

Pergamon: Patterns of Diversification in the Pottery Production of Pergamon and its Microregion *

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Abstract

This abstract highlights the production of red slip tablewares in Roman-period Pitane (modern Çandarlı), located some 30 kilometres from Pergamon as the crow flies. Two aspects are emphasised: first, questions and observations from which the evidence for pottery production, specifically slipped tablewares, in the region may be approached. Second, these are compared both to current knowledge of production sites within the Pergamon region, and data obtained through recent archaeometrical analyses.

Pitane is known for the production of red slip tablewares during ca. the first three centuries AD since Loeschke's excavation in 1911.¹ Thus, Pitane became the first archaeologically attested production site of Roman-period red slip tablewares in the eastern Mediterranean. Çandarlı Ware² was long regarded as a distinct product that dominated the Aegean market especially during the second and third centuries AD. Progressing research prompted a re-evaluation: Çandarlı ware is not necessarily always and everywhere distinguishable from products manufactured in Pergamon itself and within the Pergamon region proper,³ which leads to the question of nomenclature. Because of observations within the last years as well as archaeometrical analyses, researchers in Pergamon now favour the umbrella term Eastern Sigillata C, echoing Kenyon's opinion.⁴ This also reflects a broader development. At least as far as the major manufacturers of red slip tablewares are concerned, a model of regional production is emerging: a number of nucleated workshops within a relatively limited geographical zone that manufactured similar products, and which in certain respects dominated the production and distribution infrastructure.⁵ The original meaning and content of a term as 'Eastern Sigillata X' are thus being renewed with new knowledge. The use of Eastern Sigillata C and Late Roman C for red slip tablewares produced within the Pergamon region therefore seems almost obvious.

This brings us to regional production organisation and the morphological repertoire shared between two or more distinct workshops. The study of red slip tablewares is moving away from what for long were considered (relatively) well defined classes that originated from a particular site or region. This framework has grown fluid with the identification of new classes across the former Roman Empire, in some cases even the very places of production.⁶ What these regionally grouped production centres from our perspective have in common, is a (partly) shared morphological repertoire, yet each with distinct features (morphologically, decoratively). Naturally this reflects our perception: we observe (or create) similarities between products from workshops A and B.

These observations nevertheless imply a set of ideas and knowledge that was shared. One aspect how this might have worked is that the inspiration was (partly) provided by those behind setting up a workshop in the first place.⁷ Yet the role of the individual potter should not be downplayed: each brought along a unique set of motoric and mental skills, a dimension echoed in a mid-3rd century AD contract from Oxyrhynchos (P. Oxy. LVIII, 3942).⁸ Elements of this contract – e.g. the contract’s limited duration – potentially suggest a scenario of itinerant potters, which in turn opens up the possibility of thinking why different workshops produced a (partly) similar repertoire. The final point concerns the role, hierarchy and output of workshops within the model of regional production. Did one workshop lead the way, providing inspiration to others? This seems to apply on a general level: Eastern Sigillata A travelled to Italy as a product and as a concept, where it was absorbed and transformed, and in turn offered inspiration to existing workshops, or prompted the emergence of new ones.⁹ Distributional evidence – geographic, diachronic, quantitative – implies that manufacturers of various sizes existed. The Late Roman C workshops at Phokaia, for example, catered for the lion’s share of production and distribution, whilst Gryneion and Pitane likely catered for more regionalised markets.¹⁰

A closer look is required at the current knowledge of both larger and smaller production sites within the Pergamon region. The potters’ quarter excavated in the Ketios Valley is surrounded by confusion concerning its period of activity, and its morphological output.¹¹ One contribution,¹² which considers Pitane as an export-focused offshoot, fails to consider the interaction between different production sites. Both sites were contemporaneous and shared a morphological repertoire, with a hybridisation of Hellenistic ‘Pergamene’ features and adopted ‘Roman’ features.¹³ Due to the publication status of the Ketios Valley and the lack of kiln sites in Pitane, a comparison of the internal workshop organisation is not possible. Also, the fabric of both is macroscopically undistinguishable, which points to (a) similar clay source(s) and/or clay preparation, only to be differentiated through analyses: “Evidently Pergamene potters did not only use the same clay sources throughout time, but also relatively identical mixtures regarding temper. Clay recipes seem to be used from generation to generation of potters”¹⁴. Small(er)-scale producers are probably represented by a kiln excavated in 1913,¹⁵ and one excavated in the ‘potter’s villa’ at Niyazi Tepe.¹⁶ Both are Hellenistic in date. Recent surveys and archaeometrical analyses produced evidence (wasters, slag) for production in Elaia from late Hellenistic times onwards.¹⁷ Also, production of ‘Çandarlı-like’ pottery has been attested at Gryneion. This survey also produced evidence for Late Roman C production in Phokaia as well as in Myrina, Elaia, Gryneion, Kyme and Çandarlı.¹⁸ Archaeometrical analyses of Late Roman C from across the Mediterranean all fit the Phokaia group, whereas Late Roman C produced in Gryneion has only been attested in Ephesos and Priene.¹⁹ Once again this supports a model in which one producer catered for a larger market, whilst various smaller-scale producers supplied local markets. As Late Roman C manufactured at Pitane has not been attested

outside the Pergamon region, it can be concluded – with some reservation – that Late Roman Pitane evolved into a smaller-scale producer, whereas Phokaia led the production and distribution of Late Roman C. This may indicate diachronic shifts in the workings and fortunes of larger- and smaller-scale regional production centres.

From the above, the following questions emerge that hopefully we will be able to investigate in the near future to understand Pitane's role within this regional framework: How was the supply of the necessary raw materials (i.e. mostly clay, water and fuel) organised, and what impact did this have on the landscape? What was the morphological repertoire made in each of these workshops, and to what extent did it relate to neighbouring workshops? Which was Pitane's contribution to the market for red slip tablewares both during the principate as well as during late antiquity?

Notes

* This extended abstract was written and submitted in 2018. In 2019–2021 three fieldwork campaigns have taken place at Çandarlı within the scope of the TransPergMikro Project (funded by the DFG): an intensive field survey in 2019–2020, and all collected artefacts that relate to local pottery manufacture were studied in 2021. The results are currently being prepared for final publication.

¹ Loeschke 1912. – Hereto recently: Domzalski 2014.

² Hayes 1972, 316–322; Hayes 1985, 71–78.

³ Japp 2009; Japp – Mommsen 2009; Japp – Schneider 2009; Japp 2013.

⁴ Engels et al. 2012; Crowfoot et al. 1957, 281–284.

⁵ The recent example of Late Roman D is a case in point: Poblome – Firat 2011.

⁶ e.g. Sagalassos: Poblome 1999.

⁷ Poblome – Brulet 2005.

⁸ Cockle 1981.

⁹ Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 416–421.

¹⁰ Empereur – Picon 1986; Mayet – Picon 1986.

¹¹ According to Erdemgil (Erdemgil 1980; Erdemgil – Ozenir 1982) production took place from the 3rd century BC till the 4th century AD and partially till the 6th century AD. Bounegru (Bounegru 2003) on the contrary postulates two phases of production and places the first phase between the mid-3rd and the end of the 1st century BC, and the second phase, after an interruption during which the area was used as a necropolis, between the 4th and the 1st half of the 6th century AD. This phasing does not suit the published chronological distribution of diagnostic and datable Eastern Sigillata C fragments published by Poblome, Erdemgil and Bounegru in 2001 (Poblome et al. 2001). According to this study, sigillata production in the Ketios Valley took place between 150 BC and 150 AD with a peak between 50 BC and 75 AD.

¹² Poblome et al. 2001.

¹³ Japp 2013, 171; Engels et al. 2015.

¹⁴ Japp 2013, 167.

¹⁵ Hepding 1952; Schäfer 1968, 26 f.

¹⁶ Karagöz et al. 1986, 106–108.

¹⁷ Pirson et al. 2015, 38.

¹⁸ The presence of Late Roman C in Çandarlı has been proven once again within the “Kane Regional Harbour Survey” in 2015 (Laufer 2016, 182–184).

¹⁹ Empereur – Picon 1986; Mayet – Picon 1986.

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