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Hellenistic and Roman Figurines from the South Necropolis of Tralleis in Caria

Murat Çekilmez

- 1 I completed my dissertation *Hellenistic and Roman Terracotta Figurines from the South Necropolis of Tralleis* at the University of Adnan Menderes under the direction of Aslı Saraçoğlu in 2014. The terracotta figurines discussed in my dissertation were found during salvage excavations by the Aydın Archaeological Museum in the South Necropolis of Tralleis, with a large number coming from barrel-vaulted chamber tombs. The necropolis dates from the 2nd century BCE at least through the 2nd century CE.
- 2 Thirty-three contexts are listed as of interest, but not of sharply defined chronological significance. The evidence for dating is derived for the most part from pottery, coins, and other archaeological remains.

Fig. 1—Numbers of figurines recovered for the periods represented

Fig. 2—Percentage of clay types represented at Tralleis

- 3 As was customary, the figurines were each cast in molds, and in the 2nd century BCE the number of molds used in the creation of a single figurine increased. The manufacture of these terracotta figurines in the Roman Imperial era was an industry that used a rather coarse, but homogeneous, clay that contains a fair amount of mica. A yellowish-red clay with some mica was used rarely, and mostly in 2nd century BCE. A reddish-yellow clay, sometimes burned light red, with mica, is characteristic of the finest pieces. The commonest clay is reddish-yellow, according to the *Munsell Soil Color Chart*, and usually has mica; it often is coated with a light white slip.
- 4 Stylistic analysis reveals influences from Attica, Boeotia and Myrina among the early figurines at Tralleis. Flying figurines of Eros and Nike were prominent in the 2nd century BCE. Religious types are also found and include Aphrodite and worshipers. Other representations of deities included an Ariadne, Dionysos, and his entourage.

Fig. 3—Flying Eros

Fig. 4–Signature of the coroplast Trophimos

- 5 During the second half of the 2nd century BCE genre groups with animals and standing draped women proliferated. Tralleis was destroyed by an earthquake in 26 BCE and reconstructed through the efforts of Caesar Augustus. The typological repertoire of the 1st century CE continued to include standing draped women and men, as well as athletes with quiver, masks, actors, puppets, caricatures, animals, and other mythological and religious types. These types of figurines were commonly found in most of the Mediterranean sites in the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial eras.
- 6 The works of the coroplasts whose signatures are found in the South Necropolis may be examined here in more detailed. There are Trophimos, Simalionos, Theodotos, AA and others. The signatures show that workshops were active at Tralleis in the Roman Imperial era as early as the 1st century BCE and continued to produce figurines until the 2nd century CE. We may therefore assume the fabric in which the coroplasts worked to be a local fabric of its period.
- 7 Each figurine is introduced by a general commentary that outlines the typology, chronology and significance of the class in the catalogue. Catalogue descriptions give factual detail, references to previous publications, and close parallels. Finally, typology and style of these examples can also be compared with the dated finds from the other contemporary sites and contexts. On the whole, the evidence presented points to the fact that the 2nd century BCE was the most prosperous ones for the city of Tralleis.

INDEX

Keywords: hellenistic, roman, figurine, mold, manufacture, clay, Turkey, Attica, Boeotia, Myrina, Eros, Nike, flying figurine, draped women, coroplast, sign

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