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Coloured Ceramics of the Caliphs: A new look at the Abbasid pottery finds from the old Gözlükule excavations at Tarsus

Bagci, Y.; Bagci Y.

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- 1- The early Islamic pottery finds of the 1935-1947 Gözlükule excavations show that the mound in Tarsus was integrated into the Abbasid Caliphate (c. mid 8th – mid 10th century), in particular from a technological and socio-economic point of view.
- 2- Combining the ceramic material of the old and the new excavations on the Gözlükule mound at Tarsus holds a great potential for a better understanding of the archaeological pottery assemblages excavated at this site.
- 3- Regardless of the selected preservation of the archaeological finds practiced during the 1935-1947 Gözlükule excavations (decorated and glazed pieces were retained), the variety and the quantity of the ceramics indicate that the site was a significant consumption centre, and it is very likely that pottery was produced in Tarsus. These phenomena are in fact congruent with the general industrialisation of towns in the eastern Mediterranean during the early Islamic period (c. mid 7th – mid 10th C.E.)
- 4- Although historiographical studies of the *thughūr* (Arab-Byzantine frontier) have anticipated lively exchange with the Byzantines, mainly through local trade, this idea cannot be traced in the pottery finds of the Gözlükule mound, because these artefacts belong almost exclusively to the ceramic traditions developed in the Abbasid Caliphate (i.e. “the Samarra Horizon Ceramic Repertoire”, Unglazed Moulded Ware, Brittle Ware). The imported finewares from Syria and Iraq show commercial interaction with the heartland of the early Muslim Empire. Furthermore, Byzantine ceramics dated to the 9th – 10th century are until now not recorded among the medieval pottery assemblage of the old excavations.
- 5- The introduction of new classes of polychrome glazed table wares in the Middle East in the Abbasid period was not an *ad hoc* phenomenon but a longer process that approximately stretched over a century, between the 9th and the 10th century.
- 6- From a technological point of view, the morphological components such as the fabric, the shape and the decoration of some pottery types of the Abbasid period, including the table wares of the so-called “Samarra Horizon Ceramic Repertoire” and the cooking ware (Brittle Ware), demonstrate common skills and know-hows about ceramic production.
- 7- From a socio-economic point of view, the wide distribution of certain classes of Abbasid pottery and the production of their imitations contributed to the development of a shared Abbasid *koiné* stretching between the western Mediterranean to Central Asia, which shed further light on the connectivity of the early Muslims.
- 8- Early Islamic culinary practices are an understudied topic, especially from an archaeological point of view. This thesis has provided a preliminary proposal for diet and dining habits on the Gözlükule mound in Tarsus during early

Islamic times by using a multi-disciplinary approach combining pottery evidence with pictorial material and texts. Further research, including archaeozoology and archaeobotany in particular, will inevitably help to gain a more complete understanding of consumption patterns on the Gözlükule mound in the early Islamic period.

- 9- In Turkey medieval archaeology is still mainly restrained to the Byzantine and the Seljuk periods. However, the Anatolian plateau was a hub of various multi-faceted cultural encounters including the Abbasids, the Ilkhanids, the Mamluks, the Italians, to name a few. It is important to integrate these other dynasties and communities into the field of research.
- 10- The study of the medieval material of old excavations contributes to the field in two significant ways. First, it fosters new archaeological approaches seeking to examine old excavations and their finds through a new window, in the light of recent publications and body of knowledge and unpublished archival documents among others. Second, it reinserts this particular type of archaeological data, which would otherwise have been left aside due to its poor stratigraphy, into current scholarship in an innovative and effective way.
- 11- The movement of populations is a situation that is deeply rooted in history. One example was the Arab-Byzantine frontier which constituted a melting pot in terms of the cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of its inhabitants, forming a dynamic zone with its own folklore. The reactions to the refugee crisis, in particular, the rising fear against immigrants, urges us to reflect on the ways through which cultural diversity and inclusivity can be thoroughly incorporated into our society.
- 12- Recently, more and more scholars have lost their jobs in universities in Turkey primarily because they signed the treaty of The Academics for Peace which condemned the oppression and the violence that are inflicted upon the Kurdish community in eastern Turkey. This statement seeks to raise attention and to invite the scientific community to support the academics in Turkey by showing solidarity against the disquieting and inhumane purge of their colleagues by the Turkish government (<https://barisicinakademisyenler.net>).