

Episkopi Bay Survey 2003 Field Season

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(August 2003)

The summer of 2003 marked the initiation of a maritime survey project associated with the University of Cincinnati excavations at Episkopi-Bamboula, directed by Dr. Gisela Walberg. With permission from the Department of Antiquities Cyprus, and logistical and financial support from the Institute of Nautical Archaeology, Texas A&M University and RPM Nautical Foundation, a limited nautical archaeological survey of certain areas of Episkopi Bay.

Five areas of interest were explored during the 2003 season using low-tech survey methods. A brief investigation was carried out on an underwater construction along Kourion beach representing part of the town's ancient harbor. Visual inspection of some of the shallower areas near the cliffs west of Kourion beach was accomplished. Shallow-water investigations were conducted along the mouth of the Kouris River. Archaeologists investigated three small bays along the west coast of the southern Akrotiri Peninsula, where scatters of ceramic debris attested to maritime traffic from the Hellenistic period through Ottoman times.

Finally, the area around Cape Zevgari was preliminarily surveyed, yielding the material thus far with the largest temporal distribution. The earliest ceramics, basket-handle amphora sherds, are clearly of late Archaic or Classical date. The Hellenistic and Roman periods are also well represented, and material as recent as the 19th century can also be found. In the area of Cape Zevgari, a concentration of Late Roman amphoras (LR1) of probable 5th- or 6th-century date likely represents a small shipwreck, though no wood or other material could be located. Each amphora was flagged, and in the end, a total of over 150 were recorded among the assemblage.

Plans for the 2004 season include sonar and magnetometer surveying over a wider area of the bay. Given the sand and sediment which extend over parts of the bay, disturbances along this seabed should be relatively easy to detect with sonar, although whether they are simple rock outcroppings or actual shipwrecks will require more detailed investigation. Thus, more precise diving and remotely operated vehicle (ROV) operations can be utilized to investigate select targets.

For more information and updates, see the website of the Department of Antiquities for press releases: http://www.mcw.gov.cy/mcw/da/da.nsf/DMLexcavat_en/DMLexcavat_en