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Neglected Ceramics: An overview on the Hellenistic Pottery from Amisus

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The southern Pontus represents the most underdeveloped area in the Black Sea archaeology. The reason for this lies not only in the lack of systematical excavations but also in the generally disinterest of archaeologists for this region. Then, archaeological materials, which fill increasingly the store-rooms and depots of the Turkish museums since beginning of the last century, remain unstudied although they offer an enormous potential for scholars.

The Hellenistic ceramics from Amisus mostly come from the excavations which have been carried out in 1908 by Théodore Macridy, the former conservator of the archeological museum in Istanbul. Apart from these materials, there are also some chance finds or ceramics from salvage excavations, of which the number is increasing year for year.

This paper aims to give an overview on the unpublished material from Amisus. It should be considered as a starting point of a much needed detailed research. The pottery collections from the excavation of 1908, still kept at the Museum of Istanbul, consists of hundreds of fragments, mostly late Hellenistic fine ware of Mediterranean origin: black glazed vessels with west slope decoration, Pergamene appliqué ware, Megarian bowls, lagynoi, but also a considerable collection of stamped amphora handles. In addition, there are also very large amounts of local Hellenistic pottery, so called Galatians ware, which remain out of the consideration in this paper. Due to lack of any archaeological record these pottery collections are of limited significance. We have no information leading to relative chronological subdivisions and indicating to areas excavated.

The only well documented contexts with pottery come from the recent rescue excavations. Apart from the well known Early Hellenistic tomb with rich gold grave gifts and clay vessels the only datable context with pottery I could establish in another grave, immediately after its discovery during building construction works in 1997. Possibly a female deceased was buried in a terracotta coffin with two *lagynoi*, four *unguenteria* and a plate. A coin enclosed into the coffin is datable to the first quarter of the 1st century BC.

Limited as the evidence of the well documented pottery contexts the huge amounts of the material at least reflect the orientation of the pottery uses and productions in Amisus.

As well they serve to reveal interrelationship between the Black Sea region and the Mediterranean world and to enrich the data of the Hellenistic Pottery.