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ROMAN IMPORTS, IMITATIONS, AND LOCAL IDENTITY IN SPHAKIA, SOUTHWEST CRETE[1]

Introduction

A considerable part of Roman material culture was dominated by the copy or replica. Part of this was no doubt due to the scale of the Empire, which necessitated the repetition of forms and objects in order to make them available to a large-scale population, but the concept of reproducing or borrowing themes, styles, and compositions from pre-existing models also seems to have been an early and consistent feature of the Roman mindset. Replicas and reproductions can be observed in nearly all aspects of Roman life, from the decorative arts like sculpture and painting, to public symbols of influence and conquest, to objects of personal, daily use like silver and pottery.

For over a century, modern scholarship on Roman copies has focused primarily on statuary and sculpture, especially with respect to lost Greek prototypes.[2] That the only surviving Greek models for *any* Roman statue are the copies of the Erechtheion Caryatids on the Athenian Akropolis that were reproduced in greater number by Augustus for his Forum in Rome and Hadrian for his *canopus* at Tivoli illustrates the power of such imagery and their recognizably Greek antecedants, even if this example is today entirely an accident of preservation.[3] More recently, however, scholars have begun to investigate the existence and meaning of an expanded range of artefacts that were copied and imitated in the Roman world.[4]

The Romans themselves were familiar with copying, and terms like *imitatio*, *mimesis*, and *aemulatio* can be read in authors like Pliny, Quintilian, and Dionysos of Halicarnassos,[5] but the nuances of these words are vague, just as the distinctions between terms like copy, replica, emulation, forgery, and fake are blurred for us today.[6] Such words and the language used to describe and discuss such artworks are loaded with undertones: forgeries and fakes suggest a deliberate intention to deceive, and thus to pass something off as something it isn't, while it can be argued that words like "copy" and "replica" are more neutral, perhaps expressing dependence or influence instead of outright deception. In any case, it would be impossible to prove the intellectual or economic motivation for a Roman copy from available evidence.

Investigations of ancient copying practices are also often thwarted by the lack of an existing original, as in the case of most Roman free-standing sculpture and wall painting and rely instead on often-vague references or descriptions in ancient authors and reproductions, if the aim is to recreate the initial artwork. Studies of ceramic imitations, however, can benefit from an enormous volume of both originals and imitations for comparative analysis, even though ancient authors do not provide the references and descriptions of artists, specific artefacts, and workshops found in texts on sculpture. Over a century of pottery studies have led to considerable knowledge about the major wares circulating throughout the Roman world. Production sites have been identified, even if regionally, and it has been possible to track the movements of vessel classes and wares from source to final destination. Fabric analysis has additionally provided geological and technological data that is in some cases closely tied to the local geologies of workshop areas.[7] Such pottery is often said to come from "primary workshops", where the ware or shape was probably first developed and from where it was initially marketed; even in the case of regional areas

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[2] Scholarship on sculptural copying in the Roman world has been considerable in the last few decades and major shifts in scholarship have resulted. Instead of a focus on recreating the lost Greek original through *kopienkritik*, scholars now view the Roman creations as independent artistic creations in their own right. For the origins of this scholarship, see A. Furtwängler, Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture (London 1895). The body of more recent research is enormous, but some significant works are B. S. Ridgway, Roman Copies of Greek Sculpture (Ann Arbor 1984); M. Marvin, Copying in Roman Sculpture: The Replica Series. In: Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies and Reproductions, Stud. History of Art 20 (Washington 1989) 29–45; Gazda 2002; E. Perry, The Aesthetics of Emulation in the Visual Arts of Ancient Rome (Cambridge 2005).

[3] A comprehensive analysis of the Athenian caryatids and their Roman successors is E. E. Schmidt, Die Kopien der Erechtheionkoren (Berlin 1973).

[4] Marburger Beitr. antike Handels-, Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte 28, 2010.

[5] For example, Pliny (NH 34.62); Quintilian (Inst. 10,11.6.7); and Dionysos of Halicarnassos (Din. 7). Also F. Preisshofen/P. Zanker, Reflex einer eklektischen Kunstanschauung beim Auctor ad Herennium. Dialoghi Arch. 4–5, 1970–1971, 100–119.

[6] E. E. Perry, Rhetoric, Literary Criticism, and the Roman Aesthetics of Artistic Imitation. In: Gazda 2002, 153–171.

[7] The clearest example of a correlation between workshop region and ceramic fabrics is probably Campania, with its distinctive black glassy fabric, yet other areas also produced geographically meaningful fabrics, like the LR I amphoras from Cilicia. See Tomber/Dore 1998, 88–90; 108.

with more than one workshop, it is assumed that some overarching administration ensured quality control or at least a consistency within the product.[8]

There is also, however, a wide array of ceramic types that resemble these identifiable wares but differ in significant enough ways that they cannot be assigned to the same production centres. If similarities to known wares are obvious enough, these vessels are termed "imitations." One can cite the generations of amphoras imitating Koan shapes that proliferated around the Mediterranean in the early Roman period and were manufactured at a variety of centres in central and southern Italy,[9] but other types of pottery were imitated as well, including fine decorated tablewares. In some cases, it has been possible to identify the places where these imitations were made, like the local versions of Phocaean Red Slip vessels produced at Anemurium in Cilicia or at Sardis.[10] Such sites are usually called "secondary workshops," with the assumption that they were dependent on the products of primary workshops for their inspiration.

Yet this terminology, "secondary", is somewhat vague, as it implies a lesser-quality product, something that came after, and its use denies the maker credit for any independent artistic creativity or aptitude, in the same way that Roman sculptors had been disparaged by modern scholars for their presumed slavish reliance on Greek sculpture. There is no evidence that potters clustered or were hired according to their abilities, that the better ones gravitated to primary workshops and hacks to the secondary, but, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that many vessels identified as imitations are of lesser quality, usually characterised by poorly adhered decoration, a soft, ill-fired, often crumbly clay, and easy breakage. When such vessels cannot be assigned to a known workshop, it is easy to identify them as imitations and dismiss them, yet so-called imitation pottery can also be very well made and these vessels are not always easy to distinguish from the exemplars. Fabric analysis can give them away, if fabric differs significantly from the clays associated with a primary workshop, but a well-preserved fragment made with a solid paste and good quality surface treatment may remain ambiguous, occupying that grey area of "possible imitation."

While the identification and accurate interpretation of imitation wares is an issue for modern researchers, the position of these vessels in antiquity was very different, a fact that cannot be more strongly emphasized. Today these imitations are studied in fragments, which allows their fabrics to be closely examined because they are visible; when these vessels were made and put on the market, they were whole, their fabrics were obscured, and their surface coatings, if any, were vibrant and new. It is only with the ravages of time that imitations reveal themselves to be such. And particularly well-made copies of known wares may have been difficult to separate from authentic products. This situation begs the question: how much did ancient consumers know about copied pottery wares, and how much did they care?

While the intentions of the Roman buyer can only be suggested, pottery distribution patterns and comparisons of copies against authentic vessels within a particular area or site, can, in fact, say much about the role of this pottery in the ancient world. As a case study, the remainder of this article will examine the presence of imitation Roman fine wares from Sphakia, in southwest Crete.

The Sphakia Survey Roman Fine Wares

The Roman pottery from Sphakia was collected and analyzed as part of the Sphakia Survey Project, begun in 1987 to reconstruct and interpret ancient landscape use, and which is now in the final stages of publication (**fig. 1**).[11] Covering some 470 square kms, the wild and desolate landscape of Sphakia includes fertile coastal plains, terraced hillsides, numerous gorges, and much of the White Mountains range, snow-capped even in summer. It is frequently very windy, and the gorges in winter are filled with rushing water. Steep slopes, now subject to bulldozing for road and agricultural constructions, have brought buried artefacts to the surface, but displaced others. The plentiful grazing animals of Sphakia have also contributed to soil and thus artefact degradation and movement. The pottery from Sphakia is very poorly preserved. Surfaces have frequently been abraded away, and sherds are small and battered. They often lack definable shapes and decoration, and wares cannot always be identified with precision. Pottery from later periods, which tends to be harder-fired, is generally better preserved than earlier material, but even for survey, the Sphakia pottery is startling in its poor state of preservation compared to that from other parts of the Mediterranean. Because of this, the ceramic analysts have relied upon fabric analysis, both macroscopic and petrographic, to group fabrics by inclusions or technological features, and it has been possible to assign a good number of originally ambiguous fragments to known wares.

Roman evidence, mostly in the form of pottery, with some architecture and supplemented by ancient *testimonia* and inscriptions, was recognized at 157 out of 366 sites, with intensive settlement focused on the south coast and especially on the Frangokastello Plain and the Loutro Peninsula (**fig. 2**).[12] These are both coastal areas looking out to North Africa, a location that is sometimes significant for their ceramic history and trade to and from the region. While some Roman sites lie inland, the amount of material diminishes away from the coast, and little Roman pottery was found in the high mountains.

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8 Vaag 2005.

9 J. A. Riley, The Coarse Pottery from Berenice. In: J. Lloyd (ed.), Excavations at Sidi Khrebish Benghazi (Berenice) II (Tripoli 1979) 149–151; J. Moore, When Not Just Any Wine Will Do …? The Proliferation of Coan-Type Wine and Amphoras in the Greco-Roman World. Marburger Beitr. antike Handels-, Wirtschafts- u. Sozialgesch. 28, 2010, 89–122.

10 C. Williams, Anemurium. The Roman and Early Byzantine Pottery (Toronto 1989) 52–53; Rautman 1995, 80.

11 The main preliminary publications on the survey are collected on the project's website: http://sphakia.classics.ox.ac.uk/. The fabric analysis program used by the Sphakia Survey is discussed in Moody et al. 2003.

12 The Roman sites on the Frangokastello plain and the Loutro peninsula were discussed by the author at the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America (2003): Three Coastal Sites in Roman Sphakia (West Crete). Simon Price presented a paper on Loutro at the 10th International Cretological Congress in Chania (2006): The Loutro Peninsula and its Resources in Context.

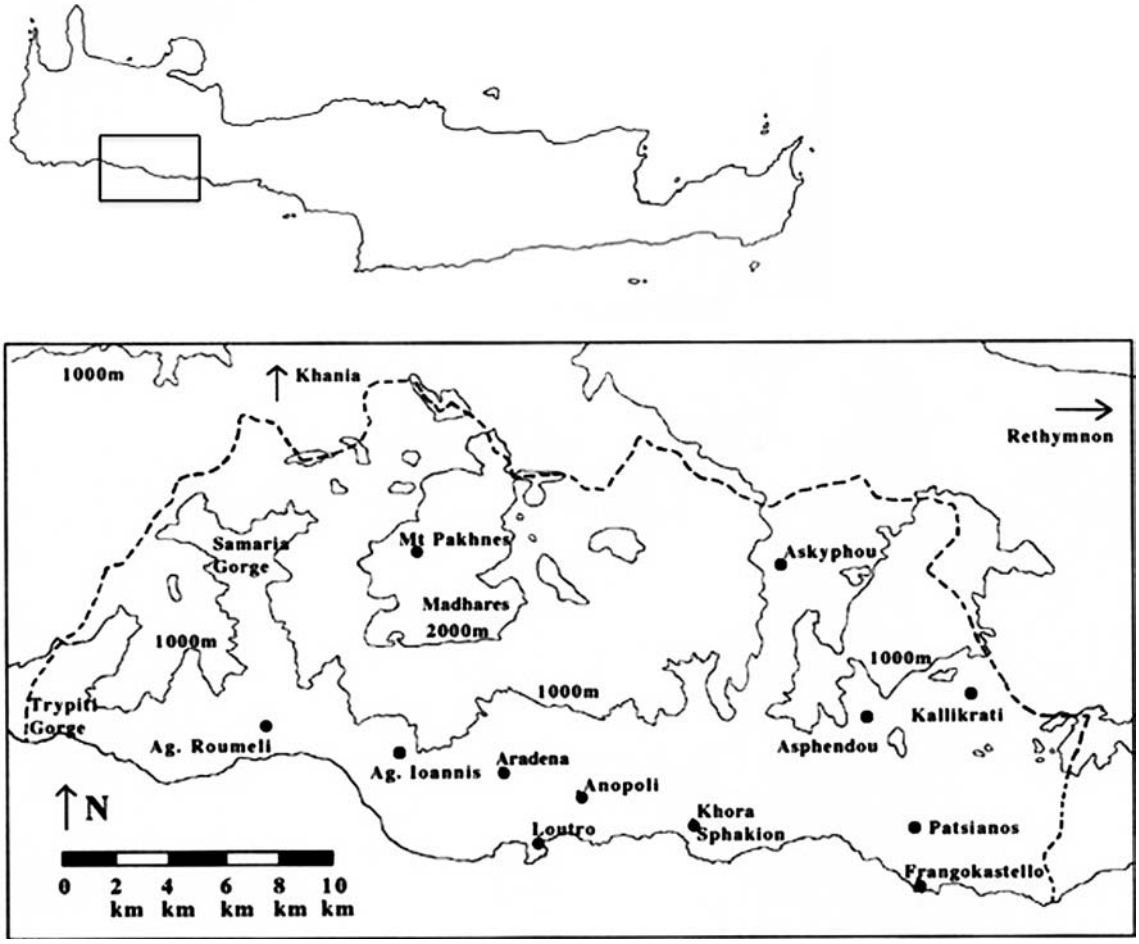

Fig. 1. Crete and Sphakia.

The Roman decorated fine wares from Sphakia represent a good cross-section of what was in circulation from primary Mediterranean workshops - Italian Sigillata, Eastern Sigillatas A and B, Cypriot Sigillata, Candarli Ware, Cypriot Red Slip, Phocaean Red Slip, and African Red Slip. These wares are all known at Roman sites across Crete, although with varying degrees of abundance, and Sphakia is certainly within the norms for foreign ceramic acquisition on the island, at least in its range of wares.[13] Alongside these known wares are several groups of so-called imitations, including vessels imitating the appearance and shapes of Phocaean Red Slip and African Red Slip. The Phocaean examples consist mostly of Forms 3 and 10, the most common and thus presumably most popular shapes in this ware, and this choice cannot have been accidental.[14] On this basis alone, it is tempting to ascribe to the potter a deliberate desire to replicate fashionable shapes, vessels he knew would sell. It may also be, however, that these were the only Phocaean shapes available for replication.

Of the three to five fragments that may be Phocaean Red Slip imitations, one has its slip mostly gone and the vessel lacks the discolouration on the rim that is characteristic of the ware.[15] Another fragment has the opposite problem: the entire sherd is discoloured, perhaps in a misguided attempt to reproduce the effect of the real vessels. Other fragments are tentatively recognized as imitations through their fabrics. The fabric of Phocaean vessels has been defined mainly through kiln sites around the area of Phocaea and seems to be fairly consistent: a well-levigated red to reddish yellow clay, often containing "small lime particles", and rare silver mica.[16] One of the Sphakia imitations is made of a clay containing both glassy and milky quartz as well as glitter siltstones, while another example is highly micaceous, and while small amounts of silver and even gold mica are sometimes noted, this does not occur in large enough amounts in any true Phocaean vessel to produce the glittery fabric of the Sphakia sample. While neither of these fabrics is typical of the products of

[13] There is as yet no comprehensive publication of Cretan Roman pottery, but some sites have produced usable data; the major publications are presented here. Eleutherna: A. G. Yangaki, La céramique des IVe–VIIIe siècles ap. J.-C. d'Eleutherna (Athens 2005); C. Vogt, Πρωτοβυζαντινή Ελεύθερνα 1.2 (Rethymnon 2000). – Knossos: Hayes 1983; Forster 2001; L. H. Sackett (ed.), Knossos from Greek City to Roman Colony. Excavations at the Unexplored Mansion II. British School Athens Suppl. 21 (London 1992); Forster 2009. – Gortyn: A. Di Vita (ed.), Gortina I (Rome 1988); Di Vita/Martin 1997; A. Di Vita (ed.), Gortina 5.3: lo scavo del Pretorio (1989–1995) (Padova 2001). – Ierapetra: Gallimore 2011.

[14] PhRS Form 3: Hayes 1972, 329–338; Form 10: ibid. 343–346.

[15] Ibid. 324; Vaag 2005, 135.

[16] Among the many consistent descriptions of Phocaean Red Slip fabrics are Hayes 1972, 324, and Rautman 1995, 41.

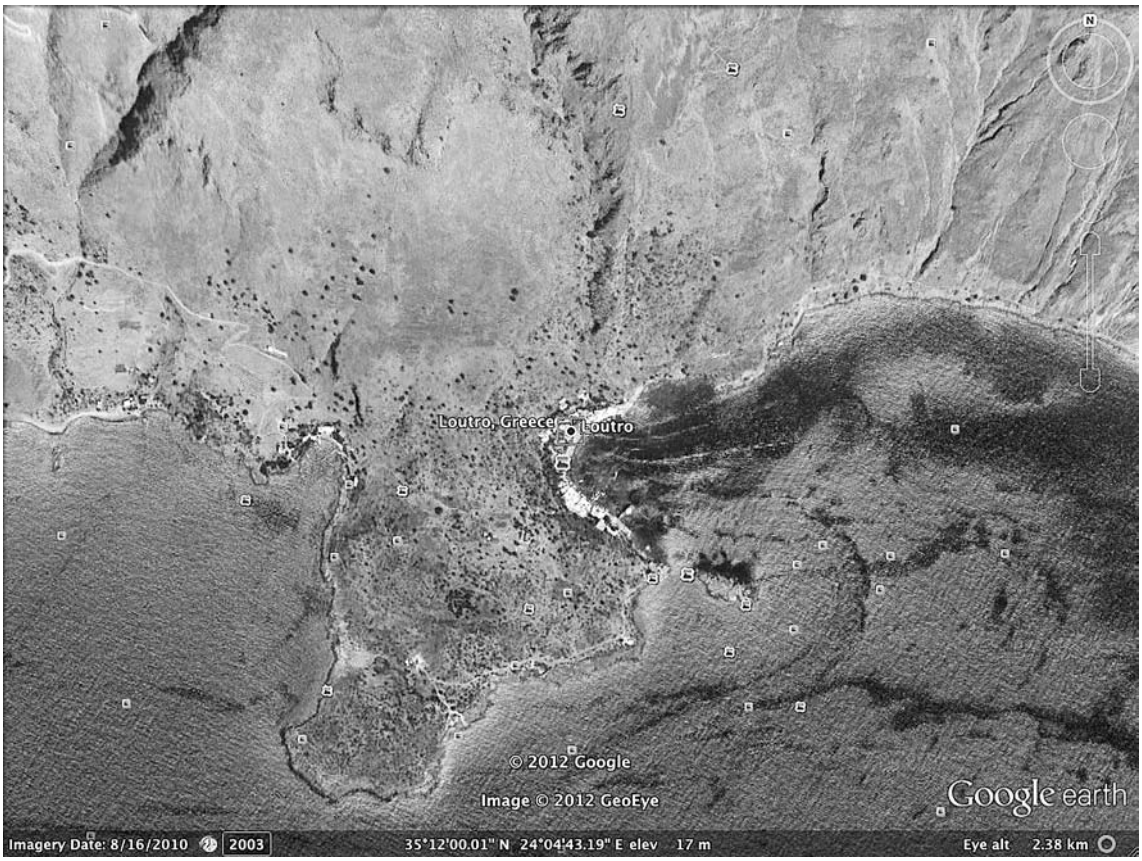

Fig. 2. The Loutro Peninsula (photo: Google Earth).

West Asia Minor where Phocaean production workshops have been located, micaceous vessels in Phocaean shapes have been traced to workshops at Sardis and Chios, and the Sphakia examples may derive from these sources, so-called secondary workshops, rather than from the primary centre.[17]

Some of the five African Red Slip imitations from Sphakia similarly reproduce known shapes, and Forms 26 and 99 have been recognized.[18] The usual fabric of this ware is very distinctive and is rich in glassy quartz, a feature that is extremely visible and thus recognizable; it can be present in angular or rounded form and produces a sparkly appearance in the clay.[19] The Sphakia vessels identified as imitations deviate considerably from this model. Macroscopic and then petrographic analyses on a small group of the Sphakia imitations have confirmed multiple, if still unknown, sources for this pottery. One probable imitation is made from a fabric containing small, scattered amounts of very fine quartz with biotite mica, and it seems to be related to a fine-textured fabric observed petrographically in Sphakia fine wares dating to the Greek period; it does not display the degree of quartz normally present in Tunisian pottery. This fabric is not particularly diagnostic as to its source, but it does not seem to come from North Africa.

Additional examples of African Red Slip examined macroscopically display a feature more normally associated with Phocaean Red Slip, namely what the Sphakia fabric program calls "TPS," or "tiny pale speckles". This feature looks like very finely crushed salt or lime, but it is not calcareous as it does not react to diluted HCl; it can, however, be present alongside lime particles. It may be feldspar, but does not show up petrographically. This fabric occurs occasionally in a range of vessel types in Sphakia, but is most closely associated with Phocaean Red Slip shapes; the author has also observed this fabric in Phocaean vessels from Cilicia. This TPS, however, is not connected with African Red Slip forms, and its use confirms an imitation; a Phocaean-related fabric used for an ARS shape raises some intriguing questions about the relationship between the imitations of these two wares and their place in the Roman ceramic market.

The Local Fine Ware Traditions of Crete

Related to these imitation ceramics that reproduce or adapt a pre-existing shape and decoration are local or regional fine ware traditions. These are wares that are inspired or influenced by a popular type of pottery, but which do not necessarily reproduce its shapes. On Crete, as elsewhere, potters developed their own traditions in the wake of the

17 Sardis: Rautman 1995, 42. – Chios: Vaag 2005, 135, and J. Boardman/J. Boardman, Byzantine Emporio. The Finds. In: M. Balance et al., Excavations in Chios 1952–1955, Byzantine Emporio. British School Athens Suppl. 20 (London1989) 99.

18 ARS Form 26: Hayes 1972: 49; Form 99: ibid. 152–153.

19 Tomber/Dore 1998, 61; B. L. Sherriff et al., The Source of Raw Materials for Roman Pottery from Leptiminus, Tunisia. Geoarchaeology 17, 2002, 835–861; Moody et al. 2003, 76–77.

overwhelming popularity of Sigillata and Red Slip vessels made elsewhere. Knowledge about these wares is very limited and there is as yet no island-wide catalogue of shapes, wares, or the workshop that produced them, and they tend to be identified and addressed within individual site publications; indeed, this may represent, in some cases, their reality, but it remains difficult to connect individual vessels with specific production sites.[20] Such local "colour coated wares" have been identified at Knossos and are presumed to have been created there, on the basis of shape developments out of Hellenistic traditions and fabric; Forster writes that these local vessels were intended to "supplement the popular *terra sigillata* wares imported at the time."[21] The repertoire of shapes includes small jugs that are not common in foreign *sigillatas*. The study of the Roman pottery at Ierapetra, in east Crete, has defined that site's local fine wares according to fabric: Roman Local Fineware Fabrics 1 and 2. These vessels follow an already strong Hellenistic local fine ware tradition called East Crete Cream Ware, presumably under the influence of Roman red-coated imports.[22] This development out of earlier pottery styles may also be present elsewhere on Crete but is not well understood due to a lack of study of pottery sequences. Gortyn, the administrative capital of the province of Creta et Cyrenaica, and the best-excavated and published Roman site on Crete, is a different case and although various groups of vessels have been identified as "local" products, they are treated as imitations on the basis of typological similarities rather than independent wares.[23]

Despite this on-going research into local Cretan ceramic productions, knowledge about the circulation of these regional wares is still in its infancy, and it is still not possible to link a vessel or fragment found in one part of the island with a production center located on the other side of Crete. Fabric studies are unevenly applied and the geology of the island does not provide key markers that might indicate distinctive clays; the exception is perhaps the granitoid outcrops of the Mirabello Bay area, but these do not seem to have been greatly exploited in the Roman period and are more common in early Iron Age pottery.[24] Data about the clays from Knossos, for instance, is ambiguous.[25] The local clays used in the Roman period are described as a "relatively fine, soft-fired, buff to cream [10YR/8/6] with some variation commonly in the body of the clay towards a pinkish tinge, particularly with 'thicker' examples. …".[26] Hayes' description of what he calls "Local buff-cream ware" is similar: "The ware is bright yellowish-orange when poorly fired (as is often the case), otherwise cream, buff, or light brown with a marked pinkish tinge."[27] Both these descriptions indicate a poorly fired neogene clay with a pink core, which accords well with the neogene sedimentary deposits around Knossos, and any area with a similar geology could well be producing fabrics with the same signature.[28] In other words, there is nothing particularly distinctive or diagnostic about these Knossian fabrics. This data must thus be used alongside shape and typological information, and elements of decoration in order to identify securely Knossian products found elsewhere, as in the case, for instance, of Hellenistic Hadra vessels.[29] Shape studies can be useful, as several centers on Crete, like Lyttos and Knossos, produced local shapes that seem to have travelled around the island, but this seems to be a phenomenon of pre-Roman periods.[30] Yet some of these well-defined regional wares from Crete had a restricted distribution; for instance, the Hellenistic East Cretan Cream Ware, made of a very distinctive fabric, has not been identified at all in Sphakia.[31] The regional ceramic developments in the west of Crete are still poorly known, aside from Raab's identification of the Kydonian "Standard Ware".[32]

The point of these local wares is ambiguous, and it is unclear why potters would develop and market their own version of a known ware rather than simply copy or reproduce it. This is an important question because of the overlap between regional styles and imitation pottery, and while the precise motives of the ancient potter cannot be known, there are several possible explanations.

First, the creation of such independent wares suggests a degree of artistic creativity, of a potter not wanting merely to copy the status quo but go beyond it, even if within the already-defined parameters of a ware. But an ancient potter must also make a living, and his products ideally must acknowledge current trends while at the same time stand apart from them. This might explain the differences that distinguish such regional wares.

Second, the potter may be responding to or even prompting changes in the Roman aesthetic and in the tastes of the consumer. He may have hoped that his product would be the one to catch on, to become the new desired commodity. This may be the explanation for the production of the so-called local colour-coated wares identified in the excavations at Knossos. A number of these vessels are small jugs, a shape not normally part of the repertoire of imported fine wares.

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20 The best-published Roman kiln sites on Crete are those that produced the island's transport amphora, but the pottery and wasters from these sites, which sometimes include fine wares, has not been comprehensively published; see A. Marangou-Lerat, Le vin et les amphores de Crète. Études Crétoises 30 (Thessaloniki 1995).

21 Forster 2001, 153.

22 Gallimore 2011, 244-248.

23 For instance, the discussion by A. Martin (Martin/Di Vita 1997, 308).

24 D. C. Haggis/M. S. Mook, The Kavousi Coarse Wares: A Bronze Age Chronology for Survey in the Mirabello Area, East Crete. Am. Journal Arch, 97, 1993, 290 n. 58.

25 This situation has been echoed by Gallimore (2011, 201) for Hellenistic Knossian pottery.

26 Forster 2009, 115.

27 Hayes 1983, 108.

28 M. D. Higgins/R. Higgins, A Geological Companion to Greece and the Aegean (London 1996) 202–204.

29 P. J. Callaghan/R. E. Jones, Hadra Hydriae and Central Crete: A Fabric Analysis. Annu. British School Athens 80, 1985, 1–17.

30 In this regard, Englezou's study of central Cretan Hellenistic pottery, and Erickson's work on Archaic and Classical ceramics are particularly useful: M. Englezou, Ελληνηστική Κεραμική Κρήτης: Κεντρική Κρήτη (Athens 2005); B. L Erickson, Crete in Transition: Pottery Styles and Island History in the Archaic and Classical Periods (Athens 2010).

31 J. Eiring, Hellenistic Pottery from Pyrgos at Myrtos. Ε' Επιστημονική Συνάντηση για την Ελληνιστική Κεραμική (Athens 2000) 53–60; N. Vogeikoff, Late Hellenistic Pottery from Mochlos in East Crete. Ε' Επιστημονική Συνάντηση για την Ελληνιστική Κεραμική (Athens 2000) 69–74, esp. 70-72; Gallimore 2011, 182–200.

32 H. A. Raab, Rural Settlement in Hellenistic and Roman Crete: The Akrotiri Peninsula (Oxford 2001) 66–68.

In this case, the local products can be seen as a supplement to foreign pottery that brings a new shape to the market, as they have been defined by Forster.[33]

A degree of pride or regional honour may also be ascribed to the potter, who may wish, in the manner of today's locavore consumers, to provide his customers with something that was made nearby. He is thus making a product directed at a specific market, which should be provable by distribution studies of specific local wares, if these are well-enough defined. Related to this is the cost of transport, especially over long distances, which might have discouraged potential buyers if the price of a vessel rose commensurate with its distance from source; local products may simply have been more affordable but additionally given their owners a sense of local pride.

Not all of these scenarios, however, can be applied to the interpretation of ceramic imitations. It is unlikely that any desire to change aesthetic tastes or to exhibit personal or even workshop-based creativity has any part in the manufacture of an imitation vessel, and the consistent replication of known shapes, like the Phocaean Forms 3 and 10, argues strongly against it. The reproduction of existing pottery also does not strongly advertise local manufacture.

Instead, imitation wares seem to have been made to supplement an already substantial production and trade. It is tempting to see them in a lesser light, as pottery available to those who could not afford the "good stuff," but this was probably not true. It is unknown, for instance, if the imitations and real vessels were marketed to the same consumer groups: were there merchants who specialized in retailing high-end pottery from primary workshops to wealthy buyers, while others sold imitations to poorer areas? This does not seem to be the case for Sphakia, where both real and imitation vessels are sometimes found mixed together; it could be argued that this was a fairly normal situation across the Roman world. It is, in fact, even doubtful whether ancient consumers could tell the difference between these vessels and thus knew what they were purchasing, and it may only have been later, with wear and tear, that the imitations revealed themselves as such.

The Imitation Fine Wares of Sphakia in Context

It does not appear that Sphakia also contributed its regional ceramic developments parallel to others on Crete. There is almost no evidence for pottery production in the region in the Roman period, and no kilns have been identified, although some over-fired tile fragments from a site on the Frangokastello plain seem to match lumps of clay found at a nearby site. Experimental replications have indicated pockets of viable clay in the area, but available evidence does not indicate that they were used for ceramic production. It is thus not possible to draw any conclusions about local ceramic practices or traditions, and the inhabitants of Roman Sphakia seem to have relied substantially on imported pottery, including the vessels that can be seen as direct imitations of known wares. The sources of these foreign wares are fairly clear, and, as has been discussed, even the origins of some imitations can be deduced, but the role that these imitation vessels played in their cultural and social context should also be considered.

It is not possible to reconstruct with any accuracy to motives of the ancient consumer, but patterns in ceramic acquisition can be considered, especially across sites and within the same time period. This is easily done for Sphakia, on the basis of the material collected by the Survey project, although it must be stated that this pottery may not represent the whole picture for every site.

The main venue for foreign goods coming into Sphakia in the Roman period was probably the harbour at Phoinix-Loutro (**fig. 2**). Much of Sphakia in antiquity was relatively isolated, and although it boasts a considerable coastline along the south, some of this is inaccessible due to steep hills running right down to the sea. The few anchorages were thus even more important for sea-borne transport, even from other parts of Crete. Phoinix-Loutro was known to have been the only year-round open port on the south coast of the island and until the seismic uplift of 365 A.D. had three harbours facing north, east, and northwest.[34] An inscription from the site refers to a grain ship from Alexandria anchoring at Loutro on its way to the west.[35]

Intensive survey of the Loutro peninsula has revealed hundreds of fragments of fine tablewares that can be divided into three main groups: imported pottery from primary production sites, non-local imitation wares (Phocaean Red Slip, African Red Slip), and Cretan regional products. Some of this pottery was found across the Loutro settlement, which preserves Roman houses, a probable bath, a possible temple, and tombs, and must have been acquired by the locals, either because they themselves were in charge of the shipments and the marketing of the imported goods, or because they had first grab at the newly imported commodities. Some of this pottery, however, may simply have been awaiting transhipment at Loutro on its way to other destinations, although no warehouses have been identified.[36] The mixture of the three classes of pottery is probably thus symptomatic of the nature of many ceramic shipments, which saw products from various sources picked up en route and jumbled together, regardless of their 'authenticity' or origins. At least in Sphakia, all sites with non-local imitation fine wares also preserve authentic examples of the same wares.

Some of this pottery was undoubtedly re-distributed to parts of Sphakia. The Roman settlements tend to lie near or on the coast, but there is some dense population to the north and northwest of the Loutro peninsula that may have received their fine ware pottery from the harbour. Sites on

[33] Forster 2001, 153; id. 2009, 114.

[34] L. Nixon et al., Archaeological Survey in Sphakia, Crete. Echos Monde Class./Class. Views 9, 1990, 218. On the effects of the uplift on Loutro, see S. Price et al., Relative Sea-Level Changes in Crete: Reassessment of Radiocarbon Dates from Sphakia and West Crete. Annu. British School Athens 97, 2002, 198–200.

[35] IC xx.7.

[36] Roman coastal warehouses have been identified at Lasaia, in south central Crete and at Tholos, on the north-east coast: D. J. Blackman/K. Branigan, An Archaeological Survey on the South Coast of Crete, between the Ayiofarango and Christostomos. Annu. British School Athens 70, 1975, 28–32; D. C. Haggis, The Port of Tholos in Eastern Crete and the Role of a Roman Horreum Along the Egyptian 'Corn Route'. Oxford Journal Arch. 15, 1996, 183–209.

the Frangokastello Plain, to the east, also preserve abundant amounts of these ceramics, but it is unknown whether they arrived via caïque, or even overland, from larger shipments landing at Loutro or whether these sites received imports from another shipment route unrelated to Loutro.

The existence of pottery from both primary and secondary workshops together at the same sites is instructive for understanding the role of these imitations in Roman society and perhaps even the motivations of ancient consumers. The isolation of the region and reliance upon coastal trade probably means that Roman Sphakiotes did not have a lot of choice in their ceramics. They do not seem to have produced any pottery within the region and therefore depended on what was brought in by sea, either from other parts of Crete or from abroad. The relatively small number of imitations does not indicate a sizeable market for these vessels, but there does not seem to be any economic status or even prejudice connected with them. At least in Sphakia, their use was not relegated to poor neighbourhoods or houses, although with survey evidence such distinctions are not easily made. For instance, one transect at Loutro identified an African Red Slip vessel lying beside a Phocaean Red Slip imitation fragment, and this seems to be a usual occurrence. Such preservation emphasizes not only the role of imitations in Sphakia as viable ceramics but also that as whole, new pots, they may have been indistinguishable from 'authentic' vessels.

If imitations cannot be interpreted as the pottery of the poor, then another explanation for its appearance must be considered, namely its availability. As far as is known, pottery was not purchased because of the name of its maker or because it derived from a famous workshop, although stamped sigillatas may be an exception. Nor can it be confirmed that pottery from a specific area was preferred over another; in any case, the consumer may not have known whether the Phocaean bowl he was contemplating came from the Grynion or Phocaea factory, or, for that matter, a workshop on Chios. It is more likely that the driving force behind the acquisition of both authentic and imitation wares was availability. Sphakia had to take whatever came into the region, probably through the harbour at Phoinix-Loutro, and the mixture of ceramics found there indicates a thriving import business. Yet the profile of the ceramics from this harbour site and that from sites elsewhere in the region, especially those upland and away from the coast is the same; the main difference is in the amounts of pottery available and thus preserved. Some kind of regional re-distribution system was evidently in place that ensured the availability of multiple fine wares to sites who wanted it, and even though the inhabitants of Loutro seemed to have the greatest abundance, the Sphakiotes seem to have shared equally in the consumer market, regardless of the source of the ceramics.

Conclusions

An acknowledgement of the effect that site location has on access to goods, and the fact that the ancient consumer may not always have had much of a choice in the acquisition of objects is an important shift in focus in addressing imitation ceramic wares. In some larger markets in more mainstream areas, such as Rome or Pompeii, where pottery workshops were numerous, the selection could be abundant for those who wished or could afford a variety of wares and shapes. In more peripheral or isolated areas, however, it is not so much the consumer who influences the assortment of pottery left at a site, but rather the distributor, who may not be responsible for the selection of available goods, but who is responsible for getting them to the market. The consumer will buy what is offered, particularly if there is no other option. If this means a mixed shipment of authentic and imitation wares, even mixed with local wares from a nearby center, which all probably looked more or less the same at a given time, then personal choice becomes less meaningful. Exchange and trade routes established between individual sites, whether coastal settlements, like Loutro, or inland and upland small farms, are also obviously meaningful, but it cannot be assumed that the presence of imitation pottery directly reflects the status or wealth of inhabitants. These individuals are not necessarily poor, nor were they less sophisticated about current trends in pottery; in such cases, their identity or social status cannot be read through their pottery. It may be that some of the inhabitants of Sphakia were quite wealthy, but they were probably offered the same pottery as their poorer neighbours; they could just buy more of it.

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