



Pottery Production in Hellenistic Chalkis, Euboea. Preliminary Notes¹

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In memory of Maria Kosma

Chalkis during Hellenistic times

The reference by *Strabo* (10, 1, 8) that after the victory at Chaeronea in 335 BCE the Macedonians increased the defense walls of Chalkis including Euripus and the hill of Kanethos, gives us a first insight into the size of the city during the Hellenistic period². *Heraclides Criticus*, who lived in the 3rd century BCE, writes that Chalkis had a wall perimeter of 13 km in length, fortifying a vast total surface area of 70 stadia (On the Cities of Greece 1, 26). The failure of the Romans to occupy Chalkis during 208 BCE, as the city was impregnable, clearly indicates the presence of a strong defensive wall. In addition, the reference by *Titus Livius* (31, 23, 1–3) that in 200 BCE the Romans occupied a tower in a sparsely populated area of the city, also reveals that the wall enclosed a large area of the Chalkis peninsula.

The Hellenistic city extends from the Kalogritsa hill in the east (site of the new General Hospital, **fig. 2**, Site 2) to the Euripus channel in the west and from Liani Ammos port on the north to Agios Stefanos port on the south (**fig. 1**). Clearly, all this area was not densely populated. On the hills, the houses are located without any obvious plan. On the contrary, the main residential core is recognized in the area of Ergatikies Katoikies – Kamares – Agios Stefanos with a clear town planning system, the Hippodamian. The blocks are separated by large streets that intersect at right angle. A major artery in the axis north to south leads from the southern port to the northern. On this axis public buildings like the Agora, the theater and the Stadium, are located³.

After the conquest by the Macedonians in 335 BCE the city passed under the control of Alexander the Great's successors, who quarreled over its possession. The garrisons were

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² BAKHUIZEN 1985, 92–94; CHAIRETAKIS 2015, 42–50.

³ BAKHUIZEN 1985, 75–76.

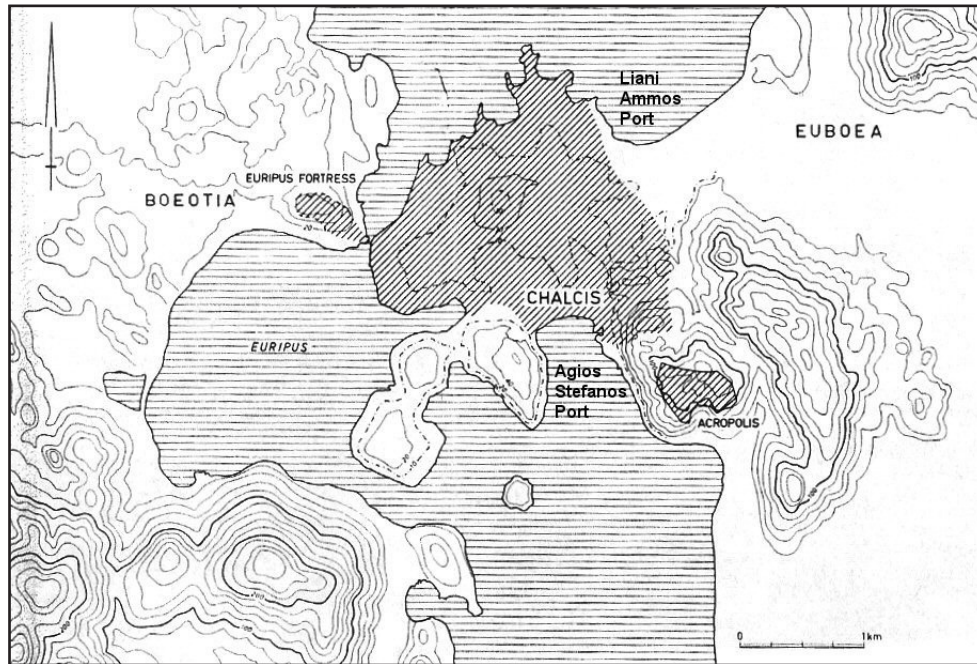


Fig. 1: Extension of Hellenistic Chalkis (BAKHUIZEN 1972, fig. 3) (Hypothetical).



Fig. 2: Topographical plan of Chalkis showing the location of the pottery workshops

alternated continuously, a fact that reveals the importance of controlling the Strait of Euripus. It is clear that these changes impinged on the state level and social cohesion; the political parties were obliged to support the varying powers (Macedonians, Romans, Seleucides, Pontians), affecting on people's daily life⁴.

Obviously, there is a lack of published studies for this period, due to the vast amount of excavations carried out in recent decades and the total inability to tackle this huge archaeological data competently⁵. A recent excavation conducted 2012–2014 for the construction of the New General Hospital deals both with topographical and archaeological issues⁶. On this site, parts of the ancient city and its fortification wall were unearthed. And an extensive refuse deposit was excavated, associated with the destruction of the city at the beginning of the Chremonidean War (268/7–261 BCE) by Antigonos Gonatas⁷. This refuse deposit gives us some of the first evidence of pottery production in Chalkis and occasions the present paper.

Old and new finds revisited

Although the existence of pottery workshops in Chalkis is known from preliminary publications, there has not been any extensive field research. Therefore this essay has one primary goal: to synthesize those data from old and new excavations which provides evidence for pottery production during the Hellenistic times. This is basically feasible for those places where the organization of production took place⁸. Hopefully, this first catalogue will allow further research and a revival of archaeology of Chalkis.

Site 1: Significant workshops are located in the area of Agios Stefanos, near the southern port⁹. In 1969 parts of a pottery workshop were excavated in the Vasiliadis plot¹⁰ (**fig. 2**, Site 1). The most interesting finds are the numerous clay cylinders of pot supports, whose large size makes them suitable for heavier vessels¹¹.

The workshop produced good quality black-painted pottery¹². The main shapes are basins of various types and sizes. The most common is a type of basin, usually with a disc base, a short open body and a vertical lip. Decoration runs on the face of the lip, while the interior surface is just painted or decorated with lines. The excavation at the New General Hospital and the refuse deposit produced a large number of sherds of this type confirming the workshop's use from the second half of the 4th into the early 3rd century BCE (**figs. 3–4**). The decoration of the basins shows a great variety: bands, garlands, wreaths of ivy and myrtle; a variety not common on vases with black-painted decoration during the early Hellenistic period.

During the 5th and 4th centuries BCE the production of black-painted vases with floral decoration boomed in Chalkis and in Euboea generally¹³. These workshops were possibly affected by or were interacting with Boeotian ones¹⁴. Therefore, the survival of black-painted decoration in the late 4th century BCE on a new shape such as the basin with vertical lip, is

⁴ GIANNAKOPOULOS 2012, 7–13. 164–168.

⁵ KOLONIA 2014.

⁶ KOSMA 2015; KOSMA – CHAIRETAKIS 2015.

⁷ KOSMA – CHAIRETAKIS 2015, 23–24; CHAIRETAKIS FORTHCOMING.

⁸ COSTIN 1991, 18–19.

⁹ CHAIRETAKIS 2015, 46–47.

¹⁰ CHOREMIS 1970, 247.

¹¹ HASAKI 2002, 95.

¹² The decoration is painted on the plain wall of the vessel with black gloss. URE (1960b, 1970) uses the term ›floral black-figured‹ and ROTROFF (2006, 86, 95) the terms ›painted decoration‹ or ›gloss motifs‹.

¹³ URE 1970; METZGER 1978.

¹⁴ URE 1940–1945.

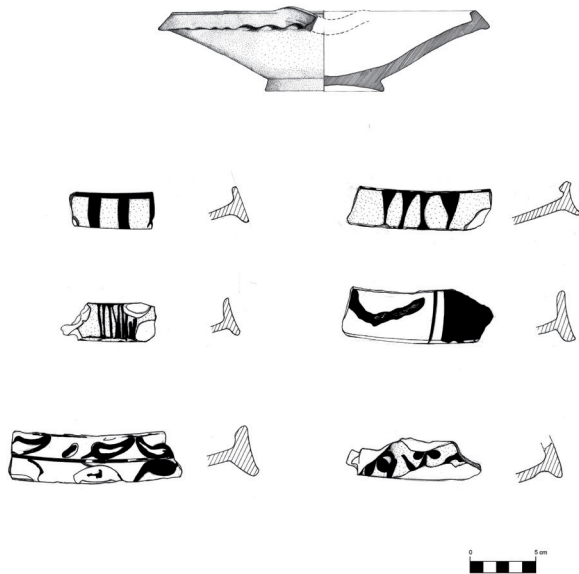


Fig. 3: Lekanes with black-painted decoration from Site 2 (Ephorate of Antiquities of Euboea; drawings Despoina Christou).



Fig. 4: Lekane with a myrtle wreath, from Site 2 (Ephorate of Antiquities of Euboea).

not surprising. The workshop produced almost exclusively for the local market, although two samples from Melitaia, Achaia Phthiotis derive from the workshop of Chalkis¹⁵.

Site 2: The excavation at the New General Hospital in the eastern part of the city provides some evidence for the existence of a pottery workshop, too (**fig. 2**, Site 2). Parts of over-fired wastes of black-glazed pottery, as well as a mold for clay wheels (probably for toys), dated to the second half of the 4th to the early 3rd century BCE, provide early data for a pottery workshop in this area¹⁶ (**figs. 5–6**).

Site 3: A refuse deposit with pottery was found also in the Chalkis Municipality plot. It remains uncertain, though, whether it is related to a destruction of the city or simply a dump for a pottery workshop¹⁷ (**fig. 2**, Site 3). Along with black-glazed pottery and clay rings as vessel separators in kilns during firing, over-fired wasters of pots and moulds for figurines were unearthed, the majority of which must be dated in the second half of the 4th to the beginning of the 3rd century BCE¹⁸. Such clay rings of simple shape known from pottery workshops in Athens of the 5th and 4th century BCE¹⁹. According to Hasaki, such rings come from large production centers²⁰.

Site 4: In the same area another excavation in the Koukoura plot gave strong indications for a pottery workshop²¹ (**fig. 2**, Site 4). The pottery of this site is dated to the 3rd and 2nd century BCE, but the workshop probably flourished during the first half of the 2nd century BCE, producing black-glazed vessels, as wastes of pots (plates, bowls etc.) indicate. In addition, many clay rings for pot supports, similar to those of Site 3, were found (**fig. 7**).

¹⁵ STAYROGIANNIS 2014, 40, note 241, fig. 76.

¹⁶ CHAIRETAKIS 2015, 21.

¹⁷ KARAPASCHALIDOU 1984–1985, 278–281.

¹⁸ KARAPASCHALIDOU 1984–1985, fig. 24.

¹⁹ MONACO 2000, figs. 44–58.

²⁰ HASAKI 2002, 94.

²¹ KARAPASCHALIDOU 1984–1985, 272–277.



Fig. 5: Over-fired black-glazed bowl from Site 2 (Ephorate of Antiquities of Euboea).



Fig. 6: Mold for wheels from Site 2 (Ephorate of Antiquities of Euboea).



Fig. 7: Kiln spacers from Site 4 (Ephorate of Antiquities of Euboea).

Site 5: In the northern section of the city in the Anagnostopoulou plot, another pottery workshop, dated between the second half of the 2nd to the early 1st century BCE, was excavated²² (fig. 2, Site 5). Many molds for bowls with relief decoration were unearthed (fig. 8–9). Although there is no corresponding potters' equipment, the existence of a Roman pottery workshop in the same plot with its kiln, leaves no doubt for the use of the same site for an earlier Hellenistic workshop.

This material contains a significant number of relief bowls with floral and figural decoration, but in this paper comments only on the molds can be made. The production of bowls with relief decoration integrates Chalkis into the long list of places that develop similar decorative patterns, those of long petals. Moreover, one fragment bears part of the name of a potter. The workshop is poor in inspiration and repeats motifs without any originality²³. The bowls produced, judging from a few of these molds, are of gray clay mostly with a dull glaze. The workshop is directed almost exclusively to the local market, although a sample from Anthidona, Boeotia could come from the workshop of Chalkis²⁴.

Site 6: In the plot of the ecclesiastical Nursing Home of the Metropolis of Chalkis 'Saint John the Russian', another mold for relief bowls, similar to those of Site 5, was found²⁵ (fig. 2, Site 6).

²² KARAPASCHALIDOU 2006, 3–4. 8–17.

²³ See also the similarities in molds from the workshops in Athens (ROTHOFF 1982, pl. 63 no. 349) and Sparta (ZAVVOU 2005, 112–113).

²⁴ KATSALI – VOUZARA FORTHCOMING.

²⁵ KALAMARA 2015a, 153–154; CHAIRETAKIS 2015, 49.

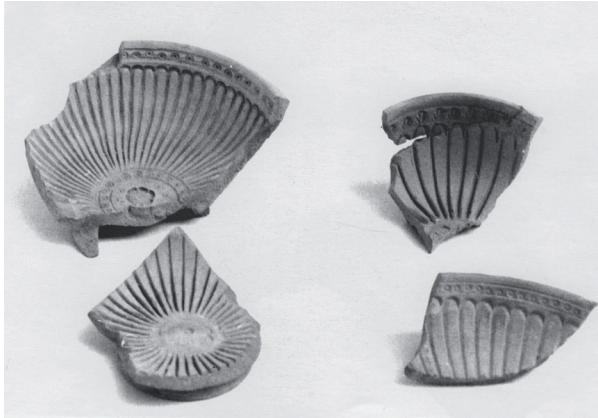


Fig. 8: Molds for bowls with relief decoration from Site 5 (KARAPASCHALIDOU 2006, fig. 8, a).



Fig. 9: Mold for bowls with relief decoration from Site 5 (Ephorate of Antiquities of Euboea).

Site 7: Another workshop is located on the Pneumatikos plot²⁶ (fig. 2, Site 7). A small kiln, built with tiles of Corinthian type, was excavated (fig. 10). Several loom-weights, which could have been used in secondary use as kiln supports during firing, were found too²⁷. The workshop material dates to Hellenistic and Roman times.

Spatial organization and the function of the workshops

The location of the different workshops gives us a first insight into the town planning in Hellenistic Chalkis. Having in mind the organization of pottery workshops in other Greek cities, it is possible to formulate some preliminary conclusions on the spatial distribution of workshops and on their function as well.

During the early Hellenistic period, Site 2 was located on the eastern boundary of the city, from where a road led to Eretria. A sanctuary and an inscription on a rock for the passersby outside the walls confirm the street traffic²⁸, which probably reinforces the location of some workshops at this point of the city. Someone coming into the city from this direction would encounter another sanctuary²⁹. It is possible, but it cannot be confirmed prior to studying of the entire material, that the pottery workshop of Site 2 covered predominantly the needs of the sanctuary, either for its equipment or for offerings.

Site 3 also gives us important information. It is located in an area where, since the Geometric period, pottery workshops and cemeteries have been located. The same seems to have existed during the Classical period, too. If the city was indeed walled in its entirety, then Site 3 is situated outside the walls, either between burial and residential areas or even in the cemetery. Perhaps, during the Hellenistic period a peripheral zone was formed outside the wall, which allowed the establishment of polluting workshops³⁰. The excavator claims that the products of this workshop were designed exclusively for the cemeteries in the vicinity³¹.

²⁶ THEMELIS 1969, 203–204.

²⁷ HASAKI 2002, 95–96.

²⁸ KOSMA 2015, 216; CHAIRETAKIS 2015, 41.

²⁹ KOSMA – CHAIRETAKIS 2015, 21–23.

³⁰ STISSI 2002, 38–39.

³¹ KARAPASCHALIDOU 1984–1985, 279.



Fig. 10:
The kiln from Site 7
(THEMELIS 1969, fig. 211, b).

Site 1 is topographically interesting. Judging by the usual placement of workshops in the region of the settlements³², it may not be inappropriate to propose that the workshop of Site 1 was developed near the western boundary of the Classical city. When the city expanded west to Euripus after 335 BCE and the area was more intensively inhabited, the workshop fell gradually into disuse.

The picture also for the next two centuries is not very different. Sites 5, 6 and 7 lie within the city's borders. The location of workshops of the Roman period in the same area³³, allows us to assume the existence of a potters' quarter already during the Hellenistic period.

Therefore workshops are located on the boundaries of the settlement, like in other Greek cities³⁴, and near main roads which offered direct access to the Agora and city harbors³⁵. Chalkis could support pottery production; raw materials (fuel, water, clay) were abundant. Access to wood supply is taken for granted, and the existence of olives³⁶, firs³⁷ and others trees are referred by many ancient writers³⁸. The use of other kinds of wood as fuel for the kiln, such as vines, brush and straw, is possible too³⁹. Furthermore, the existence of many springs in Chalkis, mostly with brackish water, is well attested, as well as the famous spring of Arethousa, near the southern harbor, which was able to supply the entire city⁴⁰. Finally, it is a certainty that the clay comes from the fertile soils of the Lelantine field (fig. 11). Analyses of

³² STISSI 2002, 38.

³³ SAMPSON 1976, 40–43.

³⁴ DOULGERI-INTZESILOGLOU 1990, 122; TSATSAKI 2010, 71–72, not without exceptions.

³⁵ STISSI 2002, 38, 40.

³⁶ The surrounding country was planted with olives (*Dicaearch. Bios tes Hellados*, p. 146, ed. Fuhr).

³⁷ *Plin. nat.* 16, 76.

³⁸ See GEYER 1903, 17, for other trees and plants, BAKHUIZEN 1985, 127, for the limits of Chalkidian territory and MORENO 2007, 81–82, for the most recent discussion.

³⁹ STISSI 2002, 47.

⁴⁰ *Heraclides Criticus* 1, 27; *Eur. Iph. A.* 170; *Strabo* 1, 3; During the 19th many of these springs were still in use and the Arethousa fountain played a vital role in daily life (KALLIAS 1896, 30–32).



Fig. 11: Phylla region near Chalkis. The clay bed lies in the foreground.

clay beds in the area of Phylla, just outside Chalkis, revealed it to be the source of the clay for pottery workshops of Eretria during Geometric times⁴¹. Undoubtedly, future studies should be directed to analyze the clay products of the workshops of Chalkis as well.

Epilogue. Chalkis, a diachronic place of pottery production

The excavated architectural remains can offer us only a partial picture of Hellenistic Chalkis. From the small, local workshops it is obvious that the turbulent centuries with the many political changes influenced this sector of economic activity in Chalkis as well⁴². However, over time Chalkis has possessed thriving pottery workshops. These workshops reflect the dynamics of the city which could support pottery production, a feature unique for the island of Euboea. Chalkis never lost touch with the process of mining, processing and creating products by clay. Whatever the reasons for the existence of a workshop, either to cover the local market, to spread to the Mediterranean markets, to produce unique pieces or to copy products, Chalkis was a timeless place of pottery production, which should take an important place in the history of pottery production in Greece.

From the Protogeometric and Geometric period there exists a great deal of information on pottery production, making it clear that Chalkis stands with the other great pottery producers in central Euboea, Lefkandi and Eretria⁴³. By contrast, evidence for pottery production during the Archaic period is limited. The presence of ceramic groups that could have been produced in Chalkis requires further analysis⁴⁴. During the 5th and 4th centuries BCE Chalkis played a significant role in the pottery tradition of the island through the production of black-painted pottery⁴⁵. Active pottery workshops are located in Chalkis during Roman times, especially during the 1st and 2nd centuries CE⁴⁶. This is the period in which the social composition of the city is best reflected in the excavated architectural remains. Similarly, the workshops of the

⁴¹ VERDAN ET AL. 2014, with some basic questions about the control of these beds.

⁴² COSTIN 1991, 2.

⁴³ ANDREIOMENOU 1984; 1985; 1996; BOARDMAN 1957, 2.

⁴⁴ BOARDMAN 1957; URE 1960 a; URE 1962; URE 1973; CHARALAMBIDOU 2009. Not without problems of identification, BOTHMER 1969; SHAPIRO 1989.

⁴⁵ URE 1960b; URE 1970; METZGER 1978.

⁴⁶ SAMPSON 1976, 40–43; SAMPSON 1980; SAMPSON 1987.



Fig. 12:
Mid-20th century pottery
workshop in Chalkis
(copyright Niki Vassalou).

Middle Byzantine period, 10th–12th cent. CE, which have been identified recently, produced fine quality glazed pottery that rivals that of other centers in Greece⁴⁷. Pottery production was also possible during the Ottoman times⁴⁸. Finally, in the 19th and 20th century Chalkis was home to a significant pottery production (**fig. 12**). In 1953 there were six machine-operated workshops for brick/tiles, eight major pottery workshops and some even smaller, which produced pitchers, bowls, pots and pipes⁴⁹. These workshops channeled their products into the markets of Central Greece, Macedonia, the Peloponnese, the Aegean Islands, Crete and many others. Furthermore, another pottery workshop exported its products into Benghazi, Africa before World War II. Moreover, clay from Chalkis, apparently from the region of Phylla, was exported to Athens throughout the 20th century⁵⁰. Many of the pottery workshops stopped their operation during the 70's. However, brick/tiles industries are still in use.

Ultimately, it should be noted that a researcher engaged in the archaeology of Chalkis, first has to deal with a virtually unknown ancient city, but on the other hand this unknown city is appealing. Through this short presentation I tried to show that the pottery workshops of Chalkis play a primary role in the employment of residents of the city, both for the Hellenistic period and the times thereafter. To demonstrate this is, also, the goal of a sector in the permanent exhibition in the new Archaeological Museum of Chalkis, housed in the industrial building Arethousa, where visitors will be able to discover through the material evidence – tools, equipment, products – the difference in the pottery production process, documented in each era.

⁴⁷ WAKSMAN ET AL. 2014; The pottery workshops are located in the Agora Square, where tools and over-fired wastes of pots were found (KALAMARA 2015b, 76).

⁴⁸ KONTOGIANNIS 2012, 53.

⁴⁹ PAPAGRIGORIOU 1953, 207–209. 239–241; The American archaeologist Dorothy Burr Thompson visited Chalkis in 1925 and captured scenes of the function of a pottery workshop <<http://www3.ascsa.edu.gr/media/thompson/thompson.html>> (08.01.2016).

⁵⁰ VALAVANIS 1990, 35–36.

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