

NB – UNEDITED CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Late Hellenistic pottery of Ephesus. Developments and tendencies

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The paper deals with the phenomenon of the Late Hellenistic pottery production of Ephesus (2nd-1st century BC). Only in this short period the Ephesian pottery industry achieved a leading position in the Eastern Mediterranean. The aim of the presentation is to look behind the evidence asking for the socio-economic reasons for this unique development in the history of Ephesian ceramic manufacture. In the first part several classes like the relief-bowls, the Ephesus-lamps, the so-called grey ware with black glaze and the bichrome glazed ware will be discussed. Additionally the relation between Pergamene and Ephesian white slipped ware and pottery with appliqué decoration shall be re-examined.

An important aspect is the fact, that the local raw materials are of very bad quality and had to be treated by adding certain components in a certain mixture for the production of fine wares. The result of this necessity are very homogenous fabrics, which were used for the above mentioned classes. As far neither a kiln or workshop nor the production area could be revealed by archaeological investigations. But the geomagnetic surveys, which have been done in the area east of the upper city outside the defensive wall and in the harbour region, indicate workshop quarters.

The Late Hellenistic pottery production should be seen under the general economic development in the 2nd and 1st century BC. Building activity throughout the city and the extension of the harbour are significant marks for the rise and the prosperity of Ephesus in this period.

A remarkable change took place in the early Imperial time, when Ephesus nearly immediately lost its position as an export orientated production centre of high value pottery. The workshops shifted to the Meander valley, where raw material of much higher quality was available for the now increasing Sigillata industry. For a short period the Ephesian potters tried to resist this development by producing hybrid vessels combining Hellenistic decoration techniques and Roman shapes and the other way around. But the success story of the ESB could not be stemmed and finally the Ephesian fine ware production came to an end.