

Episkopi Bay Survey 2004 Field Season

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From late June through early August, a second season of underwater survey work was undertaken in the area of Episkopi Bay and the Akrotiri Peninsula. The project, which is part of the University of Cincinnati excavations at Episkopi-Bamboula, is undertaken by permission of the Department of Antiquities Cyprus and is logistically and financially supported by the Institute of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A&M University and RPM Nautical Foundation. The small team of American and Cypriot archaeologists and volunteers, following on the work of the 2003 field season, worked in several new and promising areas in an effort to understand better the area's maritime history and commerce.

Near the western edge of the survey area, sheltered conditions in Avdimou Bay suggested the possibility of an ancient anchorage. At the center of the bay can be found a long, wide structure clearly intended to augment the bay's natural shelter. Archaeologists made a preliminary map of its shape and orientation. The structure extends approximately 140 m and reaches over 35 m in width. The upper surface, approximately 3 meters off the seabed at the farthest end from shore, lies just below water. No edge fastenings or other noteworthy construction features were observed, and the immediate area is practically devoid of pottery, leaving no suggestion of a date.

Archaeologists also spent several days documenting ceramic and other cultural material across the remainder of the bay. A concentration of various stone anchors suffices to suggest that this stretch of coastline, though only slightly protected from harsh weather, served as a suitable anchorage under certain conditions. No metal anchors were identified in this area, but an assemblage of fragmentary Late Roman transport amphoras from the Gaza region, perhaps indicative of a wreck, attests to the continued use of this shelter into later periods as well.

Efforts also focused on the Akrotiri Peninsula, including the area near Cape Zevgari, where the team investigated a report of small assemblage of broken and concreted transport amphoras of Hellenistic Rhodian type. Underwater investigations along the south coast of Akrotiri at Dreamer's Bay yielded much valuable new information. The inlet obviously functioned as an anchorage since very early times, as attested by a scattering of stone anchors. Pottery here provides evidence for the transport of bulk liquid commodities as well as such building materials such as tiles, with potentially high levels during the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods.

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