

Come sail your ships around me - Studying the Roman harbour infrastructure and seascape of Nea Paphos using a viewshed analysis

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The starting point for this thesis is the hypothesis whether the Roman capital of Cyprus, Nea Paphos, was a metropolis or a small harbour town during the Roman period in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. The aim of the thesis is to study the maritime Roman landscape of Nea Paphos to produce an answer to the research question. Hereby, the harbour infrastructure of the city and the visibility of these structures from the sea will be studied. Also, studying the visibility of landmarks around the city, spread across the western coastline of Cyprus could be an important indication for the accessibility of the harbour of Nea Paphos based on the mental maps that sailors used during the Roman period.

The first part of this thesis consists of a critical literature study during which the historical background of Cyprus and Nea Paphos and the physical geographical such as seafaring related factors like harbour infrastructure and sea routes will be investigated.

The second part of this thesis consists of a Q-GIS visibility analysis during which the landmarks from sea are being studied. The central aspect here is how far at sea a ship could have sailed to be able to see the landmarks and if it was possible for a ship to sail from one landmark to the next without losing sight of at least one of the landmarks. This will be an important indication whether the harbour of Nea Paphos was or was not easily accessible. Also, the visibility of the lighthouses will be studied to answer the question whether Nea Paphos did or did not contain a lighthouse, where it was located and how high it should have been. Based on the literature study, five possible locations have been chosen as a candidate for the presence of a lighthouse. The study teaches us that Nea Paphos contained a great visibility for ships sailing at sea. Ships that wanted to reach Nea Paphos could sail from landmark to landmark, during which they had at least one of these landmarks within their visual range if they remained within a maximum distance of 10 km from the coast. The GIS analysis suggests that a cooperation between two lighthouses, therefore not necessarily the same type of tower, was ideal for the visibility of ships at sea permitting them to enter and depart the harbour of Nea Paphos.

The study proposes several new questions that could play an important role for future research. Was there a network of landmarks, both of human and natural character, for the entire coastline of Cyprus that helped ships to navigate safely? Did the 'black zones' play a role in the construction of Roman harbours? This research and the questions it proposes could be investigated in the regions of other Roman harbours and could increase our knowledge about Roman sea navigation.