

# ὄρμος

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PARIDE PARRAVANO

## The Internal Frontier of Late Roman Isauria: Integration, Resistance, and Economic Expansion

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### *Introduction*

This work offers a synthesis of the socioeconomic processes of Late Roman Isauria using a regional perspective: it is able to enrich the general picture of the trajectories of the imperial system with nuances, highlighting the dialectic between phenomena and underlying structures, and therefore the complexity of historical processes. The analysis of ideological discourses, episodes of integration and resistance, and material data from the study of production structures and transport containers is therefore useful to identify and attempt to explain the characteristics of a peculiar reality, characterised by antithetical processes.

### *1. Writing the history of a region*

Socioeconomic trajectories developed within ancient empires at different speeds and in different ways, linked to the characteristics of the ecological sectors that constituted them<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the region, as a sum of contexts resulting from the interaction between human groups, production, and the environment, turns out to be the ideal heuristic tool for the study of such trajectories. This local interaction also responded to global demands, arising from the responses of communities to the processes of *longue durée*, favoured above all by maritime communications<sup>2</sup>. Paradoxically, despite the extreme regionalisation of processes caused by geomorphological fragmentation, the regions of the ancient Mediterranean experienced significant phenomena of connectivity<sup>3</sup>.

Rather than by its political borders, therefore, the region is defined by the interaction of human groups within a specific physical geography<sup>4</sup>. This interaction

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, CAMERON – WARD-PERKINS – WHITBY 2000, 363 and foll.

<sup>2</sup> HORDEN – PURCELL 2000.

<sup>3</sup> HORDEN – PURCELL 2000; SHAW 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Febvre in BURKE (ed.) 1973. The complex dynamics that this interaction entails were al-



is based on mass factors, institutional factors, and events (*à-la-Vilar*): the former includes both the masses of men and women, i.e. demography, as well as the masses of goods, i.e. the economy, and the masses of narratives, i.e. phenomena of mentality and opinion<sup>5</sup>. In the field of classical antiquity studies, taking these factors into account has allowed the perspicuous analysis of macro- and micro-regional relations such as those existing between Baetica and Mauretania Tingitana<sup>6</sup>, between Western Sicily and Proconsular Africa<sup>7</sup>, between Bithynia and Thrace<sup>8</sup>, between Cilicia and the Levant<sup>9</sup>, or within Boeotia<sup>10</sup>, within Tyrrhenian Italy<sup>11</sup>, within the regions of Southern Asia Minor<sup>12</sup>.

Although in the following pages the synthesis of regional processes will also take into consideration institutional factors and events, it will be above all the masses of goods and narratives that will act as guides in the exploration of the interweaving of antithetical processes typical of Late Roman Isauria. Here, in fact, phenomena of integration and resistance coexisted with a notable economic expansion, witnessed by the flourishing of rural areas and the massive production of a new amphora form: neither of these would be comprehensible outside the particular scenario offered by the morphology of the region.

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ready evident to ancient authors. Strabo, for example, basing himself on the linguistic and cultural element, overcame the difficulty of precisely identifying the regions of Asia Minor, caused by the movements of peoples, the contiguity of different groups, and the Roman administrative reorganisation: in doing so, he established a fundamental link between geography and history, SALMERI 2000.

<sup>5</sup> VILAR 2018.

<sup>6</sup> SHAW 2006.

<sup>7</sup> SALMERI 2005, 190; see also SALMERI (ed.) 1992.

<sup>8</sup> SALMERI 2005, 190.

<sup>9</sup> SALMERI 2020; 2024. See also LUND 2013 on the connection between Rough Cilicia and Western Cyprus, and ŞENOL 2008 on the commercial relations between Cilicia and Egypt in the Roman period.

<sup>10</sup> BINTLIFF 2007, 664-676.

<sup>11</sup> TCHERNIA 1986; 2016, 297-301; WITSCHERL 2004, 261-265.

<sup>12</sup> In general, on the contribution of regional studies to the reconstruction of the empire's economic trajectories, see DE BLOIS – RICH (eds.) 2002; WITSCHERL 2004; BINTLIFF 2007; LAVAN (ed.) 2015.

On the regions of Asia Minor see MITCHELL 1993; SALMERI 2000; MITCHELL – KATSARI (eds.) 2005; ELTON – REGER (eds.) 2007. See also D'AGATA 2017, 2019; D'AGATA *et al.* 2020, 2023, and SALMERI 2020, 2024 on Iron Age and Roman Cilicia respectively; EQUINI SCHNEIDER (ed.) 2004, 2010 on Elaiussa Sebaste and Rough Cilicia in the Roman and Late Roman periods; RAUH 2023 on the latest results of the Rough Cilicia Survey Project; VARINLIOĞLU 2008a, 2008b, 2011 on Late Roman Isauria; MITCHELL 1995 on the Pisidia region in Roman and Late Roman periods; ARENA 2017 on Pisidia, Lycaonia, and Isauria in Roman and Late Roman periods; PILHOFER 2018 on Christianity in the region of the Calycadnum river; BREYTENBACH – ZIMMERMANN 2018 on Christianity in Lycaonia.



## 2. *The narrative of the internal frontier: integration and resistance in Isauria*

By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, numerous episodes of uprisings and turmoil had been occurring in Isauria<sup>13</sup>. The *Notitia Dignitatum* confirms the need for prompt military intervention: two regular legions were headquartered in the area (*II* and *III Isaura*), plus other auxiliary forces, for a total ranging between 1,000 and 2,000 men<sup>14</sup>. Among the pacified provinces, only Egypt boasted a superior military commitment.

One of the major uprisings occurred in 368, when, after a long raid against the cities of coastal Cilicia and Pamphylia, Isaurian brigands were caught by the Roman army. However, despite the unfavourable balance of forces, as the Isaurians demanded it, parley had to be initiated<sup>15</sup>: this indicates how much the Isaurians were feared. This was the outcome of the violent contrast between the mountain and plain dwellers: in the ancient urbanocentric mentality, the profile of the shepherd and that of the brigand or rebel, both deeply associated with mountains, largely overlapped<sup>16</sup>.

Nevertheless, the brigand/rebel has to be conceived as an ideal-type: the behaviours of conformity and resistance were determined by the social praxis, but individual psychology and personal experiences, as well as the physical and socio-economic context in which they developed, also played a role.

The geography of Cilicia was characterised by marked geomorphological differences<sup>17</sup>. It consisted of a large, alluvial plain to the East – *Cilicia pediás/campestris* (plain) – and a mountainous area to the West – *Cilicia trachêia/aspera* (rough)<sup>18</sup>: the latter, with some territorial additions, became the province of *Isauria* during the Late Roman period. It is noteworthy that, in the new administrative system, the three provinces of *Isauria*, *Cilicia Prima*, and *Cilicia Secunda* became part of the Diocese of Oriens, and not of the Diocese of Asia<sup>19</sup>: strong cultural and economic links connected the area with Antioch and the Syrian world, as well as with Palestine<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> HA, *Tyr. Trig.*, XXVI, 6-7: *denique post Trebellianum pro barbari habentur; etenim in medio Romani nomini solo regio forum novo genere custodiarum quasi limes includitur, loci defensa non hominibus*; see also MITCHELL 1993, 234-235.

<sup>14</sup> *Not. Or.* XXIX, 7-8; SHAW 1990, 238.

<sup>15</sup> *Amm.* XXVII, 9, 7. Other uprisings had taken place in 353 (*Amm.* XIV, 2), and (probably) in 359 (*Amm.* XIX, 13).

<sup>16</sup> See the discussion in THORNTON 1995.

<sup>17</sup> JEAN 2001; see also SYME 1939.

<sup>18</sup> Strabo XIV, 5, 1; *Hdt* II, 34, 3; VI, 95, 3; HILD – HELLENKEMPER 1990, 23-26; BINI *et al.* 2018, 2.

<sup>19</sup> HILD – HELLENKEMPER 1990, 34.

<sup>20</sup> SALMERI 2020, 104-110; 2024; PARRAVANO *forth. a*; *forth. b*.



In Rough Cilicia/Isauria, the Taurus chain creates a landscape of ravines, peaks, narrow valleys, and few significant urban centres: the perfect environment for shepherds, brigands, and rebels, so it is hardly surprising that Isaurian unruliness and upheavals were felt as dangerous as the threat posed by the *gentes externae*<sup>21</sup>. The segregation from civil life was a typical sign of protest and opposition<sup>22</sup>. This dynamics shows the resistance not only to the political, but also to the cultural hegemony enforced by the central power: the *pólis* played a pivotal role in tax collection and maintenance of public order, but also in the spreading of civic and urban values<sup>23</sup>.

These values were upheld and justified by the devotional element: since the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, the sanctuary of the martyr Thekla at Meriamlik was an important pilgrimage destination, and it acquired a new monumentality during the 5<sup>th</sup> and the early 6<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>24</sup>. The hagiography of the saint provides evidence of the worldview of the typical city of the Graeco-Roman East, through the bombastic praise of the *metrópolis* of the province, Seleucia ad Calycadnum<sup>25</sup>. Also, in a major episode, Thekla is depicted fighting off the bandits<sup>26</sup>. Far from being a simply hyperbolic image, this episode was the literary focus of a symbolic discourse that concealed the material concerns of the central power. The defence of urban life, the marginalisation of non-urban elements, namely the bandits<sup>27</sup>, and thus the control of the masses, were exerted through the dismissal of the brigands as enemies, deviants, barbarians reluctant to adopt temperance, culture, and politeness<sup>28</sup>.

However, the struggle did not remain on a purely ideological or literary level. In 475 a violent uprising, supported by the Senate, forced the Emperor Flavius Zeno, of Isaurian origin, to seek refuge in his homeland<sup>29</sup>. This fortunate Isaurian had changed his name from *Tarasicodissa* to the more urban Zeno in order to become part of the military élite of the Empire<sup>30</sup>. He had risen to the purple in 474, but his reign had been marked by the conflict with two other high military leaders

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<sup>21</sup> Prisc. *f.* 10. On the raids and upheavals of the Isaurians: Philostorg. *HE*, XI, 8; Yesh. *Stil. Chron.*, 23. See also the juridic evidence: for instance, *CTh* IX, 35, 7, which allowed the torturing of Isaurians even during the Christian festivities, or *Nov. Iust.* 25, which reported physical resistance to public officials in Isauria and Lycaonia; see also ARENA 2004.

<sup>22</sup> HOPWOOD 2009, 182; MILLAR 2006, 163.

<sup>23</sup> MAZZA 1973, 92 and foll.; VEYNE 1984; LEWIN 1991, 170-177; MITCHELL 1993, 198-226; LIEBESCHUETZ 2001; HOPWOOD 2009, 184; MECCELLA 2021.

<sup>24</sup> KRISTENSEN 2016, 230; PILHOFER 2018, 220-227.

<sup>25</sup> *Vita* 27: see MILLAR 2006, 29-30; VARINLIOĞLU 2008b, 293.

<sup>26</sup> *Mir.* 5: see KRISTENSEN 2016, 249; PILHOFER 2018, 205-220.

<sup>27</sup> SHAW 1990, 245.

<sup>28</sup> In particular, self control (*enkrâteia*) was as much a civic as a Christian virtue: see Paul. *Gal.*, V, 23; MOTTA 2017; BREYTENBACH – ZIMMERMANN 2018, 111.

<sup>29</sup> ELTON 2000b, 398.

<sup>30</sup> MITCHELL 2000, 138.



of Isaurian origin, *Illus* and *Trocundes*<sup>31</sup>. These three Isaurians acted like tribal chieftains, transferring to a higher scale their traditional modality of resolving rivalries, managing power and personal retinues<sup>32</sup>. On the one hand, this is an example of the resilience of the tribal mentality and customs<sup>33</sup>; on the other hand, it highlights the willingness to assimilate in the Empire, to exploit the resulting possibilities of enrichment and empowerment.

By the same token, forms of integration had been taking place since the beginning of Roman rule, when the region witnessed a process of urbanisation with new foundations; but also the existing cities, such as *Isaura Nova* and *Claudiopolis*, acquired the panoply of public structures that characterised the *póleis* of the Greek East<sup>34</sup>. Prominent local leaders became part of the Roman power structure assuming the priesthood of the Imperial cult<sup>35</sup>: converging interests between central power and local élites were creating new forms of cooperation. Then, after the Isaurian war that harassed the first years of Emperor Anastasius, Isaurians were hired in building activities, such as the projects of the monastery of Saint Sabbas in Palestine (501), that of Saint Symeon the Younger near Antioch (541-551), and the renovation of the Hagia Sophia dome<sup>36</sup>. Another form of integration, whilst harmful for the central authority, was the scope of violence: Isauria was one of the main basins of recruitment of *buccellarii*. In the desperate struggle against the rural patronage, the central power prohibited the recruitment of personal *militiae* from Isauria<sup>37</sup>.

### 3. *Vitality of the Isaurian countryside: rural settlements, amphorae production, and mode of distribution*

A significant rural vitality distinguished Cilicia and Isauria during the centuries under examination. In the Southeastern portion of Isauria the archaeological investigations have evidenced a pattern of scattered settlement<sup>38</sup>, based on rural centres devoted to the exploitation of natural resources (Fig. 1). A fascinating find,

<sup>31</sup> MARTINDALE 1980, 586-590: *Illus*!; ELTON 2000b; MARTINDALE 1980, 1127: *Fl. Appalius Illus Trocundes*.

<sup>32</sup> HOPWOOD 2009, 190.

<sup>33</sup> BLEEKER 2022, 136; see also ELTON 2000a.

<sup>34</sup> RAUH *et al.* 2009; HOFF – TOWNSEND (eds.) 2013; see also SPANU 2020.

<sup>35</sup> LENSKI 1999, 434; ELTON 2002, 179-182.

<sup>36</sup> VARINLIOĞLU 2008b, 295; LENSKI 1999, 434. At Corycus, 456 inscriptions have been brought to light from the necropolis: among them, 6% belonged to marble carvers, sculptors, carpenters, tile makers, expert miners, but also superintendents and architects.

<sup>37</sup> *CJ IX*, 12, 10.

<sup>38</sup> AYDINOĞLU 2010; HOFF – TOWNSEND (ed.) 2013.



a stone fragment re-employed in the pavement of the main road connecting two of these settlements, Akhayat and Işıkkale, is inscribed with the term *komópolis*, which identifies a reality halfway between village and city. Centres such these adopted an urban architectural language: monumental *façades*, three-naves basilicas, tetrapyla, in a non-perishable material, the local limestone<sup>39</sup>. Although the *komopóleis* are hard to date, because of the long span of their life, it is possible to date their monumental phase between the late 4<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>40</sup>.

The relatively high standard of material life of these settlements was strictly related to the production of a substantial agricultural surplus: the presence of production facilities, such as farmyards and presses, near most of these settlements, corroborates this hypothesis. These were complementary structures. The olive oil production required an articulated *chaîne opératoire* involving at least a crushing phase and two pressing phases: had the former taken place on the same floor of the presses, it would have required the dismantling of the presses and, after the crushing, an accurate cleaning of the surfaces. Therefore, it is more plausible that the first phase was carried out in the farmyards, so that the presses could work continuously. During the other stages of the oil production, the threshing floor of the farmyards could be used for other activities, such as the processing of animal skins, textiles, and cheese<sup>41</sup>.

In fact, the other important economic network of the region was that of pastoralism<sup>42</sup>. At the base of this network lay the seasonal transhumance and a flexible social organisation, the tribe. But that of shepherds was not a monolithic unity. Clans and families were divided into sedentary and transhumant segments, which existed side by side: Bassiana, a noble woman from Irenopolis, was held hostage in Seleucia so as not to allow her tribe, the *Cietai*, to attack the capital<sup>43</sup>. Evidently, the woman belonged to the sedentary and urban sector of the tribal hinterland of Isauria.

Since the hydrographical and rainfall standards of Isauria and the nature of the terrain were not suitable for securing a sizeable cereal surplus<sup>44</sup>, it is reasonable to stress the importance of wine and oil in the economic life of the region<sup>45</sup>. These commodities were the fuel of the Empire, the foundation of the Mediterranean lifestyle and economy<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> VARINLIOĞLU 2008b, 298-299; AYDINOĞLU – ÇAKMAK 2011, 71; JACOBS 2020, 15-17.

<sup>40</sup> IACOMI – CASSIANI 2014, 7.

<sup>41</sup> VARINLIOĞLU 2008b, 304-307.

<sup>42</sup> HOPWOOD 1991, 307.

<sup>43</sup> *Mir.* 9; LENSKI 1999, 446-450.

<sup>44</sup> VARINLIOĞLU 2008b, 305.

<sup>45</sup> IACOMI 2010.

<sup>46</sup> HORDEN – PURCELL 2000, 175-180.



Some important documents testify to the role of the ecological niche constituted by Isauria and Cilicia in the production and distribution network of these products; among these, one should remember an impressive epigraphical document, the “Abydus Tariff”, dated to the final years of the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>47</sup>. This edict established, among other things, the tax to be paid by those who carried wine to Constantinople, with the exception of the *Kilikoi*, while the *Edictum de pretiis* mentions another fundamental product, the *olivae Tarsicae*<sup>48</sup>. These documents certify that wine and oil were the main products, and that, in spite of the administrative detachment, Cilicia and Isauria functioned as an economic cluster<sup>49</sup>.

In fact, by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the kilns of the coastal sites of both regions started the production of a new wine and oil container, the Late Roman Amphora 1 (LRA 1, Fig. 2)<sup>50</sup>, which later, from the 5<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century, achieved a real monopoly, replacing the old generations of amphorae<sup>51</sup>. Such vessels have been found in large numbers in Constantinople itself, amounting to 15-20% of the total of the amphorae in 6<sup>th</sup>- and 7<sup>th</sup>-century deposits<sup>52</sup>. At Elaiussa Sebaste in Cilicia, which was one of the main production centres, this form reaches 90% of the amphoric material<sup>53</sup>. In the excavations of the 5<sup>th</sup>-century layers of the temple of the *Magna Mater* in Rome, amphorae LR 1 are the most numerous Levantine import, amounting to 22%<sup>54</sup>. In Alexandria, 151.000 sherds of this form have been brought to light in strata dated between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries: the peak of the imports occurred in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, when they represented 25,2% of the total sherds of containers<sup>55</sup>. Percentages from Svetinja, ca. 1 km to the East of Viminacium, suggest a great circulation of this form via the *quaestura exercitus*<sup>56</sup>: between 567 and 596 amphorae LR 1 constituted 54% of all the containers recovered in the site<sup>57</sup>. At Zeugma and in other consumption sites of the Levant, the LRA 1 was the main import until the 7<sup>th</sup> century<sup>58</sup>, while in the

<sup>47</sup> GUILLOU – DOURLIAT 1984.

<sup>48</sup> *CIL* III, 2, 6, 89. On Cilician wine see Athen., *Deipn.*, 33b; Plin., *NH*, XIV, 81; 109; *Exp. tot. mund.*, XXXIX.

<sup>49</sup> LA PAGLIA 2016, 417.

<sup>50</sup> EMPEREUR – PICON 1989; PIERI 2005, 70-85; AUTRET – YAĞCI – RAUH 2010; BORGIA – IACOMI 2010; KIZILARSLANOĞLU – AYTEK 2018.

<sup>51</sup> See, e. g., REYNOLDS 2005.

<sup>52</sup> HAYES 1992, 63-64.

<sup>53</sup> FERRAZZOLI – RICCI 2007, 671-672; see also KIZILARSLANOĞLU 2019.

<sup>54</sup> PANELLA *et al.* 2010, 67.

<sup>55</sup> ŞENOL 2008, 116.

<sup>56</sup> *Nov. Iust.* 41; CURTA 2002.

<sup>57</sup> KARAGIORGOU 2001, 134.

<sup>58</sup> REYNOLDS 2013; BERTOLDI 2020, 54.



Western Mediterranean this form reached Italy, France, North Africa, Libya, Catalonia, the Rhine provinces, and the British Isles<sup>59</sup> (Fig. 3).

At least in the sites of the Roman East, these data are clues of the role of Cilicia and Isauria in the network of redistribution of wine and oil and their relationship with the *annona*. It is significant that Late Roman C ware produced in the Straits area is the most attested fine pottery at Elaiussa Sebaste in the 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>60</sup>. Its consistent presence is probably due to the return routes that brought the ships back to the ports of origin and along the way other products, including tableware, after having transported the oil and wine to the capital: the large number of fragments of LR 1 amphorae found there confirms this reconstruction. Furthermore, the growing importance of the provinces of Southern Asia Minor for the central power is also evident in the system of military supplies, as witnessed by the vast horreum of Maximianopolis, a foundation *ex novo* in Pamphylia<sup>61</sup>.

Hence, the *annona* system assured the supply of Constantinople and the armies of the Danube and the Eastern frontier; through return cargoes, exploited by the ship captains for their private trade, it also stimulated the spread of staple goods in the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus, strong grounds do exist to argue that a significant economic stimulus to the production of amphorae and foodstuff came from the central power and its fiscal necessities<sup>62</sup>. Ultimately, the intertwining of

<sup>59</sup> KEAY 1984; PIERI 2005; FRANCONI 2018; WILLIAMS 2005; see also PARRAVANO *forth. a.*

<sup>60</sup> FERRAZZOLI – RICCI 2010, 202; KIZILARSLANOĞLU – AKTAŞ 2023.

<sup>61</sup> RIZOS 2015; 2017, 33-34.

<sup>62</sup> The relationship between central power and economy is a pivotal theme in studies of the economic history of the empire. It is not possible here to give an account of the mass of literature generated by this essential chapter of historiography; however, it is necessary to start from the ever-fundamental ROSTOVITZ 1926 and FINLEY 1973. Since then, the hoped-for overcoming of polarised (and often oversimplified) positions has led to the exploration of multiple lines of research, some of which are innovative.

We have witnessed the birth of reconstructions that support the idea of growth of economic indices, large-scale marketing, the coherence of price formation mechanisms, the integration of Mediterranean markets during the Roman rule. Consequently, there arose a tendency to see private initiative and the free market context as the driving factors of the imperial economy and the military supply system, exploiting some of the theoretical tools of the *New Institutional Economics*: see, for example, WIERSCHOWSKI 2002; LO CASCIO 2007; VERA 2010; TEMIN 2013. There are more prudent scholars or holding different views: BANG 2011; ERDKAMP 2013, who nevertheless takes up non-Malthusian interpretations (2015); TCHERNIA 2016; WILSON – BOWMAN (eds.) 2018; SCHIAVONE 2020. Especially for Paul Erdkamp and André Tchernia, food administration provided the means to reduce transaction costs and thus to allow for the widespread marketing of food and craft products. On the *annona* see DURLIAT 1990; SIRKS 1991; PEÑA 1999; VERA 2010.

The rough list just produced must however be understood for the purposes of this study. It therefore takes into consideration general trends, within which each name represents an original and multifaceted position. For a recent synthesis and for an original (even if not entirely convincing) interpretative proposal, ODDO 2023.



the “command” and “free” mechanisms favoured the inclusion of Cilicia and Isauria in the great Mediterranean trade network, permitting the overcoming of geomorphological barriers and the exploitation of their ecological potential<sup>63</sup>.

A famous shipwreck, Yassı Ada I, gives some insights into the functioning of the network of collection and reallocation of foodstuffs<sup>64</sup>. The hypothesis that this was a ship linked to the *annona militaris*, and that it was sailing to carry supplies for the army of Heraclius (610-641) after having contributed to supplying Constantinople is very persuasive<sup>65</sup>. In the 620s, the Sassanid invasion was threatening the very existence of the Empire; consequently, the emperor could have asked for help from the Church, which was a growing institution, capable of producing and allocating foodstuffs<sup>66</sup>. The ship would probably have stopped in Cilicia itself: in fact, by the end of 625, Heraclius was withdrawing his army from Armenia through Cilicia, perhaps in the expectation of receiving the supplies coming from the capital.

This was the last, great evidence of the central role of the *annona* and its products: wine, oil, and amphorae. As a matter of fact, between the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the production of these amphorae and their accompanying goods, the fine Late Roman tablewares, ceased to exist. In the long run, this disappearance testifies to the disintegration of the great network of collecting and reallocating of foodstuffs, and to the persistence of the local networks of production and consumption<sup>67</sup>: this was a fundamental step in the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages in the Eastern Mediterranean<sup>68</sup>.

## Conclusions

The synthesis outlined in the previous pages demonstrates how the application of the regional analytical dimension can contribute qualitatively and quantitatively to historical investigation. The region is a tool of understanding that allows us to identify specific fields of action of socioeconomic forces: in this context, in the Late Empire, Isauria can legitimately be defined as a region, because local and global processes in a defined geographical context characterised the area, making it at the same time part of the same ecological niche with neighbouring Cilicia.

But as a heuristic tool, the regional dimension does not resolve historical and historiographical contradictions. On the one hand, the intertwining of phenomena

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<sup>63</sup> See TCHERNIA 2016.

<sup>64</sup> BASS – VAN DOORNINCK JR. 1982.

<sup>65</sup> VAN DOORNINCK JR. 2015.

<sup>66</sup> See, e. g., FOURNET – PIERI 2008.

<sup>67</sup> HORDEN – PURCELL 2000, 153-160; HALDON 2016, 289.

<sup>68</sup> SALMERI – TOMEI (eds.) 2020.



of integration and resistance, in the context of a period characterised by a flourishing economy, is inherent to the region. In other words, it constitutes the product of the non-total integration of different but economically driving economic circuits and of the relative visions of the world, and of the imperfect control exercised by the central power over geographical areas that were difficult to access<sup>69</sup>. On the other hand, the region is an analytical model which, like all models, allows us to recognise the constants and variables of the structure beneath the flow of the conjunctures, but does not overcome its conflicts and aporias.

In the final analysis, Isauria remains partially a historical conundrum; nonetheless, this work has tried to understand its complex reality, in which divergent and convergent socioeconomic processes took place.

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<sup>69</sup> See SHAW 2004, 350-351.

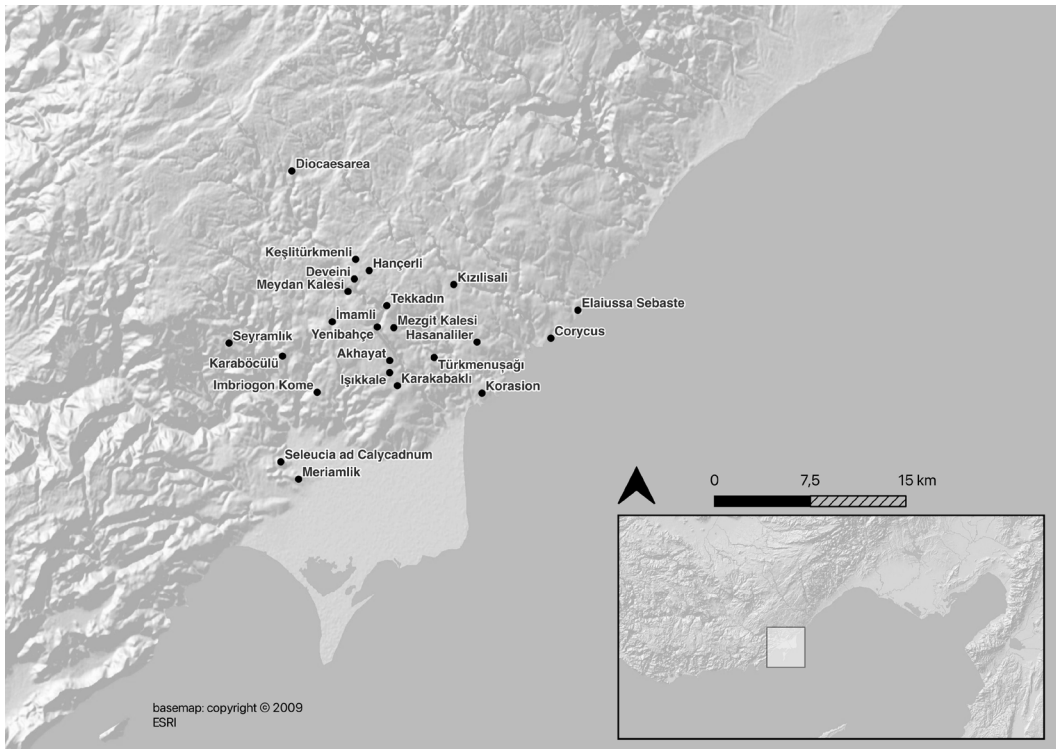


Fig. 1. Map of Southeastern Isauria showing main archaeological sites (reworked after Varinlioğlu 2008).

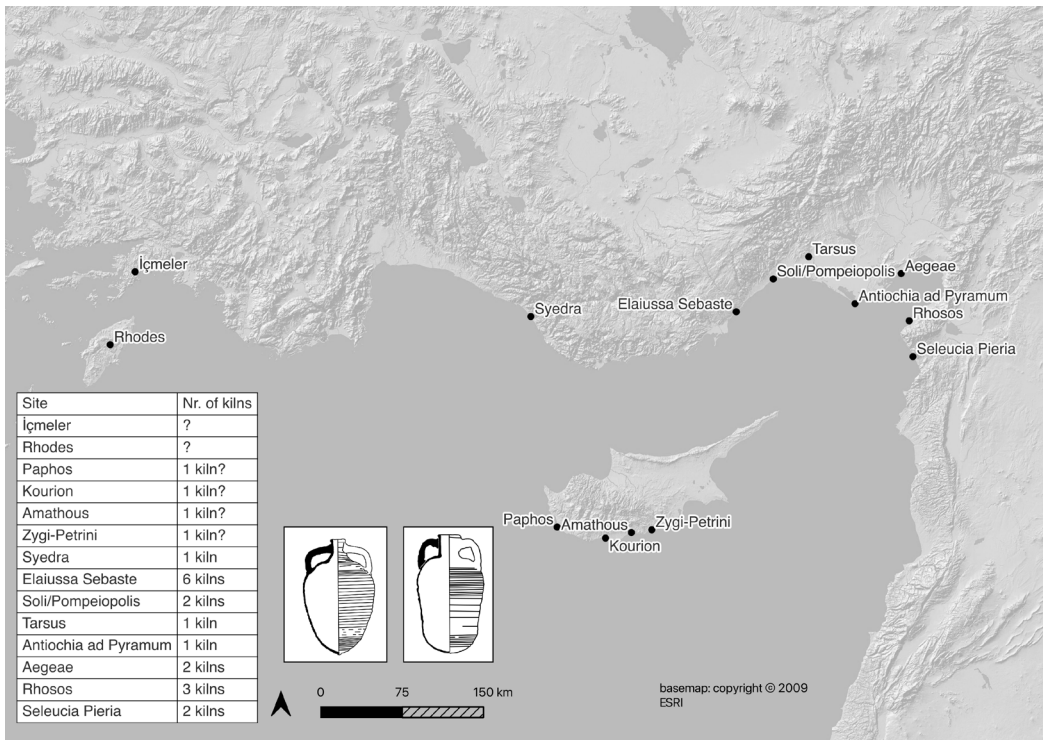
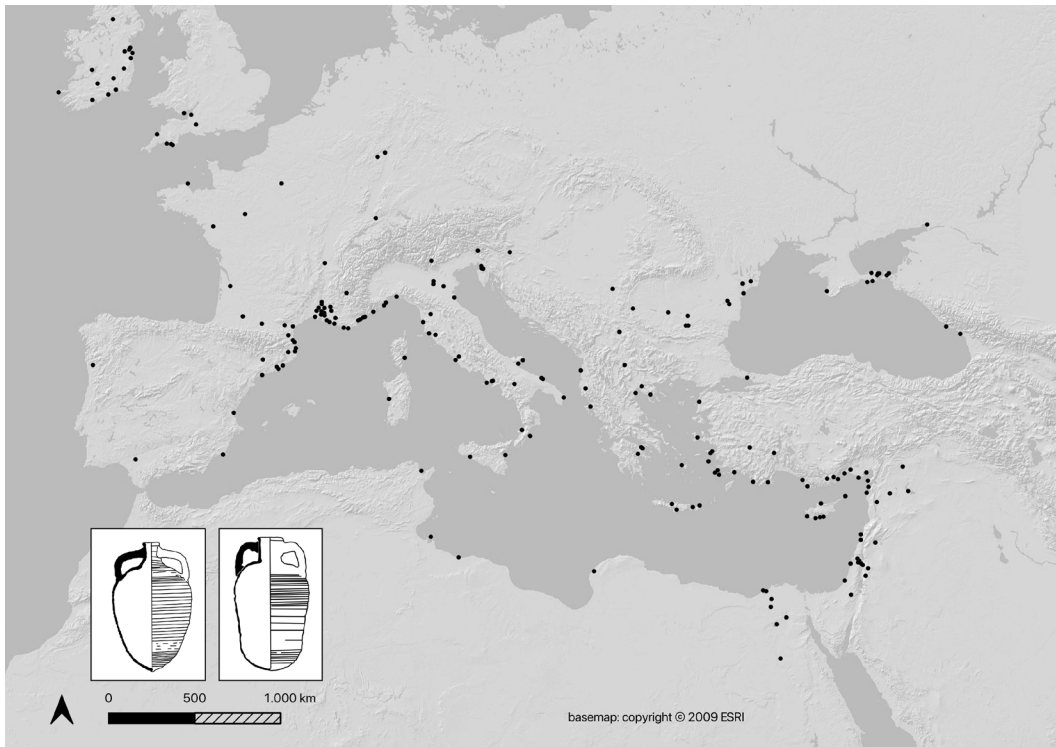


Fig. 2. Map showing the production sites of amphorae LR 1 in Southern Turkey, Rhodes and Cyprus (reworked after La Paglia 2016).



*Fig. 3. Distribution map of amphorae LR 1 (created by the author).*



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## Abstract

The present paper aims to investigate the peculiar situation of Late Roman Isauria, where, from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, phenomena of economic expansion intermingled with episodes of resistance and social conflict. These interrelations stemmed from the struggle between different socioeconomic organisations, which in turn gave birth to different worldviews, but this scenario was further complicated by the assimilation of Graeco-Roman Imperial habits, and so by numerous examples of integration. At the same time, the province witnessed a substantial economic expansion, as amphoric remains testify. Thus, in order to study the dialectic between integration, resistance, and economic expansion, the production of symbolic discourses and material values is discussed from a regional perspective, since this is the ideal arena within which socioeconomic and cultural trajectories can be properly analysed.

*Keywords:* Isauria – Cilicia – integration – resistance – amphorae