

A Work in Progress: Late Roman Amphorae from Garrison's Camp Area, Nea Paphos; the Most Attested Types and Some Considerations about

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The town of Nea Paphos was one of the major eastern Hellenistic-Roman settlements and was the capital of Cyprus for a long period from the time of the Ptolemeis to the 4th century AD becoming thus one of the most important commercial harbours of the island and the chief naval base during the Ptolemaic time. It continued thriving, though many earthquakes affected it especially in the 4th century and at least till the early Byzantine time, partly because of its good trading relationship with Constantinople, capital of the Eastern Roman Empire.¹ The kinds of transport amphorae found at Nea Paphos are instrumental in understanding the economic situation of the town and they are useful tools for reconstructing the Eastern Mediterranean commercial routes that affected the site.²

Since 1988 the Italian Archeological Mission of the University of Catania, has been making excavations at Nea Paphos, in the area called “sanctuary of Apollo at Toumballos”. At the moment the excavations take place at the so-called “Garrison's Camp”, situated in the northwestern part of the site. A few lines could summarize the main phases of the 1988–1999 period. In the early stages the activity of the Italian Archaeological Mission was concentrated on the plain to the east and west of a series of underground rooms dug into rock discovered in the 1950's by Cypriot archaeologists and interpreted as an hypogeic sanctuary, perhaps dedicated to Apollo, but part of this area was ravaged by holes: they discovered a long dromos (72 metres) acting as an entrance to the west-east bound till a rocky ridge, where there are several rooms, and lastly to go out from it in a north-south direction. At the end of the 4th century AD the Hellenistic-Roman sanctuary because of the spread of Christianity was no more a worship place. Just westward from the subterranean rooms of the sanctuary, archaeologists have discovered the ruins of an early Christian basilica, that was almost certainly a martyrium, dating back to the end of the 4th century AD, as it was shown by the surveys made under the foundation of the northern wall of the central aisle. The basilica took advantage partly of the structures of the subterranean pagan sanctuary and this counts for its special form (fig. 1). It's probable that the sacred area has been attributed to Saint Hilarion, who preached and was active in Nea Paphos towards the end of the 4th century AD, as it is stated by his contemporary Saint Jerome in his *Vita Hilarionis*. Actually a rebuilding of the whole area of the sanctuary – going back to the end of the 4th – beginning of the 5th century AD till arrived the Arabs (7th century AD) – has been shown too by the discovery of a series of rooms, partly tessellated (maybe it is the new Christian quarter, which was built as opposed to the southwestern pagan one), which were built on the inner part of the northern wall of the dromos³ (fig. 2).

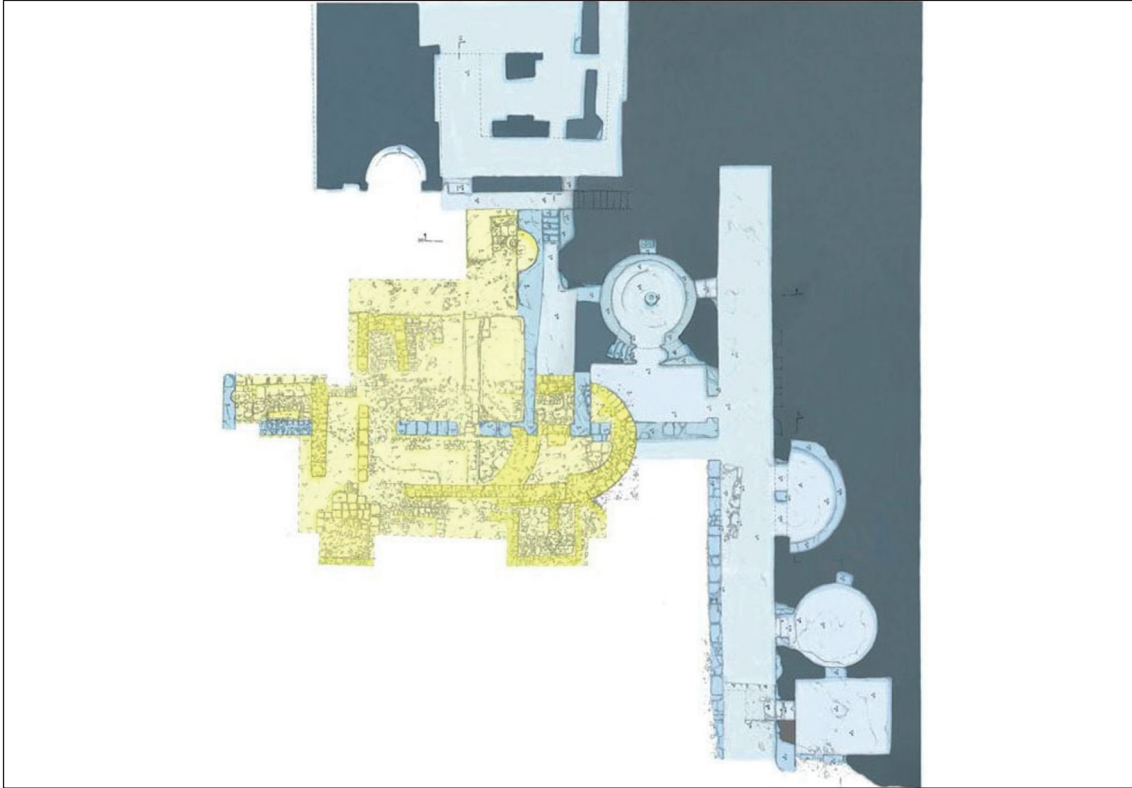


Fig. 1: The Early Christian Basilica (4th century AD) and the subterranean Hellenistic-Roman sanctuary.



Fig. 2: Christian structures from the northern wall of the dromos of the subterranean Hellenistic-Roman sanctuary.

The analysis, it should be emphasized, still in progress and in revision of the transport amphorae from Garrison's Camp area (1988–1999) reveals the presence of numerous types, coming in particular from the Eastern Mediterranean, in the thousands of fragments attested in the Late Roman – Early Byzantine time (4th–7th century AD).⁴ Relating to the 4th century AD, there are still several late attestations of amphorae produced particularly in the previous years, like, with regard to the western productions, some Baetic, Campanian, Sicilian and African types, mostly from Tunisia, while among the eastern productions, in particular the Kapitän II amphora and the late variant of the Agora G 199 amphora should be reported. With regard to the amphorae more properly datable in the Late Roman – Early Byzantine time,⁵ the Late Roman Amphora 1 (LRA1) is the most attested type, present in several typological variants and in various fabrics. It is flanked by other late eastern productions such as the LRA2, the LRA3, the LRA4, the LRA 5/6, and probably the LRA7 and the LRA13, as well as some types from the Black Sea region, above all the Zemer 40 amphora, or from the Palestinian area such as the Agora M 334 amphora. Among the western productions the presence of some Tunisian amphorae like the African IIIB and the African IIIC or the Spatheia could be reported. With regard to the ongoing reconstruction of trade and commercial routes involving the site of Nea Paphos, the late 4th century attestations of some amphorae are what remains of an intense richer economic activity (that has its origins in the lively trade framework of the Hellenistic-Republican age), witnessed by the fragments from Garrison's Camp area throughout the Mediterranean. They reveal, as it concerns only the origins of the western productions, proceeding from west to east, the presence of various Iberian types, in particular from the Hispania Baetica, Gaulish types, above all from Gallia Narbonensis, Italic types, both from the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic areas, and Sicily, and then African types too, particularly from Tunisia, but also from Tripolitania and from Cyrenaica; for the Eastern part the exchanges activities appear lively mostly with the Microasiatic area, in particular with Cilicia, as well as with Syro-Palestinian and Aegean areas. This important commercial vitality is, then, replaced by a geographical contraction of the production places of amphorae towards the east – the vessels come, proceeding from north to south, from the Black Sea region, Microasiatic (including Cyprus), Aegean and Syro-Palestinian areas, and from Egypt, except for the Tunisian amphorae – up to the destructive Arab raids in the 7th century AD.⁶

The transport amphorae may reveal more or something new about the context of the findings. If the late attestations of some types of amphorae testify the presence of flourishing economic activities that must be understood as related to the reality of the pagan hypogeic sanctuary, the change that occurs in the area since the 4th century AD, with the closing of the pagan cults and its resettlement as a religious ensemble – due to the presence of the martyrion – and a residential complex – due to the presence of the other Christian structures – is, also in this case, well emphasized by the amporic productions that, once again, highlight an interesting economic reality with regional and above all extra-regional exchanges, with a wider valence. The presence of some

productions could be, in fact, connected to the ritual needs of the martyrrium: it is the case, above all, of the amphorae of the Syro-Palestinian area carrying wine, such as, particularly, the LRA4⁷ (fig. 3). Other amphorae appear more specifically linked to the network of activities and exchanges concerning the residential structures of the area, certainly not free from connections with the religious complex, as, above all, the LRA1 (fig. 4) or the amphorae from the Black Sea region. An interesting case is the presence



Fig. 3: Fragments of Late Roman Amphora 4 from Garrison's Camp area.



Fig. 4: Fragment of Late Roman Amphora 1 from Garrison's Camp area

of the LRA1, in the variant LRA1 B form 3, as it appears by the analysis, particularly, of fragmentary handles, a Cypriot type datable between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century AD.⁸ This amphora, in fact, seems to have been produced specifically to meet the needs of the Quaestura Exercitus, created in 536, that, for this reason, promoted the agriculture in the island.⁹ If it is as it seems, all this would shed new light on a more precise interpretation of the late structures set on the Hellenistic-Roman ones, in the Garrison's Camp area (starting from the end of the 4th – beginning

of the 5th century AD), already understood, more generically, as structures in primis for probable agricultural use: these data are moreover strengthened by the discovery of olive millstones in the area.¹⁰

Notes

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¹ Bocci 1963; Mitford 1980, 1309–1315; Maier et al. 1984; Michaelides 1996a.

² For the economy of Cyprus during the Greek and Roman time, see particularly Michaelides 1996b.

³ Giudice 1992; Giudice 1993; Giudice 1994; Giudice 1996; Giudice 1997; Giudice 1999; Giudice et al. 1999; Giudice et al. 2000; Giudice et al. 2001; Giudice et al. 2004; Giudice et al. 2007; Giudice et al. 2010; Giudice 2016; Giudice et al. 2017a; Giudice et al. 2017b.

⁴ This is only a part of the research project I am working on. It is aimed at analyzing trade in Nea Paphos and in the Eastern Mediterranean through the study of the transport amphorae coming from the site, dating from the Hellenistic-Republican to the Late Roman – Early Byzantine time. I am taking into account both the publications about the area and the considerable amount of data coming from the thousands fragments of transport amphorae found in Garrison's Camp during the 1988–1999 excavations (until now, only a small quantity has been published in RDAC). At the moment, about 10,000 fragments, of which a first cataloguing was made, have been collected, most of them during my PhD. A typological classification of the amphorae is actually in fieri, a petrographic analysis of a selection of the fabrics and a statistical study will be carried out too. It should be added that all the fragments of amphorae from 1988–1999 excavations, moreover, appear substantially representative of those found between 2000 and 2014 by the Italian Archaeological Mission – the excavations were resumed in 2017. A preliminary analysis of the amphorae found during this period was carried out too (about 6,000 fragments were collected, most of them during my PhD), in view of a further study.

⁵ According to the classification of the types after Riley 1981.

⁶ About the transport amphorae and the maritime routes concerning Nea Paphos (and Cyprus) from Hellenistic until Late Roman – Early Byzantine times, there are several publications, especially from the 1970s onwards. Very important is Hayes 1991; the recent contribution of Lawall et al. 2013, with a rich bibliography, is particularly significative. The proceedings of the two international conferences about Nea Paphos, Balandier 2016, and those in press of Nea Paphos and Western Cyprus – New Archaeological and Historical Perspectives (Paphos, 11–15 October 2017), should be reported too. Finally, a very useful online resource about, generally, Roman and Late Roman amphorae is, among others, University of Southampton 2014.

⁷ Piéri 2005, 110–113.

⁸ Demesticha 2013; Demesticha 2014.

⁹ See note 8.

¹⁰ See note 3.

Image Credits

Fig. 1: Graphic reconstruction by Architect Fabio Mosca. – Fig. 2: Photo by Italian Archaeological Mission of University of Catania. – Fig. 3: Photo by Dr. Mariagrazia Giuseppina Finistrella. – Fig. 4: Photo by Dr. Mariagrazia Giuseppina Finistrella.

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