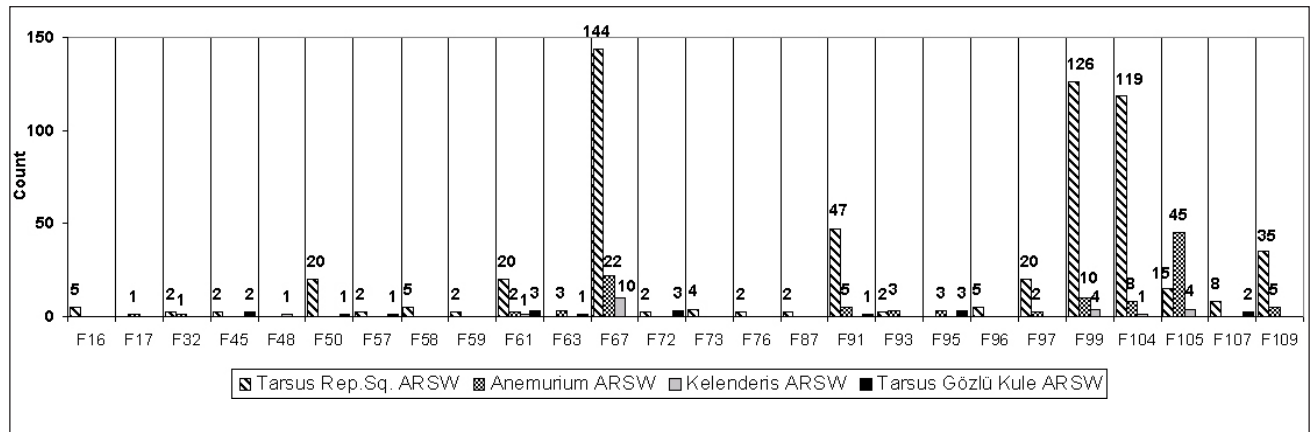


Fig. 3: ARSW in Cilicia.

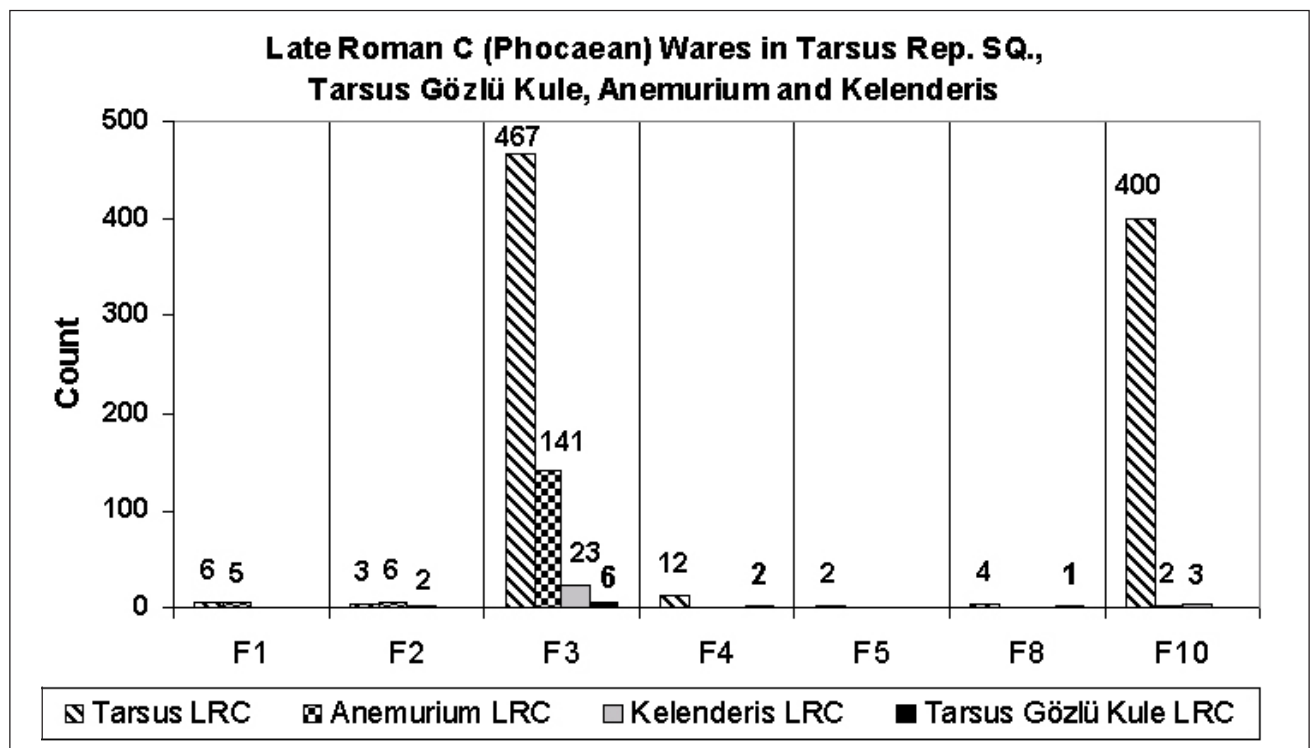


Fig. 4: LRC (Phocaeen RS) ware in Cilicia.

important results for this part of Cilicia¹⁶. Based upon the published examples from Anemurium, it can be proposed that “Cypriote Sigillata” and ESA were the most popular classes of ware in the Early Imperial period, and other earlier red slipped wares follow these¹⁷ (fig. 2). Just as in Tarsus, the earliest forms of ARSW are rare at Anemurium¹⁸; only two pieces, one piece of Hayes Form 17 (?) and one piece of Hayes Form 32, have been published (fig. 3). However, in the 4th and 5th centuries AD the number and variety of this class increase. But, except in a few forms, the quantity of ARSW decreases in the 6th and 7th centuries AD and the last form that was imported to Anemurium is Hayes Form 109. On the other hand, in the Late Roman period, i.e. from the 4th century AD on, CRSW seems to be the dominant class of wares discovered at Anemurium¹⁹ (fig. 5), and LRC and

¹⁶ There is also some published material found recently at Elaiussa-Sebaste in the eastern part of Cilicia Tracheia. A.F. FERRAZOLI, *Tipologia dei reperti ceramici e aspetti delle produzioni e della circolazione dei materiali*. In: E.E. SCHNEIDER, *ELAIUSSA SEBASTE II*, 2 (Roma 2003) 649–661. — Roman ware from Astra in Rough Cilicia was discussed previously in: L. ZOROĞLU, *A Roman potter's workshop at Astra in Rough Cilicia*. *RCRF Acta* 36, 2000, 31–34.

¹⁷ WILLIAMS 1989, 38–39. — The only, but important drawback at Anemurium is that no certain habitation levels from the beginning of the Early Imperial period up to Late Antiquity have been identified in the excavated area; rather, the team cleaned the surviving buildings. This was explained in WILLIAMS 1989, 105–115, and only certain assemblages were used to support the date of the selected classes.

¹⁸ WILLIAMS 1989, 1–24.

¹⁹ To west of Cilicia Tracheia, i.e. in Pamphylia, CRSW was the dominant class of the Late Roman pottery from the 4th century AD onwards and, therefore, one can think that this class must also have been produced in this region; cf. note 10 above. — For

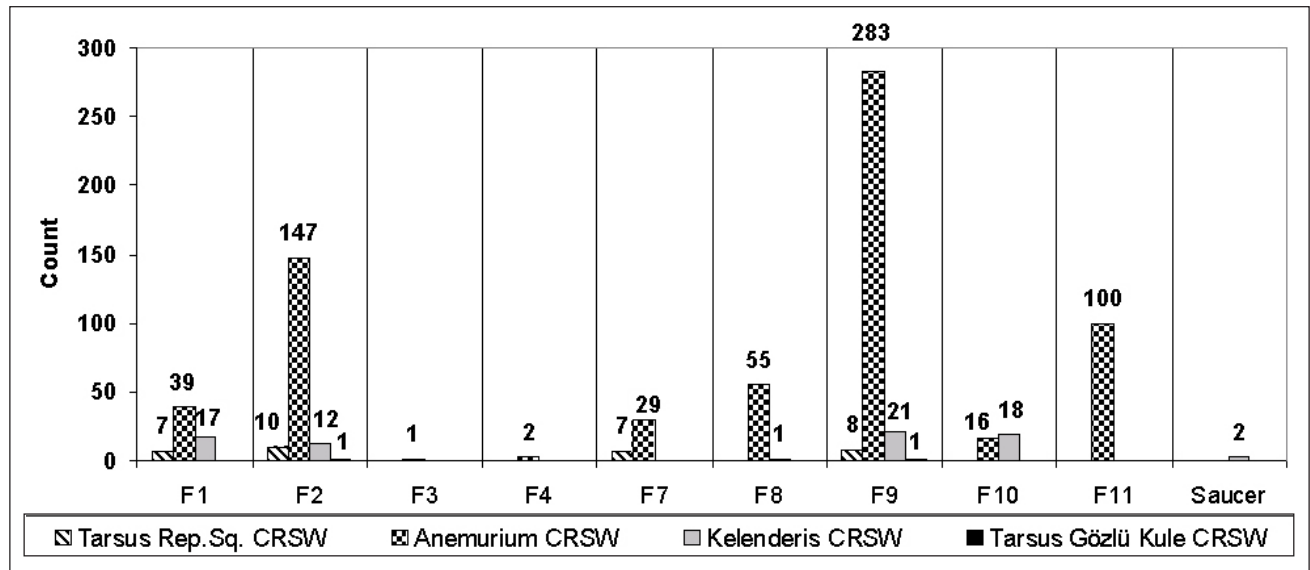


Fig. 5: CRSW in Cilicia.

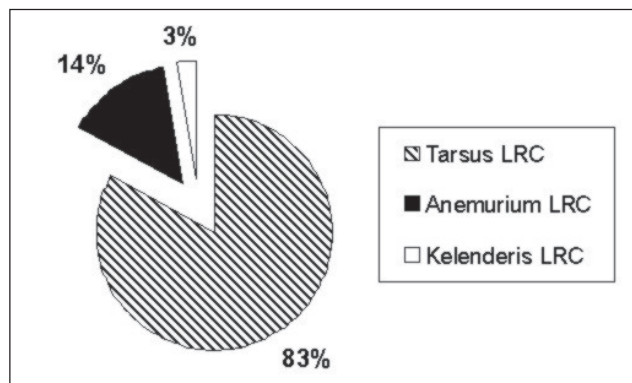


Fig. 6a: Rates of LRC (Phocaeen) Ware in Cilicia.

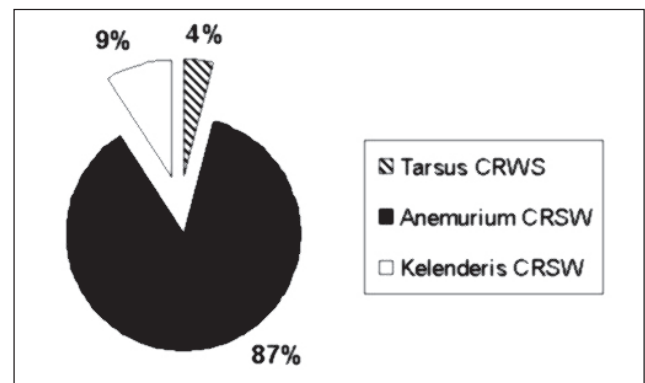


Fig. 6b: Rates of CRSW in Cilicia.

ARSW are less well represented (fig. 3–4). Moreover, although all forms of CRSW have been found there, the most popular forms seem to be Hayes Form 2, 9 and 11 (fig. 5). By contrast, there are very few examples of LRC from Anemurium, and only four forms are published²⁰. As the case in Tarsus, Hayes Form 3 seems to be the most popular one (fig. 4).

The pottery of the Roman period from the ongoing excavations in Kelenderis is extremely rich, and the conclusions given here draw only on the finds from a trench where the stratigraphy of the ancient town was determined quite well²¹. Here ESA is the leading class, and ESB and “Cypriote Sigillata” are represented in smaller quantities, which is clearly a different case from that of Anemurium (fig. 2). Middle and Late Roman levels, on the other hand, are much clearer and the earliest form of the ARSW is Hayes Form 48, unearthed in a blacksmith’s workshop that has been dated roughly to the 3rd century AD. This workshop was renovated and went on to be used in the following century, so that early forms of CRSW were also found there. As at Anemurium, this class became the leading type of the ware found in Kelenderis in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. It is

interesting to note that examples of ARSW and LRC were also found in small numbers in this trench.

Conclusion

It may be proposed that ESA seems to be the most dominant class of fine ware in the whole of Cilicia in the Early Imperial Period and, as stated above, some workshops were most probably located in the eastern part of the region. Tarsus, in

the CRSW at Perge, where it was the largest class found on the site, see N. FIRAT, So-called “Cypriot Red Slip Ware” from the habitation area at Perge (Pamphylia). *RCRF Acta* 36, 2000, 35–38; EADEM, Perge konut alanı kullanım seramigi. In: C. ABADIE-REYNAL (ed.), *Les céramiques en Anatolie aux époques hellénistiques et romaines. Actes de la Table Ronde d’Istanbul*, 23–24 mai 1996. *Varia Anatolica* 15 (Istanbul, Paris 2003) 91–95.

²⁰ Only 113 fragments of 726 pieces of CRSW were selected for publication; see: WILLIAMS 1989, 27–38.

²¹ Conclusions given here are based on the evidences from this trench in the habitation area of the ancient city that was excavated under the direction of the present author. The pottery of the Roman period from this trench will be prepared as a PhD thesis by M. Tekocak.

my opinion, is the most likely candidate for the site of these workshops, although other sigillata wares of this period – such as “Cypriote Sigillata”, ESB, Sagalassos ware, and western Sigillata – were also imported in considerable amounts. The popularity of ESA in Pedias, i.e. in the richer and more cultivated part of the region, confirms the fact that the level of social and economic prosperity was clearly superior to that in Tracheia, the poorer part of Cilicia, in the Early Imperial period.

In the Middle Roman period early forms of ARSW reached Cilicia, and in the Late Roman period other competing productions, e.g. CRSW and LRC (Phocaeen RS) ware, seem to be the predominant classes. CRSW was popular in Tracheia, in the poorer part of the region, whereas LRC was common in Pedias, the richer part of Cilicia²² (**fig. 6a–b**).

However, starting from the second half of the 7th century AD, owing to historical factors, economic and social life in Cilicia was severely disrupted and consequently the importation of luxury wares was affected in a negative way. Finally, at the beginning of the 8th century AD, damage to local production and consumption increased significantly, and this chapter in the history of pottery production in the ancient world came to an end.

²² See also HAYES 1972, 419. — But it must also be pointed out that the eastern part of Tracheia, e.g. the area between the Lamas and Kalykadnos rivers, where some major cities like Elaiussa, Diokaisereia, Seleukeia are located, is more prosperous and different from the rest of Tracheia.

Abbreviations

GOLDMAN 1950

HAYES 1972

HAYES 1985

JONES 1950

WILLIAMS 1989

H. GOLDMAN, Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus I (Princeton 1950).

J. W. HAYES, Late Roman Pottery (London 1972).

J. W. HAYES, Sigillata Orientali. In: *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica Classica e Orientale. Atlante delle Forme Ceramiche II: Ceramica Fine Romana nel Bacino Mediterraneo (Tardo Ellenismo e Primo Imperio)* (Roma 1985) 1–96.

F. JONES, The Pottery. In: GOLDMAN 1950, 149–296.

C. WILLIAMS, Anemurium, The Roman and Early Byzantine Pottery. *Subsidia Mediaevalia* 16 (Toronto 1989).