

ANCIENT GREEK, ROMAN AND BYZANTINE GLASS WORKS FROM CILICIA

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Abstract: This article examines the historical development and common forms of glass objects produced in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Roman Empire. A total of 146 pieces are presented. The earliest examples of glass are the alabastron and amphoriskos forms, which were used as perfume containers influenced by Greek pottery. These glass objects generally have blue lower parts, with exceptions such as those from Adana that have white lower parts. During the Hellenistic period, glass from the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly from Cyprus, was produced and spread to various other regions of the Mediterranean. At the advent of the Roman period, glass production had become more concentrated in local centers, with balsamaria used in funeral rites playing a significant role. Although these glass objects show regional differences, they were primarily used as perfume and essence containers. The article details the production centers, aesthetic features, and regional distribution of these glasses, shedding light on the historical context of ancient glass production.

Cuvinte-cheie: perioada arhaică, perioada elenistică, perioada romană, alabastron, amphoriskos, sticlă

Rezumat: Acest articol examinează dezvoltarea istorică și formele comune ale obiectelor de sticlă produse în Estul Mediteranei și în Imperiul roman. Sunt prezentate 146 de piese. Cele mai vechi obiecte din sticlă sunt cele reprezentate de alabastron și amphoriskos, folosite pentru păstrarea parfumului, forme influențate de ceramica grecească. Aceste obiecte de sticlă prezintă, în general, în partea inferioară o culoare albastră, excepție făcând cele de la Adana care au o culoare albă. În timpul perioadei elenistice, sticla din Estul Mediteranei, în special cea din Cipru, este produsă și se răspândește și în alte regiuni ale Mării Mediterane. În timpul perioadei romane, producția de sticlă o găsim mai mult concentrată în centrele locale, vasele de tip balsamarium folosite în ritualurile funerare jucând un rol semnificativ. Deși aceste obiecte din sticlă prezintă diferențe regionale, ele au fost folosite în special ca recipiente pentru parfumuri și esențe. Articolul de față prezintă detalii referitoare la centrele de producție, trăsăturile estetice și distribuția regională a obiectelor din sticlă, aducând un plus de informații despre contextul istoric al producerii sticlei din cele mai vechi timpuri.

INTRODUCTION

Glass, as a valuable material used for both aesthetic and functional purposes in antiquity, carries traces of cultural interactions between civilizations. Especially in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Roman Empire, glass objects had a wide range of uses, from daily life to funeral rites. This article aims to examine the historical development and various forms of glass production in the region, providing information about the production centers, techniques used, and aesthetic values. Through glass examples from Adana and its surroundings, significant data will be obtained regarding the artistic and craft understanding of the period. Beginning with some of the earliest glass forms such as alabastron and amphoriskos, which were used as perfume containers, this research will also discuss local glass production during the Roman Empire and its spread across the Mediterranean world.

ARCHAIC PERIOD GLASSES

Here is a small anthology of the most common glass forms found in the region. The oldest glasses include an

alabastron and an amphoriskos made with a friable core. These containers held scented oils and were miniaturized imitations of larger Greek ceramic vessels. The forms are typically Greek; only an alabastron and an amphoriskos are presented here. Fragments of around one hundred vessels with friable cores have been found at Gordion¹. In most cases, the vessels in this group have a blue base, but here, there is also one with a white base. The reason the workshops that produced these items ceased operations around 400 BC is unknown².

HELLENISTIC PERIOD GLASSES

In time, Eastern Mediterranean glasses became more frequent in what is now southeastern Turkey. Almost half of the known alabastra are found in Cyprus³. Their places of discovery are concentrated in the Eastern Mediterranean (Greek world) and the island of Rhodes. They represent also evidence of the interactions between the Greeks and the Persians who ruled Asia Minor, but they are widely

¹ Duncan Jones 2005, p. 103.

² Stern, Schlick-Nolte 1994, p. 38.

³ Stern, Schlick-Nolte 1994, p. 232.