

A New Context of Late Roman Pottery from Kelenderis: A Preliminary Discussion

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As Strabo mentioned (Strabo 14.5.2–8) there were quite a lot of harbor towns on the shores of Rough Cilicia both suitable for sheltering and for logistic facilities. One of these was Kelenderis located between Seleuceia on the Calycadnus and Anemurium where there are small and large coves in the vicinity to protect the sails from the danger of the winds and one of these was used as the main harbor of the town (fig. 1).¹

Greek sources mention that the Samians founded Kelenderis; but new literary and archaeological documents reveal that contacts with both the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean World encompassing Cyprus and Central Anatolian Plateau seems to have been started earlier than this time.² Transport vases coming from the cemeteries and the settlement area of the town are important archaeological materials to prove which overseas contacts Kelenderis had from the late 8th century BC up to the end of the Late Roman Era.

The topography of Kelenderis and its hinterland comprised of rocky hills, which are covered with pine, cedar and oak trees. Therefore, this topography made impossible for field cultivation here, but timbers and other substances like resins and acorn obtained from the forests were important productions in the region even today.³ Beside these, there must be also production of wine and olive oil, textile made of goat hair in the countryside like today. It is also probable that most of these productions were exported from the harbor of Kelenderis. It may also be proposed that the principal reason to establish a garrison in Meydancık Kale on the hinterland of Kelenderis by the Persians in the 5th and 4th, then by the Ptolemaic Egypt in the 3rd century BC based mainly on the requirement to control both sea routes and the to obtain of the natural resources produced in the region.⁴ It is also certain that the role of Kelenderis on the organization of local productions activities and exportation of goods gathered from the local resources was very effective not only in town but also in the countryside, and, certainly based on this situation, Pliny (*NH* V.22) quoted Kelenderis with its region as: '*Regio Celenderitis*'.

Another interesting archaeological remain revealing the importance of Kelenderis as a harbor is a mosaic pavement discovered in 1990, on which the town's itself is depicted.⁵ There we see main buildings, such as a shipyard placed on the promontory of the peninsula, and a stoa, which was certainly used to be a storage building for exports and imports, a bath behind of this on the side.

Conclusively, all these evidences support that Kelenderis was a small town in the center part of Rough Cilicia with its suitable harbor on the routes between East and West and due to this location, it was active commercially where import and export goods from various coastal settlements and from inland were gathered and distributed in antiquity.



Fig. 1: General view of Kelenderis with its main harbor.

It is a pity there are very scanty documents on the sorts and capacity of the productions of the town itself. As mentioned, being a harbor town, there must be workshops of artisans, such as carpenters, who constructed and repaired boats, and ironsmiths produced implements for shipbuilding.⁶ On the other hand, as a settlement on the coast, another important production seems to be salt obtained through the evaporation of the sea-water.⁷ Another occupation of the inhabitants was certainly fishery like today. This proposal was being proved by the excavations in various parts of the town where various artifacts which were used as fishing equipment, such as fish hooks, stone and clay sinkers and bone shuttles for knitting and repairing fish-net came into light. It is also probable that, except the daily needs, especially in the time of exploitations of the marine resources, fish processing, that means salting fish and other by-products based on the fishery seems to be another possible business line.

Due to the lack of the literary sources and archeological evidences, this last proposal on the production of salted fish was only a hypothesis up to 2014. Then, when we started to excavate in a new part of the West Necropolis, where several built-tombs dated to the late 2nd and 3rd century AD were unearthed (fig. 2), some new evidences on the fish-industry in town have come into light. The first thing we have noticed is that the tombs here have lost more or less their original plan and some of the walls of them were either renewed or new walls in different character than the original one were added inside and outside of the burial chambers. It must also be noted that there were no burials or their remains except a broken sarcophagus and some deformed burial gifts were found without their original situation. Instead of these, different materials, such as clay basins, small and big jugs, storage vats and transport amphorae, mainly LR1 type (fig. 3), including to a few bronze fish-hooks, bone shuttles and clay sinkers were found in the fill of the rooms of these buildings.



Fig. 2: Excavation area in the West Necropolis. 1 Sacred way; 2 Plan of the tomb with atrium; 3 Plan of barrel vaulted tomb with mosaic; 4 Court of the barrel vaulted tomb; 5 Vat for salting fish.

These materials cited here are dated generally to the 6th and 7th century AD, that means they are from the late antiquity.⁸ This date is also supported by the coins found in the same contexts.

Depending on these evidences and historical events in the region, it may be concluded that the monumental tombs of the Roman Period in this part of the necropolis were plundered sometime in the second half of the 3rd century AD⁹ and this area was left unoccupied for a while, then, probably in the 6th century AD, these older tomb buildings were almost cleaned, partly repaired and added new rooms if required in order to use them for different purposes, especially to be workshops. So, most of the materials,



Fig. 3: Pottery found in the fill of the workshops.

especially pottery and coins and other small finds discovered here are mostly belong to this second phase of these buildings, in other words, when they were converted into workshops.

Excavations in this area have also shown that another catastrophe took place in this second phase and the buildings were destroyed again especially by fire. According to the situation we have encountered, the materials used by the owners of these workshops were left behind in their original situation and the area was not settled for a long time. The event, which brought the end of this second phase, must have occurred in the late 7th century AD, which may be connected with the Arab invasion.¹⁰ So, the materials we

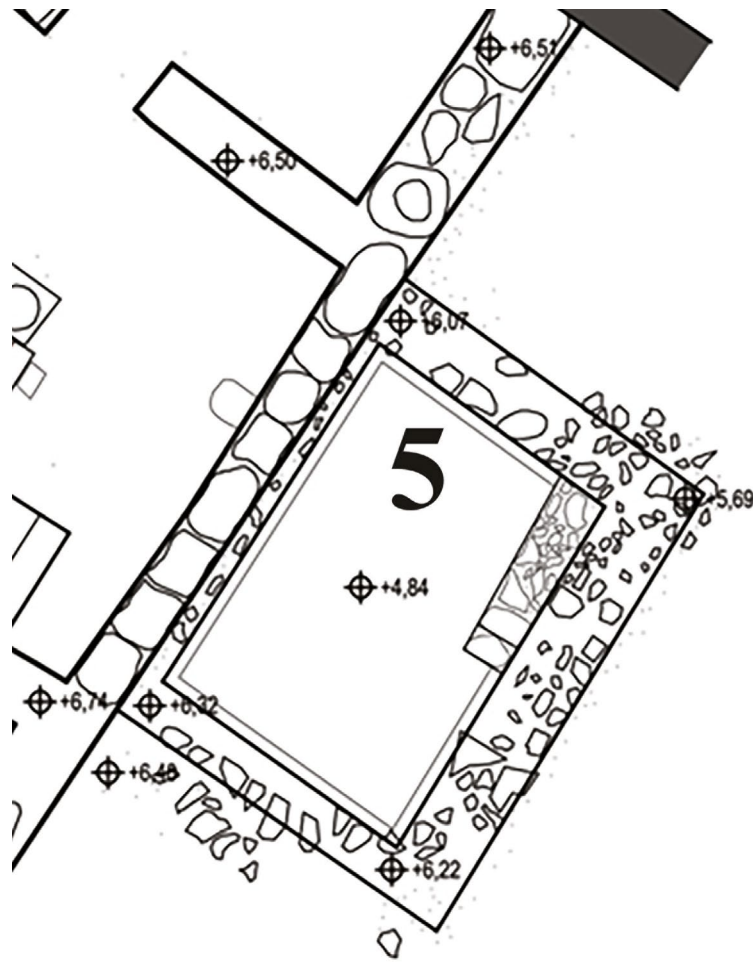


Fig. 4: Plan of the vat.

have uncovered here are completely prior from the fire, almost from the first half of the 7th century AD.

Now the question arises what was produced in these workshops, which contained various type of vases, especially transport vases, big jars and storage vats.

In the excavation season in 2014, after cleaning of a tomb with atrium (fig. 2, No. 2), the trench was extended southeastward and a rectangular pond measuring 3.70 m long, 2.40 m wide and 1.50 m deep was unearthed (fig. 2, No. 5).¹¹ Its walls which are made of irregular stones with mortar, are quite thick (0.55 m) and their inner surface and the ground were plastered with a waterproof mortar, certainly to prevent leakage (figs. 4–6). It is also important to note that internal angles are rounded with the same material. There is also a low and short wall (1 m long 0.40 m high and 0.50 m wide) placed at the southeast corner running with the southwest wall of the pond, which certainly made possible to use as a base for a wooden ladder to go down. This short wall



Fig. 5: View of the vat from south.



Fig. 6: View of the vat from north.



Fig. 7: LR1 Amphora (small shape) from the workshop.

was also plastered. Taking into consideration the shape and architecture of this pond as well as its location near the workshops, it may be proposed that it was used as a vat for salting fish.

It is a pity there is no close parallel of this kind of fish-salting ponds in Cilicia.¹² Its architecture may be compared better with the fish salting vats from Roman Spain, North Africa and even from Crimea in the northern Black Sea, especially the plastered walls and ground, and the rounded internal angles are comparable.¹³ If this comparison is accepted, then it may be suggested that this pond in the West Necropolis of Kelenderis had served probably as a vat for the production of salted fish.

On the other hand, this comparison will also help to explain why so much pottery, especially amphorae, storage vases and jugs were uncovered in the rooms of these workshops. It is clear that these vases were related to the production activity here and, in my opinion, for instance, LR1 type trade amphorae (fig. 3, 7), which is the well-known transport vessel in whole Cilicia during the late antiquity, must have been used for salted fish and sausage.¹⁴ Storage vats¹⁵ (fig. 8) uncovered together with those pottery were certainly used to keep the salted fish, probably for fermentation purposes,



Fig. 8: Storage vat from the workshop.

to produce sausage and perhaps even garum. Small jugs (fig. 3) were used to get the sausage from the storage vats to put into the export vases.¹⁶

Conclusion

In this short discussion we have aimed to present mainly local one of the local productions, e.g. salting fish, of a small town on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and its relation with the pottery uncovered in the workshops placed in the West Necropolis. Although only a small area has been excavated here, but it became clear that the monumental tombs of the Roman Imperial Period were converted into workshops after their plundering probably in the second half of the 3rd century AD.

Each room of these workshops contained mainly amphorae of LR1 type, storage vats and various small and big jugs. It is generally accepted that these vases, especially amphorae and storage vats were used to store liquids like wine or olive oil. But when a vat was discovered nearby of the workshops, then another possibility came into consideration: A sector in this area was established for fish processing. It is clear that the only one fishpond is not enough to support this proposal, so the trench around of this pond needs to be expanded to search for further vats to reach a final conclusion.

Notes

¹ On Kelenderis see: Zoroğlu 1994; see also annual reports published in Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı

² On the localization of Kelenderis inside of the boundaries of the Tarhundašša Kingdom in the Late Bronze Age see: Dinçol et. al. 2000, 1–30.

³ During the excavations in 2018 in Kelenderis we have unearthed a transport amphora of LR1A type inside and outside of which were charcoal-like remains, possibly resins. If it will be proved that this material was resin which was used both to cover especially inner wall of the export vases in antiquity. see: Mills-White 1989, 37–44.

⁴ On this subject see: Zoroğlu 1999

⁵ Zoroğlu 2015, 199–224.

⁶ A shipyard depicted on the Kelenderis mosaic on the promontory supports this proposal; see: op.cit. 220, fig. 19.

⁷ We know, for instance, salt was monopolized by the government in the last century of our time and it was prohibited to obtain salt from the sea-water without legal permission.

⁸ On the recent excavations in the West Necropolis of Kelenderis and on the preliminary reports see: Zoroğlu 2018, 3–7 fig. 11a.

⁹ Towns on the coast like Kelenderis were under various threats such as pirates from sea and banditry coming from the inland of the region.

¹⁰ It seems that this catastrophe was expected by the people living here, and no skeletal remains were found in these rooms. It was generally accepted that this was the Arab invasion around 680 AD and the coins found here support this date; on the beginning of the Arab invasion of Cilicia see: Hild – Hellenkemper 1990, 43–46.

¹¹ Zoroğlu 2016, 255 f. figs. 2 and 7. One of the historical event in the second half of the third century AD was the invasions of the Parthians under King Shapur I (241–272) in 260–261 AD and it is also likely that the tombs in the West Necropolis of Kelenderis were plundered in this time. On the Shapur's invasion and plundering of Kelenderis and its environs in his third expedition mentioned on the rock reliefs at Naksh-e Rostam see, Maricq 1958, 312.

¹² There is a probable remain of a fish salting vat in Pompeipolis near Mersin which was discovered in one of the shops on the colonnaded street. I have not seen this unpublished remain and the information was given kindly by Professor R. Yağcı, director of the Soli-Pompeipolis Excavation Project.

¹³ On the fish processing and trade: Marzano 2013, 89–111 figs. 14–16; Trakadas 2005, 47–82; Højte 2005, 133–160 figs. 8. 11. 14–16; Curtis 1984, 431–436. It is known that salted fish and sausage were popular in the Roman world. According to the process salted small fish was kept in this type of vats for a certain time, then, when they were salted enough, they were filled in the storage vats. After the fermentation of the product, especially garum, it was filled in the small bottles, and amphorae were used to transport salted fish.

¹⁴ We have hundreds of fragments and substantial whole vases in Kelenderis up today and only two sub-types are in question: One is bigger and almost oval (H.0.60-065 m), the other smaller and almost cylindrical (0.45 m); on the discussion of the the types see: Alkaç 2012.

¹⁵ For a similar storage vat from Anemurium see, Williams 1998, 82 fig. 49 (No: 489).

¹⁶ Although no kilns have been attested yet, countless fragments of misfired pottery have come to light every excavation season in Kelenderis. One group of these finds are the jugs and small jugs with a knob underside of the foot.

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