

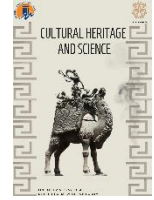


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# Tarsus and Hinterland: Roads and Cultural Heritage Effects

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## ABSTRACT

Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia Region, was at every period of its history the chief political and economic center of the region. The main reason for this situation is to be found in the fact that Tarsus has a large and fertile territory, and possesses a port on the Mediterranean coast, through which the Kydnos River passes. The fact that Tarsus is located at the point where the most important main road connecting Anatolia with the Eastern Mediterranean and Syrian geography enters the plain also made the city important and because of this road, it is also important in cultural and artistic terms for the inner regions of Anatolia in addition to its commercial, military or political importance. It has made it a city open to interaction with. It is possible to identify and trace the traces of this artistic interaction in rural settlements in the hinterland of Tarsus, rather than in the city centre, where archaeological research is difficult and limited due to the fact that it is a living city. Side streets that connect to the ancient main street, dated to Roman Period, and rural settlements located along these streets house monuments that represent this interaction. The main reason for the artistic and cultural interactions with Phrygia and Lycaonia and Kappadokia Regions from the early period is the heavy traffic of the Via Tauri, transporting not only people and goods in their culture.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

An important factor that increases the value of cities is their surrounding countryside. The wealth of cities should be studied together with the wealth of their surrounding country. Contemporary Tarsus, which follows ancient Tarsus, shows that cultural accumulation continues uninterrupted. On the other hand, contemporary Tarsus also presents an obstacle to accessing the ruins of ancient Tarsus and the information that can be accessed through them. For this reason, it is important to continue archaeological investigations in unexplored areas associated with ancient Tarsus. The mountainous terrain of Tarsus District, which forms the boundaries of Tarsus Hinterland Surveys, constitutes the hinterland of the ancient city of Tarsus.

Main roads have always served to communicate between regions and cities. These roads were mostly built for easy access and inter-regional shipping of

Roman armies. On the other hand, secondary roads connected to the main roads were built to provide transport for villages in the hinterland of the cities and then for farms to the cities (on Roman roads, the city and its countryside, see Millet 2000). The relationship between secondary and main roads influenced the settlement layout in the hinterland of the cities. Settlements in the hinterland were located at or on the sides of the alleys or at the points where they ended. Farms are located at the end of a second, unspecified alley, which is separate from the settlements. Tarsus, one of the richest cities in the ancient world, needs to be studied in terms of its street network and settlement layout in the context of urban-rural relations.

The Roads are not only a threatening symbol of the existence of sovereign power (Şahin 2011, 11), they are at the same time the first link of an effort that organizes the life of the individual, the city and society within the framework of its own ideological concept (Hardt & Negri

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2008, 312). Every traffic on it deepens its meaning even more. In this traffic is not only material culture, but also the new technologies and lifestyles it offers (on the similarities between the road networks of the Roman Empire and the information highways of our age, see Hardt & Negri 2008, 308 et al.). In this context, monuments, tombs and churches represented in different periods in the settlements of the hinterland of Tarsus, especially around the Sağlıklı Roman Road, provided important information to determine the existence, course and chronology of interregional communication. The examples of different centuries with different paradigms presented below are important for the different landscapes offered by the location of the Tarsus hinterland on the roads, as they indicate similar geographies, although centuries have passed. With this perspective, the connection between roads and socio-cultural relations (Onur 2017, 282-287) is the first topic of this article in the case of Tarsus.

## 2. A CAPITAL: TARSUS

Tarsus, whose name has survived from Ancient Age to modern times, is one of the ancient cities of Anatolia. The earliest finds in Tarsus, the city of Cilicia Region, belong to the central spectacle of the Gözlükule hill. The earliest finds in Gözlükule date back to the Neolithic Age. On the other hand, the name of the city was first mentioned in Hittite sources as "Tarz(s) a". The name of the city in Assyrian annals is "Tarzi" (Özyar & Ünlü 2015). Today, where the use of Tarsos / Tarsus by the ancient Greeks and Romans is unchanged, the city continues to be called Tarsus.

Tarsus has an extremely important place among the independent cities of Anatolia in ancient times. It is clear from the proud inscription dedicated to Emperor Alexander Severus that Tarsus is the greatest city of Cilicia, Isauria and Lycaonia: The said inscription states "As the largest, richest and most important city of Cilicia, Isauria and Lycaonia, Tarsus is designated as the capital" (Sayar 2016).

What makes Tarsus important and rich is its geopolitical location and logistical support? The fertile and vast agricultural lands that Tarsus possesses are among the important resources of the city. The Kydnos / Cydnus (Berdan) River is another important factor that has contributed to Tarsus being populated for thousands of years. The Cydnus River not only supplies the water needs of Tarsus, but also makes Tarsus one of the important port cities of the Mediterranean.

It is the Gülek Passage that provides Tarsus with an important and lasting settlement. The Gülek Passage is called "Kilikia Pylaia", which means "Cilician Gates" in the Ancient Age. The said passage is on an internationally important route that must be used, in the past as well as today, by those who want to go from Anatolia to the Mediterranean coast and from there to Syria. Using the Gülek Pass, the route reaches a stone road dating back to Roman times (Sayar 1995, 45-46; Sayar 2002, 455). About 3 kilometers of this road are within the boundaries of Sağlıklı District, which is located in the hinterland of Tarsus. This road reaching Tarsus makes it an important meeting point and crossroads.

## 3. TARSUS HINTERLAND: ROADS and IMPACTS.

The large agricultural areas, the port formed by the Kydnos River and the indispensable location of Tarsus on the ancient roads make it an important trading city of the ancient world (Ramsay 2000). In this way, Tarsus has a cultural accumulation that lasts historically, culturally and economically for centuries.

The Tarsus Hinterland represents an important area that adds value to Tarsus. In particular, the Roman Road in Sağlıklı is important evidence that the Tarsus Hinterland has always been part of the global inter-regional transportation network. The presence of the road is a factor in the emergence of a large number of settlements on its periphery. This situation is also effective in establishing interregional socio-cultural relations. Specifically for the Tarsus Hinterland this fact is explained by the following examples:

Yukarı Kale is located 17 km north of Tarsus. A rock tomb was found in the Yukarı Kale. The tomb has two klines. On the front facade there are two pavements and a pediment on the rock surface. The pediment consists of intertwined triangles. There are no inscriptions, pottery or small finds from the rock tomb Yukarı Kale. In contrast, the earliest pottery found in the settlement belongs to the Late Hellenistic and Roman Periods. However, a more important dating criterion for the Yukarı Kale rock-cut tomb is its domed top slab. The Köylü Garajı in the city center of Tarsus is a vaulted tomb monument and is dated to the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD thanks to its pottery. Accordingly, the rock tomb in Yukarı Kale could belong to the Late Hellenistic and Roman Periods. The particularity of the rock tomb Yukarı Kale is its pediment design. A pediment divided by triangles has no parallels in Cilicia. The triangular divided pediment on the facade of the rock tomb Tarsus, Yukarı Kale can possibly be interpreted as an effect of the architectural design of Phrygian origin on the rock tomb at Tarsus. In this respect, the rock tomb Yukarı Kale is the first and only example that reflects the impact of Phrygian architecture at least in the facade design of the rock tombs at Cilicia Region (Kaplan 2020, 98).

In the studies carried out in the hinterland of Tarsus, the archeological data and the structuring of the region during the Christian period constitute another important theme. In some of the settlements identified in the hinterland of Tarsus, one or more church structures were observed. Together with the spread of Christianity in the rural and relatively small-scale settlements, their transformation processes can be partially observed (Late Antiquity). Hacı Hamzalı Kale Mevkii Church construction is the result of the transformation process of the pagan building that was located on the top of the rock mass. As another similar example, the church located outside the residential area in the settlement of Yukarı Kale, which has a closed complex with a high enclosing wall, stands on a Roman building. The rock tombs around the building and the dense niches of various sizes on the rock surfaces suggest that this area may have been used as a sacred area - perhaps of Phrygian origin - in its early phase. However, at the moment there is not enough data to have an idea about

the function of the building with high enclosing walls before it became a Christian sacred building.

Thirteen churches were identified during the research conducted at Tarsus Hinterland. Some common architectural features of these churches are noticeable. One of the documented churches is a small structure with a single nave (Can Deresi Kilisesi). Other churches also have a three-nave Hellenistic basilical plan, although they are not relatively large. The common feature that attracts attention among them is that the apse of all examples, except the single-nave church of Can Deresi, are built from the east facade. Making the apse on the east façade visible from the outside is a rare application in the Cilicia Region. In most of the Late Antique Period churches in the Cilicia Region, the east facades of the buildings are in the form of a flat wall and the apse is designed to remain within this wall. As a feature of the region, the samples from the hinterland of Tarsus, which are outside the understanding of the solution of the interior design in an overall rectangular shape, refer to the outside of the region with these features. It can be assumed that the settlements where the churches are located are on the route where they are connected with the inner regions of Tarsus and Anatolia, and especially because of their horseshoe-shaped apses, interaction with the architecture of Cappadocia and Lycia Regions in the north (Yıldırım 2020, 122). The narthex arrangement of the three-aisled Hellenistic basilical plan church identified and documented in the Kümbet locality of the village of Sakızçukuru also reveals this relationship more clearly. In the north and south of the narthex, where the entrance is provided from the main axis, there are corner rooms, which is almost a standard practice for Karaman-Karadağ Binbir Kilise structures.

#### 4. CONCLUSION ROADS and CULTURAL INTERACTION

Architectural studies of the Cilicia Region have been primarily concerned with the mountainous geography of the region to the west. The architecture of the region, referred to as Mountainous Cilicia, did not have the potential to create a serious culture. In this context, it was included in the field of activity of the cultures of Eastern Mediterranean geography and the main elements of Roman Architecture with the imposition of political hegemony, as the continuous field of interaction. Tarsus is a Lowland Cilician city. Considering the research conducted in the hinterland of Tarsus, it is understood that starting from the Late Hellenistic Period, even in the Late Antique Period, Cilicia remained under the influence of the elements that the neighboring regions in Anatolia had. Evidence of regional architectural styles such as Phrygia, Cappadocia, Lykaonia are present in the

hinterland of Tarsus. The Via Tauri is the direct connection of the hinterland of Tarsus with the interior of Anatolia. The Roman road in Sağlıklı, which is a part of this road, and the intermediate roads, which are bridges between the rural settlements and the main road, are the mediators of the maturation of the cultural heritage and the identification of the impact in the rural settlements.

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