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## Trade and Exchange in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Model from Cyprus

### *Introduction. Connectivity and Economy*

In the historiography of the Roman and Late Antique Mediterranean, the city has always held a privileged place in “meetings between cultures,” and especially those kinds of encounters under discussion here today-economic interaction and exchange. Traditional studies of the Roman economy have highlighted cities as *central places* in regional exchange, which consume resources produced by the countryside or redistribute them to urban centers beyond the region<sup>1</sup>. In recent scholarship on Roman trade, the city maintains its traditional place, yet there is also a growing sense of the complexity of the ancient economy at the regional level. It is not, of course, that the categories of *town and countryside* have become unimportant for a study of the Roman economy, but rather that the scope of the discussion is significantly expanding. An explosion of scholarship on trade and exchange has occurred concomitant with an increasingly complex picture of regional settlement patterns that include not only urban centers and farmsteads, but a range of settlement types in between<sup>2</sup>. Given this local diversity, we can certainly appreciate the recent arguments by Horden and Purcell for viewing the Mediterranean not in the simple terms of city and countryside but through the lens of “connectivity”. Connectivity, they argue, contextualizes urban centers as simply the largest nodes within a broad matrix of exchange and elevates the smaller links of the chain. Villas, villages, and small towns may have lacked urban status but they still produced surpluses, participated in trans-regional exchange, and functioned with varying degrees of economic autonomy<sup>3</sup>.

The island of Cyprus provides a fitting case study for exploring regional and trans-regional connectivity in the Roman and Late Antique periods. The small island was never a central place in the Roman economy per se but it did sit astride major maritime trade routes linking Egypt, the Aegean, and the Levant, and was, by consequence, connected directly to the wider Mediterranean matrix. Moreover, while Cyprus had its fair share of sizable urban centers-Salamis, Paphos, Kition, and Kourion, for example-regional archaeological surveys have demonstrated the island’s rather busy countryside, with a breadth of smaller settlements that flourished in the Roman and Late Antique periods<sup>4</sup>. The southern coast of the island, especially, in its position alongside the major east-west trade networks, prospered throughout the Roman period, producing a whole range of settlements such as large urban centers, smaller urbanized settlements, harbor towns, villages, rural villas, and monasteries. The diversity of site sizes and types reflects

<sup>1</sup> WEBER 1968; FINLEY 1985.

<sup>2</sup> WARD-PERKINS 2000; KINGSLEY, DECKER 2001; CHAVARRÍA, LEWIT 2004, 11–15.

<sup>3</sup> HORDEN, PURCELL 2000, 123–172.

<sup>4</sup> RAUTMAN 2003, 247–255.

the exceptional vitality of the Roman economy on the island<sup>5</sup>. In this respect, regional and local variations in ceramic assemblages, architectural style, and other material culture may reveal more than the material consequences of stable trade relationships but evidence of individual communities articulating distinct economic, cultural, and political identities.

### ***Koutsopetria – Overview***



Fig. 1 – View across the site of Pyla-Koutsopetria (R. Scott Moore).



Fig. 2 – Fieldwalkers counting and collecting artifacts using the Chronotype system (R. Scott Moore).

across the site (fig. 3). The geological work included a series of deep cores in low-lying areas of the site confirming that this part of the coastline was a protected embayment during the Roman and Late Antique periods, and consequently, connected to major maritime routes. The location of the settlement was also positioned at the junction of a terrestrial crossroads—the main coastal route between Kition and Salamis-Constantina, and the inland road that ran north toward the Mesaoria plain. Thus, *Koutsopetria* not only had direct access to the sea through its own small harbor, but it also had overland links to the two major ports on the eastern side of the island: Kition and Salamis-Constantina<sup>7</sup>.

Since 2003, a team from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, the University of North Dakota, and Messiah College has systematically investigated the site of *Koutsopetria* with an eye toward defining the character of its material assemblage in both an island-wide and Mediterranean context. The micro-region of *Koutsopetria* is located around 10 km from the city center of Larnaka and encompasses the 400 ha coastal zone of Pyla village. Topographers and travelers long ago noted the abundance of ceramic material in the fields, but only recently has the site been investigated systematically. Limited excavations by the Department of Antiquities in the 1990s revealed the apse of a well-appointed early Christian basilica as well as various annexes associated with the church (fig. 1)<sup>6</sup>.

Over the last 6 seasons, the Pyla-*Koutsopetria* Archaeological Project (PKAP) has investigated the site of *Koutsopetria* through intensive pedestrian survey, geological survey, electrical resistivity, and small-scale excavations. In the course of intensive pedestrian survey, we recorded an extensive spread of ceramics in addition to *in situ* walls, cut limestone and gypsum blocks, olive press equipment, basins, marble column fragments, and carved gypsum (fig. 2). These features, together with ubiquitous artifacts like roof tiles, mortar fragments, cobble, marble revetment, plaster, cement, glass, millstone, and pithoi provide evidence for substantial buildings and intensive habitation and land use

<sup>5</sup> HADJISAVVAS 1997; LEONARD 2005.

<sup>6</sup> CARAHER *ET AL.* 2005, 253–254.

<sup>7</sup> CARAHER *ET AL.* 2007, 293–303.



Fig. 3 – Check dam (R. Scott Moore).

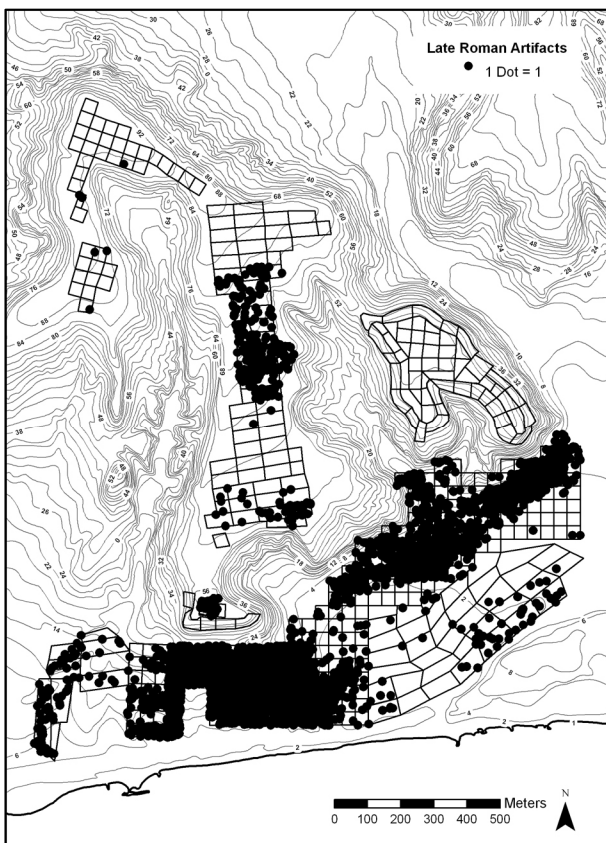


Fig. 4 – Late Roman ceramic densities (William Caraher).

The overall distribution of ceramics on the surface indicates that the site extended about 1 km along the ancient east-west coastal road between Kition and Salamis-Constantina. It is bounded in the north by a series of abrupt coastal ridges upon which Late Roman activity appears to have been relatively limited. Modern coastal development prevented us from investigating the site's eastern and western extension, but the decline in artifact densities to both the east and west suggest that the settlement was concentrated between the embayment and the excavated Early Christian basilica (fig. 4). At approximately 30-40 ha in size, *Koutsopetria* exceeds the dimensions of the typical Roman Cypriot village, like *Kopetra*, yet it is still substantially smaller than the island's urban centers. The site's coastal location, size, and substantial buildings suggest that the site is more complex than rural villages and sharing aspects in common with larger urban centers. It may be best to interpret it as a market town of the type mentioned by John Moschos in the sixth century<sup>8</sup>.

#### *Late Roman Ceramics*

Late Roman pottery provides the best and most abundant evidence for examining *Koutsopetria's* place in eastern Mediterranean exchange networks. Almost 40% of the 18,000 artifacts collected and analyzed by PKAP date to the Roman or Late Roman periods, providing us with a robust and diverse sample for analysis. While almost every functional class of pottery is represented in this assemblage, transport amphora and red-slipped fine wares make up close to 1/3 of the diagnostic material from the Roman and Late Roman period and provide the most precise indication of patterns of exchange (19% are transport amphora sherds and 8% are fine ware sherds). Amphoras and fine wares, of course, are particularly significant for mapping engagement with intra and inter-regional trade connections, the availability of certain object classes, and local consumer tastes. Fine ware and amphoras also

indicate the degree to which the site depended on local Cypriot products such as Cypriot Red Slip and locally-produced Late Roman 1 amphoras, and imports from further abroad, like red-slipped plates from North Africa and Asia Minor, or transport vessels (Late Roman 2) from Palestine and the Aegean. Consequently, the assemblages of both amphoras and fine wares contribute to our questions about the patterns of exchange that informed local consumer taste.

<sup>8</sup> JOHN MOSCHOS, *Prat. Sp.* 30.

We can begin by examining the amphora distributions. Amphorae from all periods make up approximately 15% of our total quantity of pottery from *Koutsopetria* with Late Roman amphorae accounting for 62% of all ancient amphorae. Late Roman 1 Amphora was the largest category of Late Roman amphora, representing 30% of PKAP's total amphorae from the Late Roman period and 80% of the identifiable amphora types. Late Roman 1 Amphora was, of course, one of the most widely traded amphorae of the 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD in the eastern Mediterranean and is associated with olive oil and wine production<sup>9</sup>. A number of production sites for this vessel type in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries have been located along the southern coast of Cyprus (Zygi, Paphos and perhaps Amathous) and on the Cilician coast<sup>10</sup>. We have identified seven subclasses of LR1 Amphora Types based on fabric differences. Such variety in Late Roman 1 amphora fabric is not unusual on Cyprus - there were 4 main subclasses at *Kopetra*, for example - but does indicate multiple production sites and suggests that trade on the island was not merely a matter of access to materials, but was selective, in fact<sup>11</sup>.

A closer examination of the Late Roman 1 amphorae shows that at *Koutsopetria*, 25% of the LR1 amphora have a fabric type that it has been suggested was produced in Cilicia and Syria. The largest number of Late Roman 1 amphora at *Koutsopetria* (58%) have a fabric whose origin is believed to have been south-central Cyprus. This Late Roman 1 fabric, often identified as Rautman LR1(1), is also the most frequently found Late Roman 1 sherd at Panayia Ematousa and Maroni<sup>12</sup>. Despite the relatively high number of Cypriot-produced Late Roman 1 amphora at our site, it is interesting to note that none of the brick red Late Roman I amphora produced at Kourion were found at *Koutsopetria*. At *Kopetra*, however, this ratio is reversed with over 42% of the Late Roman1 amphora being from Cilicia and Syria, and approximately 13% being from south central Cyprus<sup>13</sup>. The greater proportion of locally produced LR1 fabrics at Maroni and *Koutsopetria* might reflect their function as ports for exporting locally produced agricultural produce rather than major hubs for importing wine and olive oil from abroad in foreign made amphoras.

Comparing PKAP's Late Roman amphora collection with other nearby sites suggests both significant similarities and differences. In terms of similarities, Late Roman 1 Amphora sherds represent the dominant class of Late Roman amphoras at the small villages of Maroni and *Kopetra*, located some 50 km west of Kition. At Maroni, Late Roman 1 accounted for 21% of Late Roman amphora by weight, while at *Kopetra*, LR1 Amphoras made up 2/3 of all amphora sherds. Both sites, however, produce much greater diversity of amphora types than *Koutsopetria*. *Kopetra*, for example, produced 13 identifiable amphora types compared to the 5 types identified at *Koutsopetria*<sup>14</sup>. In fact, *Koutsopetria* shows greater similarity to the village of Panayia Ematousa, another site in the immediate hinterland of Kition - some 6.5 km north and inland of the city. Panayia Ematousa, like *Koutsopetria*, lacks Late Roman 4 amphora, the most common imported amphora at both Maroni and *Kopetra*<sup>15</sup>. The differences in proportions between Maroni and *Kopetra*, on the one hand, and *Koutsopetria* and Panayia Ematousa on the other, reinforces the hypothesis that *Koutsopetria* was more heavily engaged in exporting than importing.

It is clear that *Koutsopetria* imported Late Roman amphora from only a few locations in the Eastern Mediterranean, primarily Cilicia and Syria and that its importation of amphora from other regions was limited or non-existent. Only one example of a Palestinian bag amphora (Peacock and Williams Class 46) was found at PKAP, and while the numbers are low for other Cypriot sites (Maroni <1% and *Kopetra* <3%) this is surprising considering the close proximity of the Levantine coast to the southern Cypriot coast<sup>16</sup>. A similar situation holds true for amphorae imported from Africa with only one North African amphora sherd with being found at *Koutsopetria*, and no Egyptian amphorae. Also uncommon are Late Roman 2 amphorae produced

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<sup>9</sup> PEACOCK, WILLIAMS 1986, 185–187.

<sup>10</sup> ELTON 2005, 691–693.

<sup>11</sup> RAUTMAN 2003, 168–170.

<sup>12</sup> JACOBSEN 2006, 310–311; MANNING 2002, 42–43.

<sup>13</sup> RAUTMAN 2003, 170.

<sup>14</sup> MANNING 2002, 42–43; RAUTMAN, 168–175.

<sup>15</sup> JACOBSEN 2006, 306.

<sup>16</sup> MANNING 2002, 42; RAUTMAN 2003, 172.

in the Aegean and Black Sea region. Low numbers were reported at all nearby sites: Kopetra (1.9%), *Koutsopetria*, Panayia Ematousa, and Maroni < 1%. These relatively low percentages of amphora imports, especially Late Roman 4 (which is common at other sites), suggests that *Koutsopetria* is participating selectively in the trade along the southern Cypriot coast and that factors other than availability are determining *Koutsopetria's* involvement.

The analysis of fine wares produced a different picture of the place of *Koutsopetria* in Late Roman exchange networks. The most distinct pattern at the site, when compared to other sites on the island, is the frequency of African Red Slip. In part, this is a result of the highly diagnostic fabric of African Red Slip that makes it easy to identify even from body sherds, but even if we exclude body sherds from our analysis, African Red Slip still accounts for over 20% of the total Rim/Base/Handle (RBH) assemblage of Roman and Late Roman fine wares at *Koutsopetria*. To be sure, this proportion is lower than Cypriot Red Slip (47.8%), but it is immediately comparable to Phocaean Ware (20.3%), the other main fine ware imported to *Koutsopetria*, and is higher than local imitation wares (8.4%) or scant Egyptian Red Slips (0.4%).

The frequency of African Red Slip at *Koutsopetria* is also high when compared to other sites on the island. At Panagia Ematousa, African Red Slip accounts for only 2% of the diagnostic Late Roman fine wares; Phocaean Ware and Cypriot Red Slip form the greater proportion of wares<sup>17</sup>. At Kopetra and Maroni, Cypriot Red Slips predominates followed by Phocaean Wares and African Red Slip<sup>18</sup>. Even large urban centers like Kourion generally depended on local Cypriot Red Slip for, according to Hayes' recent published analysis, the site produced only "moderate quantities" of Phocaean Ware and African Red Slip<sup>19</sup>. While Hayes' analysis of the proportions of the major classes of fine wares are imprecise, it seems to have closer parallels with the distributions of Late Roman material at *Koutsopetria* than the site of Panagia Ematousa which is also in the immediate neighborhood of Kition.

This analysis of fine ware is admittedly basic but it is sufficient to allow us to offer some broad observations regarding the variation in the proportions of Late Roman fine wares on Cyprus. First, the differing proportions of fine ware do not appear to reflect differences in chronology between sites on the southern coast of Cyprus. Maroni, Kopetra, and the nearby Panayia Ematousa all experienced peaks in activity during the 6th century A.D. and experienced decline during the early 7th century. Second, the differences between the four sites should reflect different engagements in Late Roman markets in semi-luxury goods like imported fine wares - engagements that are not simply a result of supply patterns or differential access. The frequency of African Red Slip at *Koutsopetria*, for example, distinguishes it from contemporary coastal and inland villages west of Kition, like Maroni and Kopetra, where African Red Slip is present but in lower proportions than at *Koutsopetria*. Even more telling are the different proportions of African Red Slip at contemporary sites in the immediate hinterland of Kition - *Koutsopetria* and Panayia Ematousa. The final publication of Late Roman ceramics from Kition may help us to understand the degree to which *Koutsopetria* and *Panayia Ematousa* overlapped in the exchange patterns of the larger urban center, but regardless, we can conclude that imported Late Roman fine wares do not appear in predictable ways across Kition's hinterland.

The patterning of African Red Slip at the site of *Koutsopetria* might shed some light on its significance to the community. Unlike Cypriot Red Slip and Phocaean Ware which follow closely the overall distribution of Late Roman pottery across the entire survey area at *Koutsopetria*, African Red Slip is most common in the highest density units which made up the core of the settlement. We have not thus far identified any African Red Slip from the top of the coastal ridges where Late Roman activity appears to have been more limited. Conversely, the coincidence of African Red Slip and monumental architecture - including marble and gypsum fragments, wall-painting, and opus sectile floors - suggests that the core zone of settlement saw a substantial investment in display. The significant quantity of African Red Slip in this context could well indicate that the most distinctive element in the site's ceramic assemblage tells us less about the

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<sup>17</sup> LUND 2006, 183.

<sup>18</sup> MANNING 2002, 49–50; RAUTMAN 2003, 163–166.

<sup>19</sup> HAYES 2008, 435–476.

invisible hand of economic forces acting upon the island and more about the character and tastes of the community who lived, worshiped, and worked at *Koutsopetria*.

## **Conclusions**

This analysis of pottery from the Roman and Late Roman harbor town of *Koutsopetria* has been necessarily cursory, but it still suggests fruitful avenues for the study of trade and exchange in regional perspectives. While scholars have often been interested in patterns of exchange between surveyed regions, or in intra-site variation of excavated urban centers, regional archaeological approaches allow us to compare sites within the same region. In the example discussed in this paper - different communities outlying the urban center of Late Antique Kition - there appear to be substantial differences between sites that can only partially be explained by differential access to patterns of ceramic supply. It is, of course, difficult to pinpoint the reasons for the character of particular ceramic assemblages, but these preliminary analyses show enough significant variations between local sites to suggest different connections to the intricate web of cities, towns, villages, and regions formed by the Late Antique Mediterranean basin.

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