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THE POTTERY OF LATE ACHAEMENID SAGALASSOS: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

The Sagalassos Archaeological Research Project has a long-standing tradition in excavations and material studies of the town of Sagalassos and its wider territory, focusing mainly on Roman imperial and late Antique times. In recent years, additional efforts have been spent at studying the earlier phases of the origin of town. This paper presents a small body of ceramics that can unequivocally be considered the oldest material found at the site, ascribed to the late Achaemenid period (late fifth to fourth centuries BCE). Similarities in typology and fabric can be noted with the nearby contemporary site at Düzen Tepe. The nature of the contexts associated with this material provide tentative indications for the importance of activities related to clay quarrying and agriculture for the small community at Sagalassos during this period of time.

Keywords

Sagalassos, pottery, typology, fabric, late Achaemenid period

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Introduction

A long history of archaeological research by the Sagalassos Archaeological Research Project has resulted in significant understanding of the Roman imperial to early Byzantine phases of urban development at Sagalassos¹. Unfortunately, due to stratigraphical superposition and oftentimes large-scale and invasive building operations during the main phases of urban development, original and/or earlier structures, layers and archaeological material have remained largely beyond reach in the extant archaeological record. As a result, the early phases of the development of the original settlement at Sagalassos can never be explored systematically. In recent years, the project has executed a concerted research programme, combining targeted archaeological excavations with intensive material studies of the excavated pottery, in an explicit attempt to improve our understanding of the origin and initial development of Sagalassos, based on what little the archaeology of the site has on offer².

In this paper, some of the results of the recent material studies will be discussed. Most of the time it is quite difficult to differentiate between late Achaemenid and early Hellenistic (5th to 3rd centuries BCE) material. As a result both periods are generally grouped together during material studies.³ The aim of this paper is to present a small body of material that can be considered the oldest pottery sherds known from the archaeological site

- 1. e.g. Jacobs and Waelkens 2013.
- 2. e.g. Talloen and Poblome 2016.
- 3. A total of 722 of such sherds has been identified from both surveys and excavations.

of Sagalassos proper, unequivocally ascribed to the late Achaemenid period (late 5th – 4th centuries BCE) based on properties of fabric and typology. This material was found associated with excavated contexts from the later, Roman town, as well as forming part of surface materials found during intensive city survey (CS) campaigns, mainly from the southwestern parts of town (FIG. 1)⁴. The wider historical and archaeological implications of the presence of this material will not be considered here.

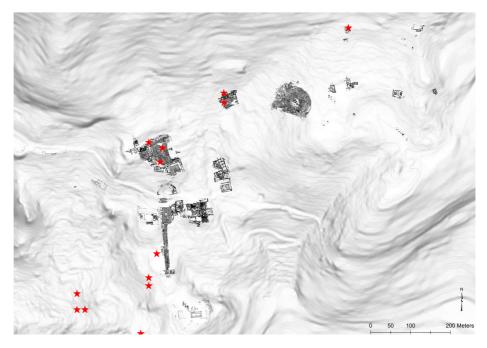


FIG. 1. Find locations of relevant contexts within the urban area of ancient Sagalassos.

Presenting pottery

An overview of the material under scrutiny (FIG. 2) can be found in Table 1. Insofar as it is possible we used type codes from the late Achaemenid-early Hellenistic pottery typology, recently constructed for the nearby settlement of Düzen Tepe.⁵

- 4. From 1990 to 2013, the fieldwork activities and research programme were directed by Marc Waelkens, and from 2014 onwards by Jeroen Poblome. For the intensive urban survey, see Martens 2005.
- 5. For the full typology, see Daems et al., this issue.

Locus	Context	Deriodization context	Fahric	Tyne
				-1/-
1 SA-2002-CS-00078-1	Sector 26	Achaemenid + Roman	248	G110
2 SA-2004-CS-00051	Sector 27	Achaemenid + Hellenistic + Roman	247	Q250
3 SA-2004-CS-00090	Sector 40	Achaemenid + Hellenistic + Roman + Mid Byz.	248	Flat base jar
4 SA-2004-CS-00111	Sector 45	Achaemenid + Hellenistic + Roman + Post Byz.	248	Handle jar
5 SA-2004-CS-00111	Sector 45	Achaemenid + Hellenistic + Roman + Post Byz.	Common	H170
			ware	
6 SA-2005-CS-00094-1	Sector 32	Achaemenid + Roman	Common	Flat wall/slab fragment
			ware 217	
/ SA-2005-CS-00086	Sector 28	Achaemenia + Hellenistic + Koman + Mia Byz.	24/	Jar with thickened rim flattened at outside and
				slight groove
8 SA-2005-CS-00086	Sector 28	Achaemenid + Hellenistic + Roman + Mid Byz.	247	Handle jar
9 SA-2005-CS-00086	Sector 28	Achaemenid + Hellenistic + Roman + Mid Byz.	247	Handle jar
10 SA-2005-CS-00086	Sector 28	Achaemenid + Hellenistic + Roman + Mid Byz.	247	Handle jar
11 SA-2005-CS-00102	Sector 30	Achaemenid + Roman	250	Handle cooking pot
12 SA-1992-UA-00070	Upper Agora: topsoil sector IX	Topsoil	Fine fabric	High standing ring
13 SA-2014-UA-00056-00052	Upper Agora: fill of water channel works	1st century CE + residual Achaemenid	Cookware	Q230
14 SA-2014-UA-00056-00052	Upper Agora: fill of water channel works	1st century CE + residual Achaemenid	249	Handle jar
15 SA-2014-UA-00056-00052	Upper Agora: fill of water channel works	1st century CE + residual Achaemenid	247	Base jar
16 SA-2014-UA-00070-00071	Upper Agora: construction trench honorific monument	2nd century BCE + residual Achaemenid	247	C170?
17 SA-2010-UAN-00045-00041	Upper Agora North: cultural fill in street substrate	1st century CE + residual Hellenistic and Achaemenid	248	Handle jar
18 SA-2011-F-00056-00067	Site F: foundation trench terrace wall	Achaemenid + early Hellenistic	Cookware	Q200
19 SA-2011-F-00056-00067	Site F: foundation trench terrace wall	Achaemenid + early Hellenistic	237	A120
20 SA-2011-F-00056-00067	Site F: foundation trench terrace wall	Achaemenid + early Hellenistic	250	Q200
21 SA-2011-F-00081-00098	Site F: foundation trench terrace wall	Hellenistic + residual Achaemenid	Common	Handle jar
			ware	
22 SA 1996-N-54.2	Site N: underneath steps south of Library	Roman + residual Achaemenid	247	H111
23 SA-1994-L-00167	Site L: back wall Library sector LVII-LIX	(late) Hellenistic + residual Achaemenid	Common	H111
			ware	

TABLE 1. Overview of Achaemenid pottery sherds at Sagalassos.



FIG. 2. Overview of some of the discussed material.

It must be noted that the full typological spectrum as reconstructed for the pottery studied at Düzen Tepe is not present in this assemblage. Clearly, jars (sherds 1-3-4-5-7-8-9-10-14-17-21-22-23) and cooking vessels (sherds 2-11-13-18-20) feature most prominently. Tableware is only exceptionally present (sherds 12 and 19). Two reasons can be suggested. First, tableware from this period is not easily distinguishable from comparable material from slightly later, due to similar diachronic practices of raw material usage from local sources. This is of course most relevant for material collected at the surface during survey campaigns, where an effective multi-chronic palimpsest emerges at the surface and no stratigraphic arguments can be applied. Secondly, for the excavated material, the very nature of the contexts wherein this material was found, might *a priori* be less likely to include tableware. We will return to this point.

A characteristic element of the pottery found at Sagalassos throughout its long-term history is the prominence of pottery production at the site itself.⁶ Likewise, most of the fabrics (FIG. 3) used for the material presented here

^{6.} Neyt *et al.* 2012; Braekmans *et al.* 2016.





Fabric 250

Cookware fabric

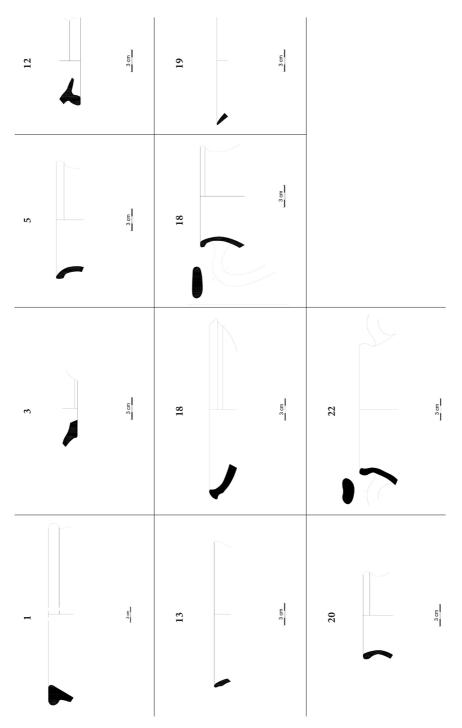
Tableware fabric

53

FIG. 3. Achaemenid pottery fabrics at Sagalassos.

were produced with locally procured materials.7 First off, are a range of fabrics that can generally be considered variations within the same range of common wares, produced with locally procured clay raw materials. These fabrics are denoted with fabric numbers 247-248-249. The overall difference mainly pertains to the general colour of sherds, both at the surface and core. Fabric 247 especially, is comparably easily identified due to its bright orange colour and overall more fine-grained texture. Sharp distinctions between fabrics 248 and 249 are somewhat more difficult to make, with the former showing a lighter shade of brown, whereas the latter entails a darker brown/greyish, sometimes up to shades of black colour. Fabric 249 also generally has more frequent inclusions. All three fabrics are quite soft and can be scratched by a fingernail, although harder ones do occur occasionally. The feel is rough to harsh, with an irregular and rough texture of the break. A moderate to abundant amount of medium to very coarse inclusions is present, generally poorly sorted. The most common inclusions are calcite (++), grog (++), quartz (+), feldspar (+), mica (+), lime (-), oxidized iron particles (-) and volcanic particles (-). Few indications of surface treatment can be observed, although occasionally traces of smoothening and/or dull finish can be observed.

7. For a more extensive discussion of the local productive landscape during late Achaemenid and early Hellenistic times, see Daems and Poblome 2016 and Daems *et al.*, this issue.



This range of common ware fabrics was encountered in sherds 1-4, 7-10, 14-17 and 22. Additionally, the fabric of sherd 23 looks very similar to some of the identified common wares (especially fabric 247) but seems altogether more rough and brittle with more and larger inclusions, as well as more elongated cracks and voids both on the surface and in the break. Perhaps this fragment can be seen as a slightly less well produced example of the same common ware range. As far as we can tell, functionally this fabric range covers mainly simple large jars with thickened everted rims (H111) and cooking vessels (Q200) with similarly thickened rims and large strap handles (FIG. 4). Two exceptions are sherd 1, which is a closed storage vessel or pithos with a flattened outward protruding rim (G110), and sherd 16, which is an open bowl with an out-turned, rounded and flattened rim (C171). Strikingly, in the latter case the forming technique is similar to its typological successors in Hellenistic times, when the upper part of the wall is stretched and flattened by the potter, resulting in a slightly thinned wall right underneath the rim. However, this example is considerably larger and thicker than most of its Hellenistic counterparts, resembling a heavier kind of dish encountered commonly in the region during the Archaic period.

A gritty black core ware (fabric 250) was identified during a diachronic provenance study of cookware and storage/transport vessels from Achaemenid to Middle Byzantine times. This distinctive fabric can be considered as a precursor to the later, Roman imperial fabric 4, as it was proven that these were part of the same production context, with clays derived from the central part of the Ağlasun valley.8 This fabric is characterized by a black/grey or dark brown colour in the break with the outer margins either black or oxidized towards a more light brown hue (5 YR 7/10). The surface is generally quite rough but can occasionally be smoothed extensively. Its texture can be very dense and range from a quite fine-grained to rough matrix. The break is rough to hackly and very rough. An abundant amount of inclusions can be observed, sometimes up to 2 mm and mostly poorly to very poorly sorted. These include quartz (++), calcite (++), grog (+), volcanic inclusions (+), mica (-) clay pellets (-), and pyroxenes and amphibole (-) minerals. In the sherds presented here it can be found in a rough horizontal attachment handle, possibly linked to some kind of storage vessel or cooking vessel (sherd 11) and in a rim fragment of a cooking pot found at Site F (sherd 20).

^{8.} Neyt *et al*. 2012.



FIG. 5. Achaemenid bowl fragment.

One fragment (sherd 19) of an Achaemenid bowl was found (FIG. 5) made from the so-called buff tableware (fabric 237). This was a fully oxidized tableware, named after its systematic buff colouring (7.5YR 6/6). At Sagalassos, this fabric also appears in a paler shade of grey to buff colour. This fine fabric is somewhat powdery with mainly a few small calcite and feldspar inclusions less than 1 mm in size. Other, less frequently attested inclusions are small quartz and grog particles. Typically, the fabric has many small, rounded micro-pores, with occasionally larger pores present as well.

Finally, four sherds are included the fabric of which could not be conclusively identified. Possibly, these were imported from an external, hitherto unknown source, however this cannot be conclusively proven at this point.

A final word regarding fabrics is reserved for perhaps one of the most crucial aspects of most of the pottery under scrutiny here, the slip. John Hayes⁹ was a pioneer in describing the so-called colour-coated wares, a Hellenistic tradition of pottery characterised by a typical dull, semi-lustrous and mottled slip of variable colours, ranging from light brown to orange and reddish brown hues. For Sagalassos these kind of slips have been observed in a body of material related to the initial phase of urbanization dated to around 200 BCE¹⁰, as well as in a number of contexts with Hellenistic material dating to the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE¹¹. Interestingly, most of the sherds under scrutiny with traces of surface slips (sherds 1-10 and 17-21) do not adhere to this Hellenistic practice, but are instead situated within an earlier, pre-Hellenistic tradition of fat, sticky brown to reddish brown slips. Similar slips have for

^{9.} Hayes 1991, pp. 23-31.

^{10.} Talloen and Poblome 2016; Daems et al., in preparation.

^{11.} Poblome et al. 2013, pp. 128-30.

example also been found at the nearby late Achaemenid-early Hellenistic settlement of Düzen Tepe (FIG. 6).



FIG. 6. Pre-Hellenistic slip tradition at Sagalassos and Düzen Tepe.

The material presented here can therefore be described as (late) Achaemenid pottery. This is not to say we suppose that a distinct Persian/Achaemenid identity should be deduced from this material. On the contrary, it has been argued that the locally produced material culture at this time should rather be seen as distinctly and consciously geared towards an Anatolian template of material culture production and consumption.¹² A similar reasoning can be applied to this material. We therefore merely refer here to a chronological framework, to be situated, possibly, from the late 5th century BCE onwards, but mainly from the early fourth century.

Framing pottery

Two main groups of archaeological contexts can be discerned – resulting from survey and excavation activities. The individual intensive survey grids where relevant material was collected will not be considered in too much

12. See other contributions in this issue.

detail here as these generally determine palimpsest or collated chronological conditions on the material. Therefore, in the fourth column of Table 1 we listed the general periodization of the survey material found in that specific grid, rather than providing a specific chronological bracket as with the excavation material.

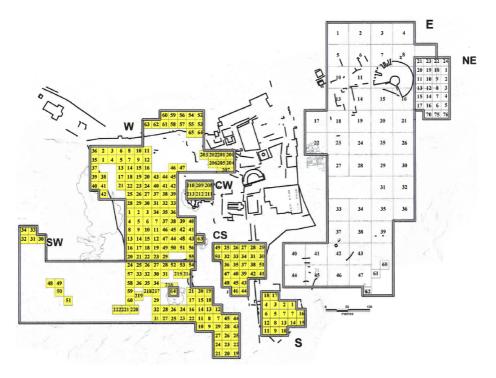


FIG. 7. City survey grids between 1999 and 2005 (image provided by Femke Martens).

The general location of the relevant survey sectors requires some comment, however. The city survey programme of Sagalassos, coordinated by Femke Martens, was conducted between 1999 and 2005 with the general aim of trying to understand the overall urban development of Sagalassos, complementary to the specific localized image provided by the different excavations across the archaeological site.¹³ After some initial methodological try-outs, a system of 20x20 m grids with walker distance of 2 m was applied across the entire occupied area of the Roman/Byzantine town alongside the monumental city centre (FIG. 7). The oldest material found during the city survey appeared fairly clustered towards the southwestern area of the later,

13. Martens 2005; Martens *et al.* 2012.

Roman imperial settlement. Several reasons can be suggested to explain this observation. For example, the degree of intensity of later habitation could have been lower in this general area, resulting in less disruptive processes perturbing older material remains. Another possibility is that this strongly sloping area was subject to more erosion processes, especially upon the collapse of the original terraces, removing the younger layer and revealing older deposits of material.¹⁴ While the effects of such processes cannot be entirely disregarded, we should still wonder why this significant effect is only observable in this southwestern area, and not in other, equally strong sloping areas of the former settlement. Most likely, the answer lies, as it so often does, somewhere in the middle, with less intensive post-deposition disturbances and certain erosive processes in a less monumentalized part of the site, resulting in a higher probability of older material remains to be found at the surface. Still, such probabilities can only manifest themselves if the material was there in the first place. So, although later occupation phases have destroyed virtually all architectural remains of the earliest phases of settlement, it can be suggested on the basis of the intensive urban survey results, that (one of) the oldest core(s) of habitation might have been situated in this general area of Sagalassos.

However, this is not the full picture. Although the survey material seems clearly clustered within the southwestern area, the excavation material tells a somewhat different story. As we generally have no *in situ* pottery from the late Achaemenid period, most sherds were encountered as residual material in younger deposits. Interestingly, these contexts were found widely distributed throughout the general area covered by the later phases of the town. This includes finds on and around the (later) Upper Agora in the city centre, to the south and north of the later Neon Library in the eastern parts of town, as well as at Site F in what would become the Eastern necropolis.

The contexts from the Upper Agora and Site F are particularly interesting. Control excavations were laid at the Upper Agora, *inter alia* to uncover the nature of a large anomaly identified during previous geophysical research by a team from the University of Ljubljana coordinated by Branko Mušič.¹⁵ The anomaly in fact turned out to result from a large clay quarry. Pottery associated with the fill of the quarry in order to accommodate the construction of the original public square at this location was dated to around 200 BCE. The sherds datable to the Achaemenid period discussed here were found as residual material in this fill. Clay quarrying during this early period was

^{14.} Martens et al. 2008, pp. 130-133; personal communication with Femke Martens.

^{15.} Talloen and Poblome 2016.

also attested at the later Eastern Suburbium of Sagalassos.¹⁶ Core drills at the central depression of the Eastern Suburbium indicated the presence of a palaeosol layer which had developed on top of a quarrying phase, that could be dated to 370-200 BCE¹⁷, providing a *terminus ante quem* for the quarrying activities. The development of the palaeosol was linked to soil accumulation due to deforestation of the higher slopes. Clearing the area of its cover vegetation might be related to preparation of these lands for agricultural production. This suggestion is supported by the evidence from a series of terrace walls excavated in 2011 at Site F.¹⁸ In the fill of the trench supporting one of these terrace walls, some of the oldest in situ stratigraphical contexts at the site were found, associated with sherds 18-21 of the material presented here. This wall was probably constructed to allow the area to be cultivated in order to supply the early community.¹⁹ We can conclude that both agriculture and clay quarrying were important activities for the original community at Sagalassos during late Achaemenid times. The very nature of these contexts related to agriculture and clay quarrying could possibly have had implications for the nature of the material culture associated with these, in which the representation of fine tableware is perhaps somewhat less likely.

Conclusions

In this paper, we presented a small body of pottery, which can be unequivocally linked to the earliest phase of occupation and community organisation at the archaeological site of Sagalassos. Based on arguments related to typological and fabric features, this material can be securely placed in a pre-Hellenistic tradition and is to be situated during late Achaemenid times (late 5th - 4th centuries BCE), mainly based on comparable material at the nearby site of Düzen Tepe. The interpretation of the pottery assemblage presented here is one of a largely utilitarian, generic functional nature. We mainly encounter storage vessels, *i.e.* jars and a *pithos*, and cooking pots, with only few attestations of tablewares. We have noted however that the very nature of the contexts in which the material was found, might *a priori* bias our sample against the wide representation of such tableware vessels. The limited amounts of available material do not allow any grand conclusions to be drawn from these observations. Still, it is interesting to note that for whatever reason, be it habitation, agriculture, or resource exploita-

- 16. Degryse et al. 2003.
- 17. Vermoere *et al.* 2003.
- 18. Claeys 2016.
- 19. Claeys 2016, pp. 76-7.

tion, a relatively large area was already connected and frequented, even at this early stage of site and/or community development, ranging from the outer southwestern point of the later settlement up to the eastern outskirts of town in the later Eastern Suburbium. We assume that this area was not nearly as densely occupied and intensively used when compared to later, Hellenistic and especially Roman imperial times. However, it is clear that even in the later Achaemenid period the local community made effective use of the space (and natural water sources?) that was available to them in order to sustain a range of activities and community dynamics.

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