

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENTS OF A NEW COLLECTION OF LATE ROMAN WARE FOUND AT THE THEATRE IN THE CITY OF PRUSIAS AD HYPIMUM

Safiye AYDIN

Assist. Prof., Düzce University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Archaeology, Düzce, Türkiye, Orcid No: 0000-0001-7203-5673;
e-mail: aydinsafiye.01@gmail.com

Keywords: *Prusias ad Hypium, theatre, ceramics, Late Roman period, Black Sea region*

Abstract: *This study aims to evaluate, from a typological and chronological perspective, the ceramics discovered during the 2017–2018 excavation at the theatre of the ancient city of Prusias ad Hypium, which reveal a new fashion in tableware decoration during Late Antiquity. Located within the borders of the Bithynia region in antiquity, the city is situated today in the Çiftepınarlar neighbourhood (Konuralp), 8 km north of Düzce province, in the Western Black Sea Region. The ceramics were unearthed during excavations carried out in recent years at the theatre, the city's best-preserved architectural structure, together with Heraklea Pontica amphorae and a coin from the reign of Emperor Arcadius (AD 395–408). This tableware, consisting of large plates, is generally characterised by decorative motifs in shades of red or brown. Within the repertoire of Late Roman tableware from the city of Prusias, these vessels stand out as a new group alongside African, Phocaean and Pontic Red Slip Ware.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *Prusias ad Hypium, teatru, ceramică, perioada romană târzie, regiunea Mării Negre*

Rezumat: *Acest studiu își propune să evalueze, din perspectivă tipologică și cronologică, ceramica descoperită în cadrul săpăturilor arheologice din anul 2017 în teatrul antic din Prusias ad Hypium, pe baza datelor de teren, evidențiind apariția unui nou stil în decorarea vaselor de masă în perioada antichității târzii. Situat în antichitate în granițele regiunii Bithynia, orașul se află astăzi în regiunea vestică a Mării Negre, la aproximativ 8 km nord de Düzce, localitatea Çiftepınarlar (Konuralp). În urma săpăturilor efectuate în ultimii ani la teatru, cea mai bine conservată construcție arhitecturală a orașului, au fost descoperite vase ceramice, alături de amfore de tip Heraklea Pontica și o monedă datată în timpul domniei împăratului Arcadius (395–408 d.Hr.). Vasele de masă, formate din farfurii mari, sunt de obicei caracterizate printr-un decor ornamental în nuanțe de roșu sau maro. În cadrul repertoriului de vase de masă de calitate din perioada romană târzie al orașului Prusias, pe lângă ceramica africană, cea de la Phokaia și ceramica pontică cu angobă roșie, aceste vase se evidențiază ca un nou grup distinct.*

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to evaluate, from a typological and chronological perspective, the ceramics discovered during the 2017–2018 excavation at the theatre of the ancient city of Prusias ad Hypium, which reveal a new fashion in the decoration of tableware during Late Antiquity. Located within the borders of the Bithynia region in antiquity, the city is situated today in the Çiftepınarlar neighbourhood (Konuralp), 8 km north of Düzce Province in the Western Black Sea Region (Fig. 1). The city, referred to as Kieros by the Heracleian historian Memnon¹, was originally under the control of Heraclea; however, when it was incorporated into the royal domain by King Prusias I of Bithynia in the early 2nd century BC, it was re-founded in the king's name and took the name *Prusias pros Hypios*². Following the bequest of the kingdom's territories by Nicomedes IV, who ruled the region during the Hellenistic Period, to Rome in 74 BC, a new era began in the history of the province³ and the city. With the arrival of Roman rule, the city was also

given the Latin name *Prusias ad Hypium*. As with other cities in the region, Prusias's development began during the Roman Imperial Period, in the time of the Flavians; the city experienced its period of greatest prosperity, particularly between the reigns of Antoninus Pius and that of Septimius Severus. As a result of developments that occurred in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, Prusias, situated on the route taken by legions sent eastwards, became a stopping point for emperors during their journeys. It was first visited by Emperor Hadrian, and later by other Roman emperors, particularly during the Severan period⁴.

It is known from ancient church records that the city of Prusias/Plusias⁵, situated within the borders of the province of Honorias in the *Dioecesis Pontica* region during Late Antiquity, retained its importance during this period and, in tandem with the empire's process of Christianisation, became a centre participating in councils at the episcopal level. In addition to the institutional presence of the church organisation, it is also evident that the city underwent a structural transformation during the Early Christian Period⁶.

¹ Memnon XVI, XIX, XXVII, XLVII. For information on the history of the city, see Arslan 2007, p. 31, 35, 49, 85.

² Ameling 1985, p. 1–3.

³ For the process of Romanisation in the province, see Marek 2009, p. 37–44; Pitt 2016.

⁴ Karakuş 2020, p. 22–23.

⁵ Belke 1996, p. 65.

⁶ For the city's Late Antique period, see Aydın 2025, p. 47–66.