Introductory notes

The reader of this book will make an imaginary journey through late antique Cilicia to discover the most significant features of its sacred landscape.

This region enjoys the advantage of a strategic position located on the main land road connecting Asia Minor with the provinces of Syria and Palestina, which has facilitated a fusion of cultures and a constant exchange of artistic and religious ideas from the earliest time. The efficient and well-equipped network of small, protected ports and roads, lined with *mansiones* and *stationes* as resting places for long-distance travelers, made the region a favourable transit route for both pilgrims headed to Jerusalem and merchants trading with the numerous cities of the Mediterranean Basin during the Roman period and Late Antiquity. Consequently, at least until the end of the Byzantine era, Cilicia was traversed by foreign visitors (traders, conquerors, migrants), who enriched it with their customs, ideas, artistic knowledge,[1] and religious beliefs.

The importance of Cilicia lies not only in its position but also in its landscape, which is characterized mainly by the ruggedness of its western area (Kilikia Tracheia) and the smoothness of its eastern part (Kilikia Pedias). The mountainous landscape and an impenetrable brushwood offered protection to its inhabitants, but it was also a favorable place for the development of banditry, which, together with piracy, was one of the great plagues on the whole territory. The rugged limestone topography, fragmented by deep river valleys, includes spectacular natural phenomena, such as canyons, sinkholes, and deep caves, which contribute to the uniqueness of the area.

In light of these regional features, the aim of this project is to trace a "sacral landscape" of Cilicia in Late Antiquity through both archaeological analysis of some significant church buildings dedicated to local and international saints and also the study of the literary sources testifying to the presence of a cult in a particular place and its spread abroad. The late antique Cilician churches show specific, unique features that substantially differentiate them from those of neighbouring regions. Some of these buildings reveal active use by late antique pilgrims; many were developed out of older structures and do not hide the previous fabric. Moreover, numerous buildings integrate natural formations (living rock) into the architecture or were erected in particularly spectacular locations.

The concept of "sacral landscape" is used in this project to define a network of sacred places in late antique Cilicia, in which a saint or martyr was venerated. It is composed of both major pilgrimage centers of internationally renowned saints and minor sites linked to local figures, mainly known to a restricted number of people living in the neighbourhood.

The literary sources employed are mainly hagiographic texts, travel accounts, and religious and historical texts, that are joined to and supplemented by analysis of the architecture and complementary information provided by archaeological surveys (excavation reports, recent archaeological studies, and inscriptions mentioning a saint's name).

1 Significant for Late Antiquity is the influence on many Cilician churches of their neighbouring Syrian religious buildings. As we will see, in many basilicas there are recognizable artistic features that are akin (to a greater or lesser degree) to fifth-century Syrian archetypes: e. g. a projecting apse, mouldings that framed the external architectural elements (Korykos, Akören, Mazılık), an important south entrance, east side-chambers flanking the apse. Moreover, a number of early Byzantine capitals (Akkale, Çatıören, Korykos) and their architectural planning reflects styles familiar to the workshops of Constantinople. For this last aspect, see: Mietke 2006, 371–389.

1. Topographical and historical introduction to Cilicia

1.1 Topography, geographical borders, and cities

Geographical description of the region

> "As for Cilicia outside the Tauros, one part of it is called Tracheia and the other Pedias. As for Tracheia, its coast is narrow and has no level ground, or scarcely any; and, besides that, it lies at the foot of the Tauros, which affords a poor livelihood as far as its northern side in the region of Isaura and of the Homonadeis until Pisidia; and the same country is also called Tracheiotis, and its inhabitants Tracheiotae. Kilikia Pedias instead extends from Soli and Tarsos as far as Issus, and also to those parts beyond which, on the northern side of the Tauros, Cappadocians are situated; for this country consists for the most part of plains and fertile land."[2]

With these words, Strabo gives a precise idea of the geographical boundaries and features of the region called Cilicia in the first century AD.

Framed to the north by the rugged and lofty Tauros chain that separates it from the high central plateau of Anatolia, Cilicia was naturally divided into two very different areas: Kilikia Pedias and Kilikia Tracheia (fig. 1).[3]

Kilikia Pedias is a huge plain, which borders Syria in the east, stretches across the Amanos Mountains, and adjoins Kilikia Tracheia in the west, at the Lamos River. Natural passes through the mountains allow access from neighbouring regions: the Cilician Gates (Pylai Kilikias, today Gülek Boğazı)[4] to the north of Tarsos from Cappadocia and Lykaonia, and the Belen Pass from Syria. Between the mountains of the Tauros and the fertile plain which broadens up to the sea there is a tract of higher land formed of foothills and slopes, where cattle graze in summer.

The plain is irrigated by numerous watercourses, which cross the lowlands and flow into the Mediterranean. Minor streams, originating in the Tauros Mountains, join three main rivers: the Berdan or Tarsos Çayı (Greek: Kydnos), the Seyhan Çayı (Greek: Saros) and the Ceyhan Çayı (Greek: Pyramos). The fertile alluvial plain, which is very rich and populated by dense settlements, allows for both dry farming and irrigation agriculture.

Completely different is the landscape of Kilikia Tracheia, where the rough and inhospitable landscape had made transhumant pastoralism the basis of economic activity, combined with activities related to the collection and processing of wood.

From a geographical point of view, Kilikia Tracheia can be divided in many micro-regions. Coming from East and crossing the Limonlu Çayı, one enters a limestone area, which stretches from the modern city of Kızkalesi (ancient Korykos) to Silifke (ancient Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos) and rises continuously from the sea to reach almost 1200m, near the city of Uzuncaburç (ancient Diokaisareia). Apart from this high plateau, the surrounding area of Kızkalesi and Ayaş (ancient Elaioussa Sebaste) is gently undulating and from the slightly elevated settlements of the hinterland (e. g. Tapureli, Yanıkhan, Canbazlı, Hasanaliler) it is possible to have a rather wide view of the entire territory and of the coast.

An important feature of this first part of the rough landscape of Kilikia Tracheia is the presence of numerous ravines, deep canyons, and sinkholes formed by the rivers (Yenibahçe Deresi, Şeytan Deresi, and Paşa Deresi) that excavate the soil before flowing into the sea. The three main sinkholes (which will be analysed more deeply in terms of their significance for the sanctity of the area in the following chapters) are all located in this limestone area between the right bank of the Kalykadnos River and the left bank of the Limonlu. The sinkholes are: Aşağı Dünya Obruğu, Cennet ve Cehennem (ancient *Korykion Antron*), and Kanlıdivane (ancient Kanytelleis). In some cases, the rivers flow underground, emerging only near their outlet to the sea, as in the case of Narlıkuyu.

Proceeding to the west, the Kalykadnos River strongly shapes the rough and mountainous landscape of the central part of Kilkia Tracheia, cutting through the Taşeli plateau. Its northern arm rises into Mount Geyik Dağları and, after having been enlarged by tributaries such as the Afşar Çayı and Yangılı Dere, it joins its south arm, which originates in the Akdağ Mountains, south of Mut. The mouth of the river is at the city of Silifke, where it forms a large alluvial plain. The whole coast from Silifke to Gazipaşa, the last city before entering Pamphylia, is steep and mountainous and the area is considered inaccessible and inhospitable.[5]

2 Strabo is an early imperial writer, who mentions Kilikia Pedias and Kilikia Thracheia (sometimes *tracheotis Kilikia*): Strabo *Geogr*. 14.5.1. Translation by the author adapted on: Radt 2005, 97.

3 The rough area of Kilikia Tracheia was referred to in the sources under different names: Isauria, Isaurike, (South) Lykaonia, K(i)etis, Homonadeis, Lalassis, Klabene, Potamia, Laka(i)nitis, or Kennatis. The exact relationship between these names remains unclear (Pilhofer 2018, 3–4). For this reason, in this work, two terms will be used with the following meaning: Kilikia Tracheia is a geographical term referring to the rough and mountainous area; Isauria is an administrative term, used from the fourth century on. For a more detailed definition of these terms see section 3.2: "Temporal and geographical boundaries of the project."

4 See chapter 18.2.

5 Large tracts of land are still occasionally visited and lived in by the nomadic transhumant group of the Yörüks.

Late Antique cities and road connections

The majority of the late antique cities of the region were small, with a population in the sixth century of a few thousand people.[6] In the flat part of Cilicia, the main city, with about 25,000 inhabitants in the sixth century, was Tarsos, the internationally renowned hometown of St. Paul. It was followed in size by Anazarbos, Mopsouestia, and the harbour city of Aigai, where in the early sixth century an annual market of 40 days took place.[7] Minor cities included Adana, at about 40 km from Tarsos, Phlabias, and Kastabala, located in the inland towards Anazarbos, and the coastal cities of Alexandreia kat'Issos, on the border to Syria, Pompeioupolis, and Zephyrion. All these cities were connected by two main roads. The first one is the coastal road, which led from Kilikia Tracheia to Syria. It passed through Pompeioupolis, Tarsos, Adana, and Mopsouestia, then turned south to Alexandreia kat'Issos to enter Syria. The second important road, called, for a stretch, the Via Tauri,[8] was that coming from north (from the Pylai Kilikias Pass at the border with Cappadocia) to meet the coastal road in Tarsos.[9]

The hinterland must have been densely populated, as shown by the remains of some settlements of considerable sizes that are only known for their modern name (Akören, Mazılık, Aladağ).

Unlike Kilikia Pedias, the most relevant cities of Kilikia Tracheia were located along the coast, as the rough territory made communication between cities difficult and would have exposed isolated centers to frequent incursions. For the same reason, connections between cities in this area occurred mainly by sea or by river (e. g. through the Kalykadnos, navigable from the innermost part of the Tracheia up to Seleukeia). Moreover, although the region was provided since the first century with a well-equipped road system, including inland,[10] it was preferable to travel by land along the coastal road leading to Tarsos. After Diocletian's reform, the administrative center of this part of Kilikia Tracheia was Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos. Very highly populated and of second importance in the Tracheia was the inland area around Olba and Diokaisareia.[11] The prestige of this area was derived mainly from the dynasty of priest-kings who ruled it until the first century AD, which endured into Late Antiquity, when Olba und Diokaisareia were renowned episcopal sees.

The hinterland of Kilikia Tracheia was dotted with numerous settlements, hamlets, and country estates (e. g. Dağ Pazarı, Tapureli, Öküzlü, Hasanaliler, Karakabaklı, Işıkkale, Paslı, and Takkadın), whose ancient names have not been handed down and for some of which (e. g. Canbazlı and Catiören) only ruins of grandiose basilicas or religious centers (e. g. Alahan and Mahras Dağı) are left today.

On the eastern coast lay the two important harbour cities of Elaioussa Sebaste and Korykos, which were connected by the coastal roadway to Tarsos. Proceeding west, past the city of Seleukeia and its port Holmoi, were the following coastal cities: Aphrodisias, Kelenderis, Arsinoe, and Nagidos. The central Kalykadnos region is often referred to as the "Isaurian Decapolis," an ambiguous Byzantine term used sometimes to designate a group of ten cities between the two arms of the Kalykadnos (Germanikoupolis, Titiopolis, Dometiopolis, Zenonopolis, Neapolis, Klaudioupolis, Eirenopolis, Philadelpheia, Lauzados, and Dalisandos) or, more widely, an ethnic group.[12] The two main road junctions that connected the coastal cities of the Tracheia with the Anatolian hinterland, and in particular with the city of Ikonion, were at the cities of Klaudioupolis and Germanikoupolis. Walking along this road, one would have reached the Sertavul Pass, a mountain pass situated in the Taurus Mountains at the border with Lycaonia, located about 30 km south of the city of Laranda.

The most important city in the western part of the Tracheia was the harbour of Anemourion, protected on the land side by a high promontory and located only 60 km from the island of Cyprus. The city was famous for its trade and also enjoyed a large fertile plain, created by the flow of the river Anamur Çayı. The last coastal cities to the west before entering Pamphylia, developed at the mouths of small rivers, on alluvial terrain, were: Charadros, Antiocheia epi Krago, Nephelis, Kestros, Selinous, and Iotape.

1.2 History of Cilicia and administrative subdivision

From the first colonies to the reorganization of Vespasian

Although the present work is mainly focused on the centuries of early Christianization of the region, some brief notes on the antecedent phase are necessary in order to better understand the development of the cities and the cultural variety that characterized the different areas of Cilicia.

From 713 to 663 BC, Cilicia belonged to the Assyrian Empire and during this time the Greek colonies of Nagidos, Kelenderis, Aphrodisias, Holmoi, and Soloi (later Pompeioupolis) were founded on the coast.[13] After the decline of the Assyrians, an independent Cilician Kingdom, which paid tribute to the Persians, ruled the region until the beginning of the fifth century, and the Greek cities were able to keep a certain autonomy. Cilicia was then a Persian satrapy and, after the fall of the

6 Jacobs – Elton 2019, 93–94.

7 Theod. *Situ*, 85.

8 See in detail chapter 18.2. A comprehensive study on this road network can be found in: Turchetto 2014, 775–784 and Spanu 2016, 29–56.

9 For more detailed analysis on the single road network connecting the late antique Cilician cities, see the topographic introduction of each specific chapter.

10 Titus renewed the road between Seleukeia and Klaudioupolis and from Olba to Diokaisareia, Hadrian completed the coastal road to the west of Anemourion and many other interventions are attested by numerous inscriptions (Pilhofer 2018a, 22–23).

11 See chapter 10.2.

12 Pilhofer 2018a, 19.

13 Blumenthal 1963, 104–122.

Achaemenid Empire, the region was ruled by the Seleucids.[14] During this time, the city of Seleukeia was founded, probably by Seleukos I Nikator, and the area around Olba was governed by the Teukrid dynasty of priest-kings.[15] If Kilikia Pedias was under the Seleucids, the coastal cities of Kilikia Tracheia were a battleground between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies.

In 133 BC, the Romans inherited the Isaurian territory that had once belonged to Attalos III of Pergamon (that is the area from Cape Sarpedon up to Pamphylia), which they gave to the King of Cappadocia, Ariarathes.[16] The Seleucid Kilikia Pedias instead fell into the hands of the Armenian King Tigranes, who coveted the Cilician harbour-cities as an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea. When the Roman Lucius Lucullus defeated Tigranes at the Battle of Tigranocerta in 68 BC, Antiochos XIII was established as King of Syria and Cilicia.

With the new organization of the empire by Pompey in 64 BC, Antiochos was discharged and both Kilikia Pedias and Kilikia Tracheia were finally unified, constituting a single province together with Pamphylia and Pisidia. Tarsos was the main city of the new province, to which, later, Cyprus and part of Phrygia were also joined.[17]

After the proconsulate of Cicero in 51–50 BC, Cilicia underwent a new division under Marcus Antonius. A large part of Kilikia Tracheia was given first to King Amyntas of Galatia, then at his death to Archelaos of Cappadocia, and afterwards to King Antiochos IV Epiphanes of Commagene. In the inland, the priest-king dynasty of Olba fell under the control of a princess called Aba[18] and Seleukeia and its surroundings were considered a free and autonomous city. Cyprus and the coastal cities of the Tracheia returned to the Ptolemies and Kilikia Pedias was instead annexed to Syria. What was once a unified territory was therefore divided in the first century BC into numerous microregions dominated by different kingdoms and cultures, and this situation left a deep impact in Cilicia's culture. Antiochos IV contributed to the Hellenization of the region, founding numerous cities (e. g. Antiochia epi Krago, Iotape, Germanikoupolis, Philadelpheia, and Eirenopolis) in order to control the territory.[19]

In 72 AD, the province was reorganized by Emperor Vespasian and the fragmentation of the territory came to an end. Cilicia became a unified province of the Roman Empire with Tarsos as its main city. Its borders were defined by the Amanos chain to the East, an undefined area between the city of Syedra and Iotape (probably the Sedra River) to the West, and the area called Isaurike (that is, the territory between the modern cities of Belören and Bozkır) was included in the north.[20]

From the second century BC until their suppression by Pompey in 67–66 BC, pirates frequently attacked Cilicia, settling in the coastal areas and plundering its cities.

Administrative subdivision of Cilicia between the second and fourth centuries AD

At the latest under Antoninus Pius, but most likely already under Hadrian, Cilicia became an eparchy with the name *Treis Eparchiai*, which included Cilicia, Lycaonia, Isauria.[21] The metropolises of these areas were: Tarsos for Cilicia, Laranda for Lycaonia, and Isaura (later Syedra) for Isauria.[22]

Like nearby Cappadocia, Cilicia was involved in the civil war of 193–194 between Septimius Severus and Pescennius Niger, who was defeated in 194 to the south of Issos. In memory for this victory, Emperor Septimius Severus built an arch with quadriga in the Pylai Kilikias. Despite this war, which involved the coastal cities as well,[23] the second and third centuries were a peaceful period, as attested by the recent excavations which have underlined a monumentalisation of many Cilician cities (e. g. Elaioussa Sebaste, Anemourion, Pompeioupolis, Antiocheia epi Krago, and Seleukeia).

These peaceful times came to an end in the second half of the third century, when, after the defeat of Emperor Valerian by Shapur I, Sasanian troops advanced to Cilicia. According to what is reported in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*, passing through Kilikia Pedias, the Sasanian king subjected many cities of the Isaurian inland and coast up to Selinous.[24]

Moreover, the historical sources report numerous revolts taking place in Isauria from the third to the fifth centuries.[25] The usurper Trebellian mentioned in the *Historia Augusta*[26] would have proclaimed himself King of Isauria around 260 (during the reign of Gallienus); although recent studies have interpreted him as a fictitious character,[27] actual raids by Isaurian bandits cannot be denied.

With the rise to power of Diocletian, a new reorganisation of the provinces of Asia Minor was undertaken. Cilicia was in-

14 For the history of Cilicia during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, see: Mitford 1980, 1230–1261.

15 On Olba and the Teucrid Dynasty, see: MacKay 1981.

16 For the probate dispute, see: Marek 2010, 320–322.

17 TIB 5, 32.

18 The Olba Dynasty of the Teukrid disappeared after the year 17 AD without leaving any traces (Staffieri 1978, 2–28).

19 For a detailed analysis of the cities founded by Antiochos IV, see: Magie 1950, 549; and Borgia 2013a, 87–98. For a study on the concept of "Romanization" (that is, of how strongly Roman influence shaped Cilicia and its inhabitants in light of literary sources and epigraphical evidence of the first and second centuries AD), see Susanne Pilhofer (Pilhofer 2015).

20 The *Life of Vespasian* lists the provinces annexed by Vespasian, including "Thraciam Ciliciam" (Suet., *Vesp*. 8.4.). For a definition of Isaurike as a territory, see: Pilhofer 2018a, 3, 6, 15.

21 Mitford 1980, 1248. See also: Ziegler 1999.

22 Pilhofer 2018a, 33.

23 Some troops were recruited between the inhabitants of Syedra. See: Sayar 2014, 333–342.

24 "And Syria, Cilicia and Cappadocia we burned, ruined and pillaged. In that campaign [the third] we conquered of the Roman Empire the town of Samosata, Alexandria on the Issus, Katabolos, Aegaea, Mopsuestia, Mallos, Adana, Tarsus, Augustinia, Zephyrion, Sebaste, Korykos, Anazarba ([Agrippas]), Kastabala, Neronias, Flavias, Nicopolis, Epiphaneia, Kelenderis, Anemurion, Selinus, Mzdu-[Myonpolis], Antioch, Seleukeia, Dometiopolis, Tyana, Caesarea [Meiakariri], Komana" (*Res Gestae Divi Saporis* 12–15; Frye 1984, 372).

25 TIB 5, 37.

26 *Hist. Aug*. Tyr. trig. 3.26. "Trebellianus". See: Magie 2014, 128–131.

27 See Feld 2005, 122–125; Pilhofer 2018a, 36.

cluded in the praetorian prefecture of the East (*Diocesis Orientis*) and administered by a *vicarius*, who resided in Antiocheia e epi Orontou. The administration of the province was taken over by a *praeses* who had no military command.

The region was once again divided in two parts: Isauria, with the metropolis of Seleukeia, incoporating the territories of the old eparchies Isauria, Lycaonia and the western part of the Eparchy Cilicia, i.e. Rough Cilicia; and Cilicia, corresponding to Kilikia Pedias, with Tarsos as the main city. The coastal strip with the cities of Korykos and Sebaste still belonged to Cilicia, although it was temporarily assigned to Isauria in the fifth century.[28]

In the fourth century the territory of Isauria was reduced in size and the territory of Isaurike was added to Lycaonia, which was founded around 370.[29] In this period and up to the fifth century, a strengthening of defenses was carried out in many Cilician cities.[30] It was probably due to the sharpening of the Isaurian raids,[31] also reported by Ammianus Marcellinus.[32]

At the beginning of the fifth century, under Emperor Theodosius II, the region was subjected to a new administrative change and was divided into three parts (fig. 2). The first, called Kilikia I, had Tarsos as in metropolis, to which were subjected the cities of Pompeioupolis, Elaioussa Sebaste, Korykos, Adana, Augusta, Mallos, and Zephyrion. The second part, to the east, was named Kilikia II and it had as its metropolis the city of Anazarbos, with eight other subordinate cities: Mopsouestia, Aigai, Epiphaneia, Alexandreia, Rossos, Eirenopolis, Phabias, and Kastabala. The third part was the westernmost and manteined the previous name: Isauria. Its metropolis was Seleukeia, which presided over 22 cities: Kelenderis, Anemourion, Titiopolis, Lamos, Antiocheia epi Krago, Iulosebaste, Kestroi, Selinous, Iotape, Diokaisareia, Olba, Klaudioupolis, Hierapolis, Dalisandos, Germanikoupolis, Eirenopolis of Isauria, Philadelpheia, Meloe, Adrasos, Sbide, Neapolis, and Lauzados.[33]

Emperor Zeno and his much-debated building activity in Isauria

The second half of the fifth century was strongly marked by the figure of Emperor Zeno. He was an Isaurian[34] named Tarasikodissa[35] and hailed from the city of Rousoumblada in Isauria. After his arrival in Constantinople, he changed his name in Zeno and was appointed as *comes domesticorum* by Emperor Leo. He married the emperor's daughter and received the office of *magister militum per Orientem*. In 469, he was sent to defeat a certain brigand named Indakos[36] from Papirios in Isauria[37] and then departed on other military campaigns in Thrace.[38] In 473, Leo I raised Zeno's son, Leo II, first to the rank of *Caesar* and then to that of *Augustus* but, due to the sudden death of the emperor and the young age of Leo II, Zeno was designated co-ruler of the empire. As a ruler, Zeno had no theological ambitions and he entrusted the management of religious issues to Bishop Akakios of Constantinople.[39] During his reign, Zeno had to struggle against several usurpations and conspiracies, in which both his mother-in-law Verina, the widow of Leon I, and his compatriot, Illous, were involved.

The first usurpation, which concerns us directly since it was linked to Isauria, was that of Basiliskos, brother of the empress, Verina. The conferment of the title *Augustus* on Zeno in 474 had eliminated the chance for Basiliskos to become ruler, pushing him to lead a rebellion and to crown himself emperor. Probably warned against the rebellion, Zeno and his wife Ariadne fled in 475, first to Chalcedon and then to Isauria. Theophanes Homologetes recounts that, once he had arrived in Isauria, he went to a place called "Ourba"[40] and then to Sbide,

28 Pilhofer 2018a, 37.

29 Bas. *Ep*. 138.

30 A precinct wall was built around the pilgrimage site of St. Thekla and the cities of Titiopolis, Korasion, and Anemourion. See chapters 5.4 and 8.2.2.

31 The question of the reality of insurrections caused by the Isaurians has long been debated by the scholars. Noel Lenski and Gilbert Dagron are in favour of the truth of Isaurian insurrections and report four revolts between 260 and 343 (Dagron 1978, 113–123; Lenski 1999a). The greatest would have been during the reign of Constantius II (353–354) in Lycaonia. Dagron related miracles 5 of St. Thekla (attack to Seleukeia) and 6 (siege of Ikonion) to this period. The second, between 368 and 377, is reported by Ammianus Marcellinus (Amm. Marc. *Res gestae* 27. 9. 6–7) and concerns the assault in Pamphylia and Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos. Events that may be dated to this period are mentioned in the miracles as: the plunder of Selinous (Mir. 27), the pillage of the monastery of St. Thekla (Mir. 28) and the presence of Saturninus in Isauria to aid the whole region against the Isauriens (Mir. 13). The third is mainly made of raids carried out under Arcadius (between 403 and 406) and it was reported in miracles 16, 19, and 32. Finally, a new Isaurian assault would have happened around 441, as cited in the miracles 27, 37 and 38. For a more comprehensive treatment of these uprising, see: Dagron 1978, 113–123. On the contrary, Philipp Pilhofer disagrees, considering that the interpretation of the sources and archaeological data made by Lenski and Burckhardt (Burckhardt 2013, 100–103) lacks critical analysis (Pilhofer 2018a, 39–40).

32 Amm. Marc. *Hist*. XIV 2. This passage, like many others in which the Isaurians were depicted as rebellious, has been recently interpreted as an attempt by Ammianus to exaggerate the dangerousness of the Isaurier (Feld 2005, 139–144). Pilhofer explains all the mentions in the sources as occasional raids of disorganized band of robbers, who ventured out of the mountains (Pilhofer 2018a, 40–41).

33 TIB 5, 88.

34 Although in late antique sources the Isaurians are represented as a barbarian tribe within the borders of the Roman Empire, recent studies have shown that it is not possible to talk about an Isaurian "ethnical identity," but only of a regional group of people mainly characterized by local identities and joined by a certain cultural unity. See: Pilhofer 2018a, 49–53.

35 The contemporary historian Kandidos in his *History* (Photios I.31) reports "Ταρασικοδίσσα Ῥουσουμβλαδεώτου" (See: Feld 2005, 238).

36 PLRE II, 590–591, "Indacus Cottunes."

37 The modern city of Bağdad Kırı about 100 km to the north of Anemourion. See: TIB 5, 374–375.

38 On Zeno's life, see: Kosinski 2010, 57–79.

39 In 482, Zeno promulgated the *Henotikon*, composed by Akakios as a compromise with the patriarch of Alexandria Peter III (also known as Peter Mongos). The act, in accordance with the Council of Chalcedon of 451, condemned the views of Nestorios and Eutyches as heretical and approved the twelve anathemas of Cyril of Alexandria, avoiding any definitive statement on one or two natures of Christ. (Euagr. *Hist. Eccl*. 3.14).

40 "Ourba" is probably to read as Olba, not least if it is described as a φρούριον (that is "fort"?) and not as a city.

a small town to the north of Germanikoupolis and at 10 km from Zenonopolis: "φεύγει εἰς Ἰσαυρίαν κατά τι φρούριον ἰσχυρὸν Οὐρβὰ καλούμενον, εἴς τε Σβίδην".[41] In Sbide, Illous and his brother Trokundes besieged Zeno.[42] During his exile in Isauria, Zeno showed a particular connection with the martyr Thekla. It is indeed recounted by Evagrius that the saint appeared before the emperor predicting his return to the throne. Soon after, Illous and Trokundes came over to Zeno's side and they all together, at the end of August 476 (that is, after about 20 months of exile), turned against Basiliskos in Constantinople and regained the throne. As an expression of gratitude, Zeno is said to have erected a *megistos temenos* to the saint.[43]

Towards the end of 479, Marcian, Emperor Leo's son-in-law, led a new, unsuccessful revolt in Constantinople against Zeno, but he was imprisoned in the Isaurian fortress of Papirion, supervised by Illous's soldiers.

In 484, a new uprising, this time led by Illous, broke out against Zeno, when the emperor deprived him of his office as chief military commander of the East and confiscated all his properties, which were donated to Isaurian cities.[44] Helped by Verina, who proclaimed Leontios emperor in Tarsos, Illous carried on the rebellion in Isauria, where he hoped to have the support of the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless, Zeno's forces prevailed, besieging the conspirators in Papirion until 488, when Indakos and Leontios were captured and executed. The reign of Zeno lasted, without any further attempts of usurpation, until his death on April 9, 491.

The interest manifested by Zeno in his homeland, together with a boom in the erection of church buildings in the fifth century, caused many scholars in the past to support the thesis that the emperor invested great finances in a church building program in Isauria during his almost 20-year reign.[45] However, the recent attribution of many basilicas to a later date (e. g. the East Church of Alahan to the Justinian time) and the lack of evidence for their direct connection to him, has reduced the importance of his building activity in Isauria.[46] Yet, even if the imperial interventions may not have been significant as previously believed, it cannot be denied that Isauria experienced a great boom in the second half of the fifth century, right at the time of the reign of Zeno, and that the emperor must have been responsible at least for Thekla's basilica.

From Anastasios to the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia

After Zeno's death, Anastasios was proclaimed emperor from the Illyrian Theme of Dyrrhachium. He was immediately required to deal with a new Isaurian insurrection of Longinus of Selinous (492–497). In 497, the war ended with the death of Longinus, who was captured at Antiocheia epi Krago, and with the deportation of many Isaurians to Thrace.[47]

There followed a period of great peace but also of natural catastrophes and pestilences: Anazarbos was struck by earthquakes in 525 and 561; the Kydnos River flooded twice in Tarsos (537 and 550); between 542 and 543 and again after 561 raged a plague.

During Justinian's reign numerous renovations and restoration of previous buildings are attested (a monastery in Apadnas, the circuit walls at Anazarbos, a thermal bath and an almshouse in Korykos, an aqueduct dedicated to Konon and the almshouse of Konon),[48] despite the fact that few churches that can be assigned to his period.

Between 602 and 628, the Byzantine Empire and the Sasanian Empire fought a long war for supremacy in the East. Most of the battles involved the Cilician territories also: towards the end of the sixth century, Philippikos was in charge of marching from his camp in Cilicia against the Persians. In 613, Emperor Heraclius was defeated by the Persians in front of the walls of Antiocheia e epi Orontou and retreated to Cilicia. He was overwhelmed, probably at the Pylai Kilikias, and the whole region was occupied by the Persians. The Byzantines erected a garrison in the city of Seleukeia, but in 618 they were forced to move to Isaura Vetus, as the Persians reached and occupied Seleukeia. In 622, they controlled the whole Isaurian coast, but with the victory of Heraclius at the Battle of Nineveh, a temporary period followed in which the ancient boundaries in the Middle East were maintained.

The defeat of Yarmuk in 636 marked the end of Byzantine rule in Syria and the beginning of the occupation of Cilicia by the Arabs, who populated many cities with new communities that were settled by the Abbasids (as, for example, in Anazarbos).[49]

For the whole of the seventh century, the border between the two empires was the Lamos River and the Kalykadnos region was the battleground for Arab-Byzantine conflicts, al-

41 Thph. *Chron*. AM 5967.30–31. To be translated, in my opinion, as: "He fled to Isauria, near a kind of strong fort called Ourba and to Sbide".

42 TIB 5, 400.

43 For the discussion on that topic: see chapter 8.2.2.

44 John of Antioch writes that the emperor gave the Isaurian cities the resources accumulated by Illous in Isauria (Io. Ant. *Hist*., Frg. 306, 3–5). See Kosinski 2010, 216.

45 Although Zeno is attested in a written source as the founder of only the pilgrimage site of Thekla (Euagr. *Hist. Eccl*. 3.8), all the Isaurian churches with centralized plans have been attributed to him: Dağ Pazarı, Alakilise, Hagia Thekla, Korykos, Öküzlü, and Kanlıdivane. In favour of this assignation are: Mango 1966, 358–365; Gough 1972, 199–212; Hill 1996, 15–18; Feld 2005, 297–301. Kosinski suggests that Zeno concentrated his building activities on his home province in order to ingratiate the Isaurians, who represented the greatest threat to his rule (Kosinski 2010, 216).

46 Elton 2002, 153–157; Mietke 2009c, 36–40; Wetzig 2014, 393–444. Mietke has recently demonstrated that the architectural sculpture of Alahan, for example, is not as outstanding as believed, because such ornamental sculpture differs in style from that ascribed to Zeno and is attested also in cities and villages not connected with the emperor's activity.

47 Thph. *Chron.* AM 5988. This fact may explain the spread of the famous Isaurian builders beyond the region and their activities in many famous buildings of Constantinople, Palestina, and so on. See: Mango 1966.

48 Prok. *De Aed*. 5.9.31–38. See also the chapter: "Saint Konon of Bidana through literary sources and material evidence".

49 Varinlioğlu 2019 b.

though the Isaurian inland territory remained undisturbed and not involved in the numerous battles between the two empires, probably due to its inhospitable mountainous terrain.[50] In 718–719, the last Byzantine military outpost in Isauria was lost.[51]

Both written and archaeological sources confirm a process of ruralization, depopulation and a substantial reduction of a large-scale trade during the seventh and eighth centuries in Cilicia. An example is provided by the well-excavated sites of Anemourion and Elaioussa Sebaste, which both attest a reduction in the size of the cities already by the end of the seventh century.[52] If we compare them with the nearby island of Cyprus, it is possible that in Cilicia the decline of coastal cities and the end of a trade network also led to a reorganization of the economy as one more oriented towards subsistence farming. Recent research has indeed shown that the population once inhabiting the coasts of Cyprus shifted to inland settlements, continuing to live there.[53] As recently shown by Günder Varinlioğlu,[54] during the period of Arab domination in Isauria, the seals of several imperial and ecclesiastical officials in Seleukeia and Korykos prove a continuity of administrative, religious and military activities, probably linked to the sustenance of the military forces. Moreover, there is also evidence of the survival of settlements in the inland. It is possible that the population practiced semi-nomadic pastoralism in the Tauros Mountains during the summer, when the danger from the Arabs was high, and that they spent the seasons safe from Arab raids (autumns and winters) in settlements such as Işıkkale and Karakabaklı, located at a lower altitude and not well defended. The limited use of *spolia* shows that they reused old structures or built new ones with perishable materials.[55]

In 965, the Byzantines reconquered Mopsouestia and Tarsos; four years later, they also retook Antiocheia, and the front shifted to Syria. In the eleventh century, the Armenians took over the rule of Cilicia; their kingdom, called the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, was founded in 1080 by the Rubenid dynasty. Their capital was first set in Tarsos and then in Sis (modern Kozan, 70 km north east of Adana) and their reign lasted until 1375, when the Mamluks defeated the Lusignan Dynasty.[56]

50 TIB 5, 47–49.

51 For a more detailed account of the war between Byzantines and Arabs in Cilicia, see: TIB 5, 43–47.

52 Russell 1987, 22–23; Equini Schneider 1999.

53 On Cyprus between the seventh and eighth centuries see: Zavagno – Kızılduman 2018, 233–251.

54 Varinlioğlu 2008, 314–315.

55 *Ibid*. 316–317.

56 A short historical introduction to the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia can be found in Robert 1987, 3–288.

2. History of research on Cilicia

The short history of research that follows is intended as a general overview of the main investigations conducted on Cilicia. Each chapter is subsequently structured with its own introduction focused on the specific excavation projects and studies on the site.

Starting with a short description of the travelers who visited the country between the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, I will move to dwell on the specialized studies on Cilicia and Isauria carried out in the last century, dividing them thematically: first topographical and social contributions, then studies on church architecture and the cult of the saints. Finally, a short overview will be given on current (or recently concluded) archaeological excavations in the region.

2.1 Ancient and modern travelers' notes

Unlike most other provinces of Asia Minor, Cilicia, and especially Isauria, was scarcely visited by travelers before the beginning of the 20th century, for various reasons. First of all, the region had an unhealthy climate and many areas suffered from malaria, at least until the first decades of the 20th century. Moreover, most of the sites were located far from the coastal and easily reachable roads and the political situation was permanently unstable.

Except for a short mention in the account of a medieval traveler called Wilbrandus de Oldenborg, who came from the Holy Land to visit some of the religious sites of Cilicia in 1209,[1] the first thorough description of the region comes from Captain Francis Beaufort at the beginning of the 19th century. As a hydrographer employed by the Royal English Admiralty, Beaufort charted and explored the coasts of southern Anatolia throughout 1811–1812, also mapping and describing extensive ruins of settlements or cities previously unknown in his book *Karamania*.[2]

Some years later, between 1817–1818, Charles Leonard Irby and James Mangles, officers of the Royal Navy, could not complete their journey because of the bad health conditions of the territory.[3]

As in the case of the Beaufort expedition, most voyages were motivated primarily by the political and strategic needs of European countries. Nevertheless, there are a few examples of individual initiatives, such as those of the French antiquarian and traveler Alexandre who, accompanied by his son Lèon de Laborde, travelled from Silifke to Tarsos (1826)[4]. In all cases, political or individual motivations were associated with a strong interest and knowledge of the archaeological heritage of the region.

The rough landscape and bad condition of roads and bridges led many explorers (i.e. Bertrandon de la Broquiere, Jean Otter, William Francis Ainsworth, Cristina Balbiano di Belgiojoso)[5] to restrict their research only to coastal areas, the Kalykadnos valley, or Plain Cilicia.

During the years 1852–1853, the French historian and archaeologist Victor Langlois extensively explored the whole region and provided the first description of many hitherto unknown sites of the Tauros Mountains.[6]

What makes the study of the texts written by ancient travelers particularly useful and interesting is their importance in witnessing to the presence of monuments that no longer exist and parts of structures now totally destroyed. Until the middle of the 20th century, groups of semi-nomadic people occupied large areas where the ancient cities once stood, which caused the dismantling of many ancient places in order to build new temporary constructions.[7] Already between 1870 and 1880, Louise Duchesne and Maxime Collignon could no longer find many of the inscriptions previously mentioned by Beaufort and Langlois or the monuments recorded at Kelenderis.[8]

In 1889, the hot climatic conditions and the danger of malaria, together with personal circumstances, led Theodore Bent to quit his exploration of Cilicia early.[9] Nonetheless, he and the epigraphist Edward Lee Hicks were the first travelers to investigate the hilly area around the Lamos River, discovering numerous new settlements (such as Tapureli) and they provided an exhaustive catalogue of the discovered inscriptions of eastern and western Cilicia.[10]

Between 1891 and 1892, Rudolf Heberdey and Adolf Wilhelm carried out two journeys to Cilicia in order to execute the first epigraphical survey of the region: initially in Isauria (1891) and then in Kilikia Pedias (1892).[11]

The historian Pierre Léonce Marcar Alishan travelled to Cilicia at the end of the 19th century and drew attention for the first time to the Armenian phase of domination of Cilicia, publishing a contribution entitled *Sissouan ou l'Arméno-Cili-*

1 Borgia 2003a, 43.
2 Beaufort 1818.
3 Irby – Mangles 1823, 529–530.
4 Laborde 1838.
5 Borgia 2003a, 44.
6 Langlois 1861.
7 An example comes from the coastal cities of Pompeioupolis and Selinous, where ruins were used as stone quarries for new buildings.
8 Duchesne – Collignon 1877, 373–376; Collignon 1880, 913.
9 Bent 1890a.
10 Bent 1890b and 1891.
11 Heberdey – Wilhelm 1896.

cie.[12] This book provides both a geographical description of the region and a detailed account of the Armenian history of the region.

A fundamental contribution to the study of Byzantine remains in Cilicia was made by the explorations undertaken by the archaeologist Gertrude Bell between 1905 and 1907. Mainly focused on the mountainous part of Kilikia Pedias and on the sites up to Korykos, her notes contributed precise descriptions of the structures that were still standing and are accompaned by a conspicuous array of black and white photographs and drawings that record the condition of many sites at the beginning of the 20th century.

Two last contributions at the beginning of the 20th century were focused on the study of inscriptions. The first is the work of the archaeologists Roberto Paribeni and Pietro Romanelli, who travelled in 1913 through Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Cilicia, recording all the inscriptions found on their way and providing a short description of the sites. In Cilicia, they took into consideration mainly the cities of Mersin, Pompeioupolis, Tarsos, Elaioussa Sebaste, Korykos, and Seleukeia.[13] The major contribution on epigraphical evidence is that of Josef Keil and Adolf Wilhelm published in 1931 under the title *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua III: Denkmäler aus dem Rauhen Kilikien*. These two archaeologists made a survey of the area included between the rivers Kalykadnos and Lamos in 1925 and provided an updated catalogue of the previously unrecorded inscriptions of Seleukeia, Korasion, Korykos, Elaioussa Sebaste, Diokaisareia, and Olba, accompanied by plans of the ancient sites and photographs of the ruins. A last recent work on funerary inscriptions has been printed in 2021 by Cubas Díaz. In his doctoral thesis the author focused on funerary culture of Rough Cilicia and on its developments from the Imperial period to Late Antiquity. Mapping funerary monuments and their inscriptions, Cubas Díaz provides an update work on grave monuments and inscriptions of Diokaisarea, Elaioussa Sebaste, Karakabaklı, Işıkkale, Korasion and Korykos.[14]

2.2. Topographical and social studies

In the middle of the 20th century, George Ewart Bean and Terence Bruce Mitford made topographical explorations of the rough part of Cilicia between the river Melas (modern Manavgat Nehri[15] on the westernmost side of Isauria at the border with Pamphylia) and the Kaykadnos River. Records of the two journeys—the first carried out between 1962 and 1963 and the second between 1964 and 1968—have been published in two volumes, organised according to diferent methodological principles.[16] The first one gives a description of the coastal cities from Seleukeia in Pamphyia up to Kelenderis in Isauria. The second, published in 1970, instead provided information on the landscape and geographical features, and reports in addition some unrecorded inscriptions.

Between 1960 and 1980, the German historian and geographer Hansgerd Hellenkemper and the Austrian specialist in Byzantine studies Friedrich Hild published numerous contributions on Cilicia. The most important is the two-volumes publication, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini - Kilikien und Isaurien* (TIB 5), that offers a very useful topographical catalogue of all settlements and major and minor urban centers, ordered according to an alphabetical index, and in which a brief history of the place is given and the visible monuments are described.[17]

Mustafa Hamdi Sayar, professor of Classical Archaeology at the University of Istanbul, has carried out numerous surveys in Cilicia (both Pedias and Tracheia) over the last twenty years, mainly focused on the analysis of settlements, historical geography of the land, and road networks between Roman times and Late Antiquity.[18] He began to fill one of the biggest gaps in research on Kilikia Pedias, namely the lack of a study on the inscriptions such as that made in the 19th century for Isauria, by publishing a volume with the inscriptions found in the area around Anazarbos and Hierapolis Kastabala.[19] A complementary volume by the same author on Kilikia Tracheia has been in progress for about ten years.

A typological study of Early Byzantine houses in the hinterland of Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos was the topic of the doctoral thesis of Ina Eichner, completed in 2003.[20] She documented and studied 20 houses and domestic complexes in eleven settlements lying on rural roads connecting the coast to the urban centers of the inland. Architectural drawings and photographs complete the systematic and comparative study of the remains, perfectly inserted in the landscape and road network of the region.

Furthermore, numerous studies have been carried out by the archaeologist Günder Varinlioğlu, Professor in the Art History Department at Mimar Sinan University of Istanbul, on the rural landscape in Isauria and its exploitation in Late Antiquity.[21] Through the analysis of different settlements in the hinterland of Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos, the Lamos valley, and the coastal area between the city of Aphrodisias and the port of Holmoi, the scholar investigates several aspects: architectural features of their remains, their development and transformation process between the Roman period and Late Antiquity, and the connection to the main urban centers.

Karl Feld wrote an entire book, published in 2005 on the basis of his doctoral thesis, on the relationship between the Isaurians and the Roman Empire between the first century BC and the sixth century AD. This contribution is very interesting as it represents the first attempt to treat the question of banditry in Isauria from the Roman Republic up to the reign of the Emperor Zeno in light of the topographical condition of the land-

12 Alishan 1899.
13 Paribeni – Romanelli 1914.
14 Cubas Díaz 2021.
15 Pliny the Elder considered it the border between Pamphylia and Cilicia (Plin. *Hist. Nat*. 5.22).
16 Bean – Mitford 1965; Bean – Mitford 1970.
17 Hellenkemper – Hild 1990.
18 Sayar 2002; 2005.
19 Sayar 2000.
20 Eichner 2011.
21 Varinlioğlu 2008; 2011; 2019b.

scape.[22] Although strongly criticized,[23] this monography is the only one that deals with the whole Isaurian territory. However, it lacks adequate analysis of the connection between the historical background and updated archaeological material.

Numerous topographical and social studies have been published in the last ten years by Emanuela Borgia, archaeologist and Associate Professor at the University of Rome La Sapienza. With particular attention given to the epigraphical sources of Isauria, Borgia has written archaeological contributions on onomastics,[24] social composition and professions[25] and building activities connected to public sponsorship or private benefaction.[26] These works, together with those of Varinlioğlu, represent fundamental contributions aimed at interpreting archaeological data that was until recently only recorded and roughly described in catalogues of researchers from the beginning of the 20th century and never reviewed in a modern publication.[27] Moreover, they provide important information on the social composition of the inhabitants of the rough territory of Isauria and on the topography of the area in light of specific archaeological case studies, based on excavations in which both authors participated for several years.

A recent contribution, aimed at analysing the strict relationship between urban and periurban space in Late Antiquity, has been written by the author[28] on the monasteries of Cilicia and Isauria. Here appears also a careful comparison with the neighbouring region of Lycia and with territory around Antiocheia on the Orontes.

Finally, the recent publications of Troels Myrup Kristensen, Professor of Classical Art and Archaeology at Aarhus University, brought a significant, innovative contribution by examining the sacred topography of the Kalykadnos area with a new approach, which has exercised strong influence on the present study. Combining the textual perspectives of traditions related to Thekla with the physical landscape and architectural features of the sacred places around Meryemlik, he proposed a new field of study focused on the way a visitor may have experienced the ancient landscape, moving between sacred and pagan space and interacting with the sacredness of the area.[29]

2.3 Studies on late antique church architecture and the cult of saints

An important figure in the history of research on early Christian architecture and art in Cilicia is Michael Gough, who was active in the mid-20th century.[30] He, together with his wife Mary, conducted numerous excavations in Alahan and surveys of the surrounding area, contributing thereby to the reconstruction of the history of an important complex of Rough Cilicia and to the creation of comparisons with other religious structures of the region.[31]

Two important contributions on the church architecture of Cilicia and Isauria were published in the last decade of the 20th century. The first concise catalogue of the main religious buildings of Cilicia and Isauria is the lexicon of Friedrich Hild, Hansgerd Hellenkemper, and Gisela Hellenkemper-Salies, *Kommagene–Kilikien–Isaurien*, first published in 1990.[32] While this work has the great merit of reporting the principal bibliography on the studies carried out on the main religious buildings of late antique Cilicia, not all the churches of the region are taken into consideration.

The archaeologist Stephen Hill wrote a more comprehensive work on Byzantine church architecture in the region some years later (1996). In his volume, Hill analysed all the late antique Cilician and Isaurian churches, arranged alphabetically, trying to underline their strong regional character in opposition to previous contributions, which saw Cilician churches as provincial copies of metropolitan prototypes.[33] Although this text remains the most complete catalogue of religious architecture in Cilicia, in some places the archaeological description of the buildings is inaccurate and absolutely devoid of any reference to literary sources.

In 2009, numerous studies on Saint Paul and his journeys in Cilicia, which had been presented between 1993 and 2008 at symposia held in Tarsos and Antiocheia, organized by the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality of the Pontifical Antonianum University, were published in three volumes. These contributions come from four perspectives: archeology of the Pauline sites, historical / cultural context and exegesis, theology, and reception.[34]

Between 1999 and 2007, Stephan Westphalen carried out an architectural study on some late antique basilicas in Isauria (Kanlıdivane, Diokaisareia, Işıkkale)[35] and wrote his habilitation project (unfortunately still unpublished) on the function of the eastern side chambers in Cilician churches of the fifth and sixth centuries.[36]

In the same period, specialized contributions aimed at analyzing the relationship between late antique Cilician basilicas and previous pagan structures were also published: the short volume, *Temple to Church* of Hugh Elton, Eugenia Equini Schneider, and Detlev Wannagat,[37] and the more exhaustive

22 Feld 2005.
23 Elton 2007b; Meyer 2007.
24 Borgia 2005; 2010; 2017; 2018.
25 Borgia 2012; 2020.
26 Borgia 2013b.
27 The project of Sayar on the inscriptions of Cilicia Tracheia is, as previously mentioned, still in process.
28 Cortese 2022. The book contains different contributions on the topic "urban space between Roman Age and Late Antiquity" and it is a proceedings of a Symposium held at the University of Regensburg in February 2020.
29 Kristensen 2016; 2017.
30 Gough 1952; 1954b; 1955b; 1972.
31 See chapter 9 for a detailed bibliography on the excavations of Gough at Alahan.
32 RBK 4, 182–355.
33 Hill 1996.
34 Padovese 2009a; 2009b; 2009c.
35 Mietke – Westphalen 1999, 517–526; Wannagat – Westphalen 2007, 1–24; Westphalen 2015, 535–552.
36 Westphalen 2007 (unpublished).
37 Elton *et al.* 2007.