

Pottery is usually the most abundantly represented material found at archaeological sites. In many cases, it is the only evidence of the variety of factors that make up the everyday life of ancient societies: eating habits, exchange and trade, religious and ritual practices, symbolic behaviour and many other aspects of social relations, and the relationship between communities and their environment. In recent years a significant increase in interest in study of cooking pottery has been observed. By applying through macroscopic, typological, chronological and laboratory analyses based on natural and physical sciences, it is possible, among other things, to determine the provenance, time of manufacture and ways of using cooking pottery. Research on ancient cooking pottery is also connected with the research of societies that produced, used and eventually disposed of used or damaged objects. Cooking pottery not only provide information concerning specific culinary practices and behaviours, but also can be indirectly used as a tool to provide evidence of the economic processes, identify particular cultural and/or social changes taking place over the centuries. Pottery production is always set in a specific social context. Therefore, the proper interpretation of the complex relationship between the producer and the recipient (society) and the changes that may have occurred in this relationship requires a lot of evidence. It is important to link changes in production technology with social activities and processes, and the environment.

The subject of the project is cooking pottery from the excavations conducted at Agora in Nea Paphos, Cyprus between the years 2011-2019 and dated to the Middle Roman (MR) and Late Roman (LR) periods (from the 3rd to 7th centuries CE). The aim is to demonstrate the production and consumption of this category of pottery in the light of the political, economic and social changes that occurred in the city.

Nea Paphos was a large city of huge importance during the Hellenistic and Roman periods (now listed at the Unesco World Heritage Site). It is located in the south-west of Cyprus, at the crossroads of the main sea routes between East and West, and was an important commercial and administrative hub for many centuries. The city was founded in the late 4th or early 3rd c. BCE was divided into residential, administrative and commercial districts. At the end of the third or in the early 2nd c. BCE, it became the capital of the of the island, but was of strategic importance as its geographic location allowed easy access to natural resources. After several centuries of the prosperity of Nea Pafos, serious changes in economic and cultural nature shed new light to the city history. The MR and LR periods are of the most enigmatic in the city past, and it seems that the city at that time was full of contrasts of different nature. However, it is still unclear how citizens of the ancient city lived they normal life in the new cultural and political landscape.

MR and LR cooking pottery from Nea Paphos has never been the subject of a comprehensive, interdisciplinary study combining archaeological and archaeometric approaches in the light of the interpretation of the changes of the social processes. A diversified collection of cooking pottery from the Agora, presumably, there is pottery produced locally and in various centres located both in Cyprus and beyond. The presence of local production of cooking pottery was indicated by the archaeological studies of pottery from excavations in Nea Paphos before, however these studies were focused on typology only. In these studies, cooking pottery is discussed in a small scale, focusing mainly on ceramics presumably produced locally, imports are addressed very modestly. However, no detailed chronological studies have been conducted so far, as well as analysis of technology of production in diachronic terms, and imports were determined poorly.

For this reason, the integrated analyses of cooking pottery of this timespan will provide important new information regarding the production and circulation of cooking pottery. This research has several aims: 1) to determine homogeneity or typological diversity in terms of provenance and technology; 2) to provide detailed, compositional and technological descriptions of the defined fabric groups (with typology of the vessels represents each of group); 3) to define the phases of production and technology of the production of cooking pottery. The main research questions are: Was cooking pottery produced in the vicinity of Nea Paphos in the MR and LR period? Was the production of cooking pottery being continued? Can we attest, in terms of pottery technology and provenance, contacts between the community of Nea Pafos and other sites on the island or beyond? What was the impact of political, economic, social, and cultural factors on cooking pottery production and consumption in Nea Paphos during the MR and LR periods?

The research will supplement our current knowledge concerning the economic, social and cultural transformation that took place in Nea Pafos in the MR and LR periods. This will be possible not only by characterizing local production and consumption of cooking pottery but also by characterization of circulations of imported cooking pottery, which will explain the nature of the relationship between Nea Paphos and the neighbourhood as well as distant locations. These will led us to increase our knowledge of the history of this city in the MR and LR period and allow to draw a wider cultural landscape of Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean in the MR and LR period. The interdisciplinary and systematic research of this category of ceramics will provide a solid source for future interpretations of economic, cultural and social processes in a wider context, e.g. the characteristics of the manufacturing industry of all categories of pottery in Nea Paphos.