

The destination of Paul's first journey: Asia Minor or Africa?

Thomas W. Davis
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, Texas
United States of America

and

Mark Wilson
Stellenbosch University
Western Cape Province
South Africa

Abstract

The results of experimental archaeology related to ancient seafaring, new studies of eastern Mediterranean trade networks, and recent archaeology on Cyprus shed new light on the itinerary of Paul's first missionary journey and the related question of the departure of John Mark from the apostolic party as related in Acts 13:13. It is now clear that Nea Paphos normally was used as a port of departure for ships sailing to Alexandria and North Africa, not Asia Minor. If Perga in Pamphylia were the original intended destination, then the travelers should have sailed from a port such as Lapithos or Kyrenia on the northern coast of Cyprus. This article will propose that the original intended destination of the missionaries was North Africa and that this change in plans led to the departure of John Mark. The results of asking this 'What if?' question will help to understand better Luke's literary enterprise, Paul's missionary purposes, and the development of early Christianity in the eastern Mediterranean.

Key Words: Paul's first journey, Asia Minor, Cyprus, Paphos, Alexandria

Introduction

In her article "What if Luke had never met Theophilus," Loveday Alexander (2000:161) begins with these words: 'Asking the "what if" questions of virtual history is a way of rubbing our noses in history's essential contingency—in the fact that things could have been different, that human choices (among other contingencies) actually matter'. Speaking specifically about the book of Acts, she continues, 'With Luke we are dealing with an author who seems particularly sensitive to the delicate combinations of forces, both communal and individual, that hedge about the articulation of the word'. In the spirit of Alexander's article related to Luke, we would also like to utilize historical imagination to discuss an unresolved issue related to Paul's first journey in Acts. First raised by the Roman historian Stephen Mitchell in 1980, it has never been followed through to its logical end. Some scholars including these authors have adopted Mitchell's suggestion that Paul's meeting with Sergius Paulus on Cyprus was the basis for their redirection to Asia Minor, specifically to Antioch near Pisidia¹. For this Roman colony was the home of the Roman governor. Paphos in the first century CE still maintained its historic ties to Alexandria

¹ For further discussion see Wilson 2016:230-232.

begun during the Ptolemaic period. The background of these ties will be developed. As Green (2000:116) observed, 'The connections between Paphos and Alexandria are delectable archaeologically'. Some of these connections that he mentions plus others will be explored.

The Evangelization of Cyprus

The genesis of the first journey originated in Antioch on the Orontes where Paul (still Saul in the Acts narrative) and Barnabas are sent forth by the believers there to the evangelistic work to which they had been called (Acts 13:1–4). The two were joined by John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10), who was to serve as their assistant (Acts 13:5). Barnabas probably persuaded the church in Antioch that Cyprus should be their first 'foreign' mission outreach. Perhaps it was a way to repay in part the debt owed to their spiritual midwives from Cyprus who had brought them into the new faith (Acts 11:20). Salamis, Barnabas' home city, was only a short sail from Seleucia Pieria, the port of Antioch. Pottery and coins from Antioch recovered in excavations on Cyprus document the strong commercial links between the city and the island².

The party initially preached in the synagogues in Salamis (Acts 13:5). The use of the plural (συναγωγαῖς) here suggests that there were several in the city, although excavations have not revealed any material remains from them. The origins of the Jewish communities on Cyprus date back to the Early Bronze Age³. By the first century CE Philo (*Legat.* 282) claims that Cyprus was full of Jewish colonies. Some of these Jews had long-standing connections to North Africa because they arrived as Ptolemaic mercenaries (Josephus *Ant.* 13.284–87). After leaving Salamis, the apostolic party proceeded along the Roman road that ran 163 kilometers along the southern coast. They stopped in synagogues in the major cities of Kition, Amathus, and Kourion before arriving at the Roman provincial capital of Paphos (13:6)⁴. The intention of Paul and Barnabas clearly was to begin their activity in Cyprus, particularly in its two major cities⁵. But were Pamphylia and South Galatia also originally their intended destinations?

The Evangelization of Pamphylia and South Galatia: Planned or Unplanned?

Biblical scholars had generally held that Paul and Barnabas, before leaving Antioch, planned to visit Asia Minor after Cyprus. However, the reasons suggested for targeting this region have been varied⁶. A Jewish community certainly existed in Pamphylia in the first century CE. Philo mentioned their presence (*Legat.* 36), and Pamphylia was one of the places mentioned in 1 Maccabees 15:23. Acts 2:10 mentions Jews from Pamphylia being present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. Yet, as Witherington (1998:403) observed trenchantly, Antioch near Pisidia was 'not necessarily the most obvious choice for the next place to evangelize'.

A Roman historian S. Mitchell (1980:1074 n.134) was the first to suggest that they went to Antioch near Pisidia because of an event in Paphos. After a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus was blinded, the proconsul Sergius Paulus "believed" (ἐπίστευσεν) in Paul's

² For a lamp see Bailey 1965:5-13; for coins see Tatton-Brown 1997:79.

³ See Davis forthcoming; also Kerkeslager 2010.

⁴ For a detailed discussion of this road, see Bekker-Nielsen 2004:114–116, 194–197, 202–206. The distance is taken from the table found on pages 220-222.

⁵ Kerkeslager (2010:502) is skeptical about the historicity of the Acts account because there is no mention of Cyprus in Paul's letters. He states, 'Legends of apostolic origins for Cypriot Christianity are not credible'. According to him, unknown Jewish Christians, not the apostles, founded the church there.

⁶ These reasons are detailed in Wilson 2016:230.

gospel when he saw this miracle (Acts 13:11–12)⁷. Thus Mitchell (1993:7) suggested that the turn northward was motivated by the fact the Antioch was the patria of Sergius Paulus: ‘We can hardly avoid the conclusion that the proconsul himself had suggested to Paul that he make it his next port of call, no doubt providing him with letters of introduction to aid his passage and his stay’. Inscriptions found at the site name his son later an influential senator, and his daughter who was married to the Caristianiis, another influential Roman family living in the colony⁸. Thus the gospel’s spread northward from Cyprus resulted from this providential meeting with the Roman governor from Galatia.

However, this hypothesis has failed to convince some New Testament scholars such as Stanton (2004:37) who wrote that ‘this theory rests on little more than disciplined imagination’. Peterson (2009:385) though allows that ‘it is possible that he (Sergius Paulus) influenced Paul and Barnabas to go there first’⁹. So the question remains: If Pamphylia and Galatia were not the original destination of the first journey, where did Paul and Barnabas intend to go after Paphos? Is North Africa a possible consideration? A brief survey of the Hellenistic and Roman history of Cyprus will help to advance the discussion.

Cyprus and its North African Connection in the Hellenistic Period

The Cypriot kingdoms were released from Persian rule by Alexander in 333 BCE, and in 312 BC the royal institution was abolished. In 294 BCE the island was annexed by Ptolemy, and the island became part of Egypt’s sphere of influence. As Papantaniou (2013:43) noted, ‘The transformation of political topographies in Hellenistic Cyprus...brought a marked urban and extra-urban change’. The catalyst for this change, he continued, ‘was indeed Ptolemaic rule (and particularly that of the second and first centuries B.C.E.) that established city life and institutions, such as boule, gymnasia, and theaters, in accordance with the rest of the Hellenic world’. The Ptolemies also began to mint coinage on the island. Ptolemy I Soter and Ptolemy III Euergetes both issued coins with Aphrodite, the island’s patron deity, on them. Koutoupas (2015:52) wrote, ‘Moreover, based on the close relations between Cyprus and Alexandria and the movement of various types of people, another reason for the appearance of Aphrodite on coins could be also her close relationship with the Ptolemaic queens’¹⁰. The island’s ongoing connection with Alexandria is evidenced in 131 BCE when Euergetes II fled to Cyprus with his queen and wife Cleopatra III. He lived on the island for two years before returning to Alexandria to recover the throne from his queen sister Cleopatra II. Despite this and the other palace intrigues that characterized Ptolemaic history during this period, Mitford (1959:104) wrote, ‘Cyprus...was that kingdom’s sole remaining overseas dependency. As such it was administered by men of distinction in the interests of co-regents, often mutually antagonistic’. For example, Theodoros (124–118 BCE) simultaneously held the titles of governor and commander-in-chief (στρατηγός), admiral of the Ptolemaic Mediterranean fleet (ναύαρχος), and high priest of the island’s cults (ἀρχιερέυς) (Mitford 1959:105).

Not only was the connection political but also cultural. Tatton-Brown (1997:46) wrote, ‘Cyprus maintained particularly close ties with Egypt, shown by sculpture in the Ptolemaic style...as well

⁷ The nature of the governor’s faith is explored by Keener 2013:2024–2025.

⁸ See the sidebar ‘Sergius Paulus’ Connection to Pisidian Antioch’ in Ramsay 2001:76. Nobbs (1994:287) also concluded that the inscriptional evidence mentioning Sergius Paullus cited by her ‘would fit conveniently into a senatorial career of the time, and suggest they could well refer to the same person’.

⁹ Peterson (2009:385) based his observation on comments made by Ben Witherington in his commentary on Acts (1998:403-404) who quoted Fox (1989:293-294).

¹⁰ Athanasios (2015:57) writes further: ‘Aphrodite, apart from her local importance (Cyprus), was also connected with the promotion of the deification of the Ptolemaic queens’.

as burial customs and architectural features...that reflect fashions in the newly founded Egyptian city of Alexandria'. In the UNESCO World Heritage necropolis site called the Tombs of the Kings, the presence of a limestone eagle, symbol of the Ptolemies, suggests that these were populated by the state officials and societal elites of Paphos along with their families. Christou (2008:68) wrote regarding their style: 'The architectural forerunners of these tombs are to be found in the "Moustafa Pasha" necropolis in Alexandria of Egypt'. Green (2000:116) mentioned that there are also 'good parallels for these tombs in the Hadra and Chatby cemeteries of Alexandria itself'.

This connection was commercial and military as well. In her colorful biography on Cleopatra, Schiff (2010:43-44) noted Cyprus's significance for Egypt: 'The pearl of the Ptolemaic possessions, Cyprus commanded the Egyptian coast. It supplied the Egyptian kings with timber and afforded them a near monopoly on copper'. Nea Paphos—commonly just Paphos in the first century CE—was founded on the southwestern coast at the end of the fourth century BCE. It became the Ptolemaic capital because of its naval advantages. Its predecessor Palai Paphos (Kouklia), sixteen kilometers to the southeast, still served as the center of Aphrodite worship on the island as well as the *ἱερόν* for Nea Paphos (Mitford 1961:2). Hill (1940:174) suggested that the Ptolemies moved the capital to Paphos because of the abundance of timber in its district, despite the fact that its harbor 'was dangerous and strategically less well situated than that of Arsinoe-Famagusta, the successor of Salamis'. Apparently the Ptolemies did not view the harbor of Paphos as dangerous nor that its location not strategic, since a Ptolemaic fleet was based there in later years. As Davis (2012:233-234) summarized, 'Geography dictated the Ptolemaic choice. Salamis harbor was silting up and lay too close to the Syrian coast, whereas Paphos could be reached from Alexandria in a direct sail that avoided Seleucid territory'.

The remains of Roman Paphos mostly obscure the Ptolemaic city. However, during the excavation of the Roman House of Dionysius, a pebble mosaic dating from the late 4th century BCE—the oldest mosaic found in Cyprus—and depicting Scylla, was found under its foundations. Also discovered in the Hellenistic strata was a hoard of 2,484 silver Ptolemaic tetrachms hidden in a large Hellenistic amphora with mints representing Alexandria, Salamis, Kition, and Nea Paphos. From the same layer came 11,000 seal impressions depicting divinities and Ptolemaic kings (Christou 2008:72-73). One of the statues from the workshop depicted the shipwright Pyrgoteles who constructed *triakoner*es and *eikoseres* for the fleet of Ptolemy Philadelphos (285–46 BCE).

Cyprus in the Early Roman Period

In 58 BCE Cyprus was annexed by Rome. During the civil wars Julius Caesar returned the island to his mistress Cleopatra VII. In 36 BCE Mark Antony, now Cleopatra's husband, confirmed the gift. After Octavian captured Alexandria in 30 BCE with the subsequent suicide of Cleopatra, Cyprus reverted to Roman authority. In 58 BCE Cyprus was incorporated with Cilicia into the province of Syria, and Cicero served as its proconsul in 51–50 BCE. But in 22 BCE the island was detached from Syria to become a senatorial province, a reorganization that held for the next three hundred years. During the imperial period Cyprus was divided into four districts: Paphos, Salamis, Amathus, and Lapethos (Wilson 2013:499). So Paphos continued to function not only as the capital of the island but as a district center. In 15 BCE an earthquake severely damaged the city, but through the benefaction of Augustus it was quickly rebuilt. In honor of its benefactor, Paphos was now named *Sebaste* or its Latin equivalent *Augusta* (Cassius Dio

54.23.7)¹¹. P. Paquius Scaeva was awarded two unprecedented five-year appointments as proconsul probably because his experience as financial administrator and supervisor of public works. Thus he was the obvious choice to lead the reconstruction of Paphos after the earthquake. These early proconsuls, according to Bekker-Nielson (2004:57), 'were men who had proved their worth as administrators, and the proconsulate at Paphos was the ultimate or penultimate stage of a distinguished career'.

Because Cyprus was now surrounded by Roman provinces, its strategic political and economic role was diminished from its former status in the Hellenistic period. Whether it became a 'political backwater'—Mitford's words (1980:1295)—is now being reevaluated¹². Nevertheless, Christou (2008:78) writes that the 'great prosperity and cultural development of Nea Paphos during Roman rule is reflected in the discovered remains of its monumental public buildings and majestic private houses'. Yet a link between Egypt and Cyprus continued during this period. For example, the excavations at the Roman theater in Paphos has led Green (2000:120) to hypothesize 'that the overall design of the theatre at Paphos echoed that of the one at Alexandria'¹³.

Evidence from the Geographical and Maritime Situation

Intercity connections within the island remained tenuous, even in the Hellenistic and Roman imperial periods. The Kyrenia Mountains, whose highest peak rose to 1,024 meters, ran along the island's northern coast and could be seen from Syria 103 kilometers to the east and from Asia Minor 69 kilometers to the north. A strong geographical connection therefore existed between cities on the northern coast and those on the mainland to the east and north. These mountains presented a formidable barrier to the Mesaoria plain to the south. Because there were only a few easy passages across the range, Bekker-Nielsen (2016:120) wrote: 'These passages in turn determined the pattern of roads and settlements along the coast'. The Troodos Mountains in southwestern Cyprus similarly presented an obstacle to the construction of roads to Paphos from cities on the northern coast, as the maps of Bekker-Nielson (2004:108 fig. 30; 110 fig. 14) show. Instead a road network encircled the island connecting the major coastal cities with Paphos.

Cyprus dominated the sea lanes from the Aegean to the Levant and Egypt, and Paphos was an 'easy sail' to and from Alexandria (Michaelides 1991:1). Strabo (14.6.3) noted that this distance is 3600 stadia (actual air distance is 460 kilometers), again evidencing the geographical connection between the two cities. The sailing patterns around Cyprus are an important aspect of travel in the eastern Mediterranean. D. Davis (2009:115) explained: 'Ships heading south and east from Crete, Rhodes or Cyprus used the prevailing etesians to speed them on their way, but knowing what angle to the wind to maintain the rigging, and the course, was crucial for making accurate landfall: a ship departing Crete for Alexandria would have had winds astern for most of the way; another heading there from Cyprus would have had to keep the wind on the starboard beam or quarter'. Such a pattern is seen in Luke's description of Paul's return on the third journey in Acts 21:3: ἀναφάναντες δὲ τὴν Κύπρον καὶ καταλιπόντες αὐτὴν εὐώνυμον ἐπλέομεν εἰς

¹¹ An inscription on milestone 15 from Paphos dating from the Severan period gives the city's title as *Sebaste*; see Bekker-Nielsen 2004:268.

¹² For more on the Roman period of Cyprus see Davis 2012:234–235.

¹³ Green made this suggestion even though the theater in Alexandria has not been preserved. Nevertheless, he (2000:120) wrote that 'given the nature of the site, it is likely that it too was at least partially built up with an artificial embankment, just as the theatre at Paphos'. The results of the University of Sydney's excavations at the theater are available online at: <http://www.paphostheatre.org/>.

Συρίαν. As Nobbs (1994:281-282) wrote, 'the crossing from Patara to Syria is recounted, correctly referring to the sighting of Cyprus, as indeed the ship would have passed to the south of Cyprus on its eastward journey, favoured by the northwest winds'.

Despite such sailing patterns determined by the prevailing winds, Fairchild (2013:54) depicted sea lanes on a map that ran from Paphos to ports in Pamphylia without any substantiating documentation. He wrote, 'Whether they landed at Magydos or Attalia on their journey from Cyprus or at one of the other major Anatolian seaports closer to Cyprus—Side, Korakesion or Anamurium—is unclear. If they landed at one of these seaports, they either walked the coastal road to Side, whereupon the road led inland directly to Perga, or they took a smaller ship from one of these ports to the mouth of the Kestros River'. Two things are problematic with this statement. First, Korakesion and Anamurium were not even in the region of Pamphylia but in Rough Cilicia. Second, Luke is very specific about which port the three sailed to: *Αναχθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Πάφου οἱ περὶ Παῦλον ἦλθον εἰς Πέργην τῆς Παμφυλίας* (Acts 13:13). Wilson (2016:236-238) concluded that Magydus, the sea harbor of Perga, was where the apostles landed in Pamphylia.

So the sailing patterns support our hypothesis regarding the intended destination of the first journey. If the apostolic party intended to make North Africa their next port of call, then Paphos was the best point from which to sail. If their original intent was to sail to Pamphylia, then the best departure point would have been from a port on the northern coast such as Lapithos, Kyrenia, or Soloi.

Evidence from Trade

Recent scholarship on Roman Cyprus has demonstrated the commercial connections between Cyprus and North Africa. Green (2000:116) noted that the trade in Rhodian wine amphorae 'were so popular in both Paphos and Alexandria'. It is now evident that the province of Cyprus was not as unified in the first century CE as previously thought. The elite of Paphos appear to have embraced elements of a separate cultural identity from the rest of Cyprus. New studies indicate that an economic divide existed in Roman Cyprus between Paphos and the rest of the island. Lund (2006), in his study of Roman fine wares, indicated that the Paphian elites used different luxury table wares than the rest of the island. The Paphos region was the production center for Cypriot Sigillata fine ware, while Eastern Sigillata wares produced in Syria dominated the fine ware sub-assemblages of Salamis and Amathus. Lund (2002:47) noted that a frying pan produced in Akamas and found in Paphos as well as other sites in western Cyprus is largely absent in eastern Cyprus, concluding, 'It is becoming increasingly clear that there was considerable regional diversity in the distribution of pottery in Cyprus in the Hellenistic and Roman periods'. He likewise observed that in the first century CE Eastern Sigillata A, made in the Syrian Antioch region, predominated in eastern Cyprus while Cypriot Sigillata was found in western Cyprus where it was presumably made. Citing Salles, Lund (2002:47) concluded that 'western Cyprus was better connected with Western Cilicia, Northern Egypt, and parts of Israel—regions that are among the most prolific find spots of both Cypriot Sigillata and pinch-handled amphorae'¹⁴.

¹⁴ Lund's opinion is substantiated in part by the findings of Parks and Neff (2002:205-214). They examined a chemically related group of terracotta coffins, ossuaries, and roof tiles that probably originated in Cilicia but were found in Cyprus as well as along the Mediterranean coast from Attalia to Acre. Their map (2002:209 fig. 10.4) shows the distribution of finds in major cities around Cyprus including Paphos. After examining other examples of trade artefacts, they (2002:212) concluded: 'In the Hellenistic period, Cyprus looked towards Egypt as is to be expected given the Ptolemaic suzerainty over

The recent study by John Lund (2015) of ceramic connections during the Hellenistic and Roman periods in Cyprus documented strong trade links to Rough Cilicia from the Akamas Peninsula and the north coast of Cyprus, but *not* from Paphos. Commenting about the distribution of Sagalassos Red Slip Ware from Pisidia in the first three centuries of the Roman period, Willet and Poblome (2015:147) wrote, 'Although friction of transport and connectivity may have been a constraint on the development of production, it seems that in the case of SRSW production, the relatively bad connection the region with the Mediterranean basin may in fact have opened up possibilities for investment in regional production centre for tableware'. The authors (2015:133) mentioned that pieces of SRSW have been found in Italy, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, and Israel, but surprisingly none has been found in Cyprus. Therefore this data functions as an argument in reverse. Apparently little commerce existed between Cyprus and this nearby inland Pisidian region to its north through which Paul and Barnabas traveled on their return to Perga (διελθόντες τὴν Πισιδίαν; Acts 14:24)¹⁵.

Roman trade amphorae found on Cyprus suggests a complex interchange network in which Cyprus took part. The analysis of Kaldelis (2008:220) showed that after the change from Ptolemaic to Roman rule, Amathus and Salamis traded heavily with Antioch, Cilicia, and the Levant, while Paphos looked strongly west with a high percentage of imports from Italy and Rome itself. This was particularly strong in the first century CE. Kaldelis (2008:221) also noted: 'Intense contacts with the centre of the empire...could suggest that Paphos was a stop for the ships travelling from Italy to Egypt for the transfer of the annona. The wind and currents between Egypt and Cyprus...support such a possibility'. In normal circumstances, Paul probably would have found it difficult to find a ship sailing from Paphos to Pamphylia, while finding a ship sailing to Alexandria would be relatively easy¹⁶. Their voyage to Perga may have occurred, only because they sailed on a ship arranged for them by the governor.

Evidence from Numismatics

Another example of geographical relationships is the distribution of coinage between Cyprus and Pamphylia as well as among the cities on the island. Howgego (2015:308) noted that 'coin circulation patterns are important for historical geography'. Scholars are divided, however, whether civic coinage could only be used where it was minted. Nevertheless, Katsari (2011:239) suggested: 'Apart from the few instances of state, provincial or civic regulation of the circulation of small change, it seems that the majority of the Graeco-Roman cities allowed for their uninhibited use in the markets'. Cyprus, as we have seen, was situated on the sea routes that connected the harbors of Syria and Asia Minor with those in Greece. Thus Katsari (2011:229) stated that 'it is not surprising that the majority of the bronze coins found *in situ* came from the Roman provinces surrounding the eastern Mediterranean Sea'.

Nevertheless, it is interesting that the survey by Parks (2004) of Cyprus's Roman coinage cited no examples of Cypriot coinage from the imperial period in the cities of Pamphylia and Pisidia. Recent excavations at Perga likewise have found no coins from Cyprus (Erol 2005; Köker 2007). This is remarkable since coins from Antioch on the Orontes and Alexandria were among

the island. Under the Roman Empire, however, the direction of emphasis appears to shift favoring Asia Minor'.

¹⁵ It must be acknowledged, however, that the Pamphylian coastal cities did have more extensive trade networks; for example, Side with Egypt; see H.-J Drexhage (1991).

¹⁶ The maps of the prevailing wind patterns around Cyprus in Murray (1994:40-42) help to visualize the challenge of sailing north from Cyprus.

those discovered. Likewise, recent excavations at Antioch near Pisidia have found no coins from Cyprus either (Sancaktar 2014). Tek, who has documented the coins in the Side Museum and from the excavations at Side, reported: 'In the Side excavations the representation of Cyprus is surprisingly very low. I have so far only recorded one single Ptolemaic example from the mint of Salamis (that is out of 236 Greek coins excavated since 1947). The Roman coinage of Cyprus as you know is very limited and none represented among 281 Roman provincial issues excavated. Altogether, this is highly surprising. Side is one place where you would expect coins of Cyprus to appear'¹⁷. While such results are provisional and suggest limited trade relationships between Cyprus and Pamphylia, they are instructive as part of the material evidence being assembled to form a composite regional picture for this period.

Roman coinage from Cyprus under the Julio-Claudians hints at an intra-island social and cultural divide between east and west that the Romans were aware of. Under Augustus, the primary mint appears to have been at Paphos, and its bronze coinage apparently was widely circulated. This divide is illustrated by a series of coins produced under Augustus with two distinct reverse images: the temple of Aphrodite at Palai Paphos¹⁸ and the temple of Zeus at Salamis that had been built under imperial patronage of the Ptolemies. Gordon (2010) argued that the concurrent issuing of a 'Salamis' coin may have been an attempt to acknowledge or recognize a religious divide in the province: the Palai Paphos temple image was meant to placate the local elite in the Paphos area, while the statue of Zeus reverse was intended to appease the citizens of Salamis. Amandry (1993:8) offered another reason why they might have been struck in AD 22: 'Paphos and Salamis were confirmed in the right of asylum long enjoyed by their temples'. The east-west dichotomy is also hinted at by Parks in her discussion of the second use of the Aphrodite temple/Zeus Salaminos on coin issues by Drusus Minor. This son of Tiberius combined both images on one coin apparently to encourage the unification of the province and 'to keep the people of each city happy' (Parks 2004:68). Coinage with these two temples was again resumed under Vespasian and continued to Caracalla¹⁹. Hill (1904:cxix) called these the 'usual types'.

Evidence from the New Testament

As mentioned earlier, the original destination of the first journey is never given, although the cities in North Africa were the probable target. There was large Diaspora Jewish communities in Alexandria (3 Maccabees 3:1; Acts 18:24) and Cyrene (1 Maccabees 15:23; cf. 2 Maccabees 2:23) that numbered over a million (Josephus *Ag. Ap.*2.44; *Ant.* 14.118)²⁰. Alexandria was the residence of Philo, a contemporary of Paul and the leading Jewish intellectual of the day²¹. Evidence for a nascent Christianity in North Africa can be reconstructed from various New Testament texts. The Synoptic Gospels mention the presence of a Jew from Cyrene named

¹⁷ Tolga Tek (personal correspondence, 15/10/2015). He does qualify the final statement, saying, 'So far we have dealt with Late Roman and Byzantine levels only (this includes Mansel excavations as well). In Side there is almost no architectural remains with a pre-mid Roman date, and even those were extensively used in Late Roman and Byzantine. If and when we find any of Side's Hellenistic and earlier levels, I would expect more from coins from Cyprus to appear'.

¹⁸ This is no. 2 (unillustrated) in Zapiti and Michaelidou (2008:143).

¹⁹ Zapiti and Michaelidou (2008:145–146) showed Zeus Salaminios at nos. 14, 16 and Aphrodite at Palaipaphos nos. 15, 17 (with illustrations). About them they (2008:141) wrote: 'The style of these coins is that of the Antioch mint, which means the mint was transferred to Cyprus sometime during the Flavian dynasty, or that the coins were struck in Antioch and shipped to Cyprus'.

²⁰ For a fuller discussion see Venit (2010:319–322) and Kerkeslager (2010:503-504). For more on Philo and the Jews of Alexandria, see Pollard and Reid (2007:191-200).

²¹ For an overview of Philo's life, see Sterling (2010:1063–70).

Simon at Jesus' crucifixion (Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). Likewise, the book of Acts mentions the presence of Jews from Egypt and Cyrene in Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Paul's personal contact with North African Jews occurred first at the Synagogue of the Freedman in Jerusalem where men from Cyrene and Alexandria attended (Acts 6:9). If Stephen had connections with Alexandrian Jews through the Synagogue of the Freedmen, maybe Paul felt an obligation to preach the gospel in this city since he was responsible for the death of its preeminent evangelist (Barnard 1960-1961:31-45).

It was Jewish followers of Jesus from Cyprus and Cyrene who first preached the gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 11:20). This undoubtedly happened because they were much more comfortable around non-Jews than their more conservative compatriots from Judea. One of the five prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch was Lucius of Cyrene (13:1). As Paul and Barnabas contemplated a place to evangelize on their first mission, they would certainly think of this large Jewish population in North Africa who would provide a receptive and accessible audience for the gospel message. And Paphos would be the logical jumping off point for such a mission southward. The desertion (ἀποχωρέω; Acts 13:13) of John Mark at Perga is another indication that a change of plan occurred. Lake and Cadbury (1932:147) wrote insightfully: 'It is quite possible that the original plan did not contemplate anything more than Cyprus and that Mark did not feel it his duty to continue with the new enterprise'. Wilson (2016:239-240) has reviewed the various suggestions for his departure and concluded as most likely that 'the turn northward was not interpreted then as providential guidance by Mark so he decided to leave'.

Evidence from Later Church Tradition

At the beginning of the second journey, Paul and Barnabas disagreed whether to take Mark with them to revisit the churches started on the first journey. Mark's desertion in Perga had soured Paul on Barnabas' cousin. As a result the two disagreed sharply and parted ways. Paul took Silas with him to Cilicia and Galatia, while Barnabas and Mark sailed to Cyprus (Acts 15:39). The latter two are never mentioned in Acts again because Luke's narrative priority was to feature the character of Paul. After crossing the island to Paphos, is it possible that now Barnabas and Mark fulfilled the original vision to sail south to North Africa to evangelize there?

This possibility is suggested in a number of later traditions related to Barnabas and Mark. But as Griggs (1990:13) wrote, 'The founding of the Christian movement in Egypt is obscured by legends which are difficult to evaluate for historical accuracy'. Barnabas has been suggested as a possible author of the canonical Letter to the Hebrews. Noting the book's Alexandrian connections, Ellingworth (1993:14-15) wrote: 'There is no doubt that the writer shared much of the background of the Alexandrian Jewish authors of Wisdom and 4 Maccabees, and especially of Philo'. In the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 1.8–14 (ca. 300 CE) Barnabas is said to be the first to preach Christianity in the streets of Alexandria. But Barnard (1964:145 n. 1) has observed: 'This tradition is of very doubtful historical value'. Kraft and Luijendijk (2013:181) identified Barnabas as the reputed author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*. *The Acts of Barnabas* (fifth to sixth century CE), purportedly written by John Mark, contains the fullest account of his later activities. Among these were his appointment of a bishop named Heracleides over Cyprus, his use of a copy of Matthew's gospel, and his confrontation with Bar-Jesus again that resulted in his immolation in the hippodrome of Salamis by Cypriot Jews (Walker 1870).

Regarding Mark, his canonical gospel in 15:21 evidences Mark's later connections with individuals in the North African church—Simon of Cyrene and his sons Alexander and Rufus. The apocryphal *Acts of Barnabas* record that after the death of Barnabas, Mark then traveled by ship to Alexandria. Its chronology places Barnabas' martyrdom and Mark's visit to Alexandria

after the first journey (ca. 49–50 CE). Regarding other attempts at dating, Barnard (1964:145) wrote, ‘St. Jerome and Epiphanius place Mark’s journey to Alexandria *after* the composition of his gospel, while the chronicle of Eusebius places it before, in the years 41–42 or 43–44 A.D., stating that Annianus, St. Mark’s successor as bishop, was appointed 62–63 A.D.’²². Traditions reflected by Eusebius (*Ecc. Hist.* 2.16.1) state that Mark preached in Alexandria and started the church there (Griggs 1990:19-21). He was martyred in the city in 68 CE, and later the patriarchs of Alexandria were elected beside his traditional tomb in Baucalis, the oldest church of the city abandoned in the fifth century (Haas 2002:213).²³ His head is now believed to be housed in Saint Mark’s Coptic Cathedral in Alexandria, while other relics are housed in Saint Mark’s Cathedral in Cairo. In 828 CE two Italian sailors (or merchants) stole Mark’s other relics and removed them to Venice where they are housed in the Basilica of Saint Mark. In 1968 Pope Paul VI returned a relic to Alexandria (Escoffey 2012:43). A modern icon in the Greek Orthodox Church in Alexandria depicts Saint Mark bringing the gospel to Alexandria and dying in this city symbolized by the Pharos lighthouse²⁴. These later traditions suggest that Barnabas and John Mark did indeed accomplish their mission by continuing south from Paphos to North Africa.

Conclusion

This article has asked the ‘What if...?’ question related to the actual destination of the first missionary journey. While it is not possible to give a conclusive answer to our hypothesis, we have nevertheless advanced a strong circumstantial argument based on historical, geographical, archaeological, and textual data that points in that direction. The exercise has given fresh insights regarding Luke’s literary enterprise, Paul’s first missionary journey, and the development of early Christianity in the eastern Mediterranean. Knox (1964:11) argued that Paul, after visiting Spain, had a ‘hope and expectation of making a complete circuit of the nations, both north and south of the Sea’²⁵. The journey would circle back (κύκλω; Romans 15:19) across North Africa via Alexandria to Jerusalem. If Paul knew that Barnabas and John Mark had reached Cyrene and Egypt after their parting of ways, it is doubtful whether Paul would have felt the need to complete that circle and do ministry in North Africa. For the gospel had already been carried there, and the church established in Alexandria.

²² See also Pollard and Reid (2007:216).

²³ The exact location of this church is now unknown, although it is conjectured to have been in the area of the present Collège Saint Marc in Shatby.

²⁴ Escoffey (2012:39) where this icon is depicted at the top of the page.

²⁵ See also Hultgren (1985:132–133).

References

- Alexander, L. C. A. (2000), What if Paul had never met Theophilus, *Biblical Interpretation* 8.1/2, 161-170.
- Amandry, M. (1993). *Coin production and monetary distribution in Roman Cyprus*. Nicosia, Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation.
- Bailey, D. M. (1965). Lamps in the Victoria and Albert Museum. *Opuscula Atheniesnia* VI. Lund, Gleerup, 5-13.
- Barnard, L. W. (1960-1961). St Stephen and early Alexandrian Christianity. *New Testament Studies* 7, 31–45.
- Barnard, L. W. (1964). St. Mark and Alexandria. *Harvard Theological Review* 57, 145-150.
- Bekker-Nielsen, T. (2004). *The roads of ancient Cyprus*. Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press.
- Bekker-Nielsen, T. (2016). The ancient roads of northern Cyprus. In L. Summerer & H. Kaba (Eds). *Northern face of Cyprus: new studies in Cypriot archaeology and art history*. Istanbul, Ege, 117–129.
- Christou, D. (2008). *Paphos: archaeological guide and historical review*. Nicosia, Christou.
- Davis, D. L. (2009). *Commercial navigation in the Greek and Roman world*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Texas. <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/18420>.
- Davis, T. W. (2012). Saint Paul on Cyprus: archaeology and the transformation of an apostle. *Perspectives on Science and Faith* 64.4, 230-241.
- Davis, T. W. (forthcoming). The Jewish diaspora in Ptolemaic and Roman Cyprus: some speculations. *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections*.
- Drexhage, H.-J. (1991). Die Kontakte zwischen Side, Alexandria und Ägypten in der Römischen Kaiserzeit (1–3 jh. N. Chr). *Asia Minor Studien* 3, 75–90.
- Ellingworth, P. (1993). *The epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.
- Erol, A. (2005). Perge kazı sikkeleri: 1989–1998. Unpublished MA thesis, Istanbul University.
- Escoffey, C. (2012). *Ancient Alexandria*. Alexandria: Bibliotheca Alexandrina.
- Fairchild, M. R. (2013). Paul's perilous passage through Pisidia. *Biblical Archaeology Review* 39.6, 51-59.
- Fox, R. L. (1989). *Pagans and Christians*. New York, Knopf.
- Gordon, J. (2010). Why empires matter: a postcolonial archaeology of cultural identity in Hellenistic and Roman Cyprus. Paper presented at the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Green, J. R. (2000). The theatre of Paphos and the theatre of Alexandria: some first thoughts," In R. Macleod (Ed). *The library of Alexandria: centre of learning in the ancient world*. London, Tauris, 115-126.

Griggs, C. W. (1990). *Early Egyptian Christianity from its origins to 451 CE*. Leiden/Boston/Köln, Brill.

Haas, C. (2002). *Alexandria in late antiquity: topography and social conflict*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

Hill, G. *A history of Cyprus*, Vol. 1. (1940). Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Hill, G. F. (1904). *Catalogue of the Greek coins of Cyprus*. London, British Museum.

Howgego, C. (2015). Questions of coin circulation in the Roman period. In K. Dörtlük, O. Tekin & R. Boyraz Seyhan (Eds). *Proceedings of the first international congress of the Anatolian monetary history and numismatics 25-28 February 2013 Antalya*. Antalya, Sun & Inan Kıraç Research Institute on Mediterranean Civilizations, 307-317.

Hultgren, A. J. (1985). *Paul's gospel and mission: the outlook from his letter to the Romans*. Philadelphia, Fortress.

Kaldelis, A. (2008). *Roman amphorae from Cyprus: integrating trade and exchange in the Mediterranean*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University College London.

Katsari, C. (2011). *The Roman monetary system: the eastern provinces from the first to the third century AD*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Keener, C. (2013). *Acts*, Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, Baker, 2013.

Kerkeslager, A. (2010). Cyprus. In J. J. Collins and D. C. Harlow (Eds). *The Eerdmans dictionary of early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 501-503.

Kerkeslager, A. (2010). Cyrenaica. In J. J. Collins and D. C. Harlow (Eds). *The Eerdmans dictionary of early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 503-504,

Knox, J. (1964). Romans 15:14–33 and Paul's conception of his apostolic mission. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83.1, 1-11.

Köker, H. (2007). Perge kazı sikkeleri, 1999–2004. Unpublished MA thesis, Istanbul University.

Koutoupas, A. (2015). *Deities depicted on Ptolemaic coinage: monarch's ideology in a religious context*. Unpublished MA thesis, Alexandria Center for Hellenistic Studies.

Kraft, R. A. & Luijendijk, A.-M. (2013). Christianity's rise after Judaism's demise in early Egypt. In Hershel Shanks (Ed). *Partings: how Judaism and Christianity became two*. Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 179-185.

Lake, K. & Cadbury, H. J. (1932). *The beginnings of Christianity, the Acts of the Apostles: English translation and commentary*, Vol. 4. London: Macmillan.

Lund, J. (2002). Frying pans and other cooking ware from Akamas. *Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient Méditerranéen* 35.1, 43–58.

Lund, J. (2006). On the circulation of goods in Hellenistic and early Roman Cyprus: the ceramic evidence. In L. W. Sorensen & K. W. Jacobsen (Eds). *Panayia Ematousa II: political, cultural, ethnic and social relations in Cyprus: approaches to regional studies*. Athens, Danish Institute of Athens, 31-49.

Lund, J. (2015). *A study of the circulation of ceramics in Cyprus from the 3rd Century BC to the 3rd Century AD*. Copenhagen, Aarhus University Press.

Michaelides, D. (1991). Nea Paphos: historical background. In N. S. Price (Ed). *The conservation of the Orpheus Mosaic at Paphos, Cyprus*. Los Angeles, Getty Conservation Institute, 1-2.

Mitchell, S. (1980). Population and land in Roman Galatia. In H. Temporini & W. Hasse (Eds). *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II.7.2. Berlin/New York, de Gruyter, 1053-1081

Mitchell, S. (1993). *Anatolia*, Vol. 2. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Mitford, T. B. (1959). Helenos governor Cyprus. *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 79, 94–131.

Mitford, T. B. (1961). The Hellenistic inscriptions of old Paphos. *Annual of the British School at Athens* 56, 1–41.

Mitford, T. B. (1980). Roman Cyprus. In H. Temporini & W. Hasse (Eds). *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II.7.2. Berlin/New York, de Gruyter, 1285-1384.

Murray, W. M. (1995). Ancient sailing winds in the eastern Mediterranean: the case of Cyprus. In V. Karageorghis & D. Michaelides (Eds). *Proceedings of the International symposium Cyprus and the Sea, organized by the archaeological research unit of the University of Cyprus and the Cyprus Ports Authority, 25-26 September 1993*. Nicosia, University of Cyprus, 33-43.

Nobbs, A. (1994). Cyprus. In D. W. J. Gill & C. Gempf (Eds). *The book of Acts: Graeco-Roman setting*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 279–289.

Papantaniou, G. (2013). Cyprus from basileis to strategos: a sacred landscapes approach. *American Journal of Archaeology* 117.1, 33–57.

Parks, D. A. (2004). *The Roman coinage of Cyprus*. Nicosia, Cyprus Numismatic Society.

Parks, D. A. & Neff, H. (2002). A geochemical vector for trade: Cyprus, Asia Minor, and the Roman east. In M. D. Glasscock (Ed), *Geochemical evidence for long-distance exchange*. Westport, Bergin and Garvey, 205–214.

Peterson, D. (2009). *The Acts of the apostles*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.

Pollard, J. & Reid, H. (2007). *The rise and fall of Alexandria: the birthplace of the modern world*. London, Penguin.

Ramsay, W. M. (2001). *St. Paul the traveler and Roman citizen*, rev. & ed. by M. Wilson. Grand Rapids, Kregel.

Sancaktar, H. (2014). Antiokheia (Pisidia) Kazısı Sikkeleri: 2008-2012. In K. Dörtlük, O. Tekin & R. Boyraz Seyhan (Eds). *Proceedings of the first international congress of the Anatolian monetary history and numismatics 25-28 February 2013 Antalya*. Antalya, Sun & Inan Kıraç Research Institute on Mediterranean Civilizations, 515-523.

Schiff, S. (2010). *Cleopatra*. New York/Boston/London: Little, Brown.

Stanton, G. N. (2004). *Jesus and gospel*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Sterling, G. E. (2010). Philo. In J. J. Collins and D. C. Harlow (Eds). *The Eerdmans dictionary of early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1063–1070.

Tatton-Brown, V. (1997). *Ancient Cyprus*. London, British Museum.

Venit, M. S. (2010). Alexandria. In J. J. Collins and D. C. Harlow (Eds). *The Eerdmans dictionary of early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 319–322.

Walker, A. trans. (1870). The Acts of Barnabas. In *Apocryphal Gospels, Acts and Revelations*. Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 297-300.

Willet, R & Poblome, J. (2015). The scale of Sagalassos red slip ware production: reconstructions of local need and production. *Adalya* 18, 133–147.

Wilson, M. (2013). Syria, Cilicia, and Cyprus. In J. B. Green & L. M. McDonald (Eds). *The world of the New Testament: cultural, social, and historical contexts*.

Wilson, M. (2016). Saint Paul in Pamphylia: intention, arrival and departure. *Adalya* 19, 229–250.

Witherington, B. (1998). *The Acts of the apostles*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.

Zapiti, E. & Michaelidou, L. (2008). *Coins of Cyprus, from the collection of the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation*. Nicosia, Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation.