

## New Evidence of the Shipsheds Built by Evagoras at Salamis, Cyprus

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## Notes

# New Evidence of the Shipsheds Built by Evagoras at Salamis, Cyprus

**T**his note summarizes the importance of the harbour site at Salamis, Cyprus, and provides new photographic evidence of the structure and location of the remains of the shipsheds that Evagoras built at Salamis naval harbour. It establishes the position of the north-east corner of the city wall that separated harbour from city, supported by an 18th-century sketch map of the city of Salamis.

The naval harbour that King Evagoras had built c.410–400 BC for his fleet of *triremes* at Salamis, for which we have historical evidence, is important to us today for two main reasons. Firstly, it is important historically because its construction provides a vivid illustration of the three-cornered power struggle that was taking place in the Mediterranean between Athens, Sparta and the Persian Empire. Evagoras, whose ambition it was to unify Cyprus under his command, cultivated the friendship of the Athenians. According to the mythology of the time, Evagoras could claim ancestry from King Telamon of Salamis Island who, it was said, fought alongside Ajax at Troy and was the legendary founder of the city of Salamis. When the Athenians were defeated by the Peloponnesian fleet at Aegospotami, the Athenian general Conon and his remaining fleet took refuge with Evagoras at Salamis in 405 BC. Later, Evagoras took part in the battle of Cnidus in 394 BC and provided most of the resources with which the Spartan fleet were defeated. In recognition of Evagoras' services, the Athenians raised a statue to him and he was made an honorary citizen of Athens. By 391 BC Evagoras was virtually at war with the Persians, whose strategy was to keep Cyprus divided into city states and he remained a thorn in their side until they invaded Cyprus in 385 BC. A peace was then concluded, which allowed Evagoras to remain king of Salamis until his death in 374 BC. It was the possession of a formidable fleet of *triremes* at his naval harbour at Salamis that allowed Evagoras to play such a dominant role in the Eastern Mediterranean and to keep the Persians at bay for 15 years.

The second reason why Salamis is important to us today, as will be illustrated herein, is that the naval harbour that Evagoras had built at Salamis has been unoccupied for more than 2000 years and has been spared the redevelopment that besets many Classical period harbours. Salamis also has an added advantage as an archaeological site. The catastrophic earthquake

of the 4th century AD effectively raised the sea-level at Salamis by c.2 m with the result that the ancient shoreline has now become a reef, about 100 m offshore. The result of this is that Evagoras' naval harbour is presently sited in the calm waters of a lagoon and has been largely protected from winter storms for the past 1800 years.

## Salamis harbour surveys

In the early 1970s, prior to the Turkish occupation of North Cyprus in 1974, both N. C. Flemming and A. Raban carried out survey work in the southern half of the harbour (Flemming, 1974; Raban, 1995). Their work was entirely confined to the southern half of the harbour, taking in the old commercial port south of the headland and the area to the north of the headland. After the occupation in 1974, the UN issued a mandate that no archaeological work should be carried out in North Cyprus without its approval.

In 2012, the author published an article, based on observations and documentary research, that suggested that the site of Evagoras' shipsheds might lie at the northern extremity of the harbour at Salamis, about 700 m north of the headland (Davies, 2012). The evidence for this was very limited and consisted of a report by an English archaeologist, H. A. Tubbs writing in 1891, that he had observed 'remains of quays?' at the 'north point' (Munro and Tubbs, 1891: pl. V; Davies, 2012, 366, fig 3), and recent observations of a single standing ashlar column, and a few pieces of roof tile on the beach.

## New evidence

Photographs that were taken at the 'north point' by the local Salamis guide Ms Serap Kamay, in 2013, after winter storms and at low tide, clearly show lines of cut ashlar stones projecting into the lagoon at right angles to the shoreline (Figs 1, 2.5–6). It was at this location that Tubbs recorded 'remains of quays?' on his map of Salamis. There can be little doubt that the structures captured in these three photographs are the same features that Tubbs observed in the 1890s, and that they have the characteristics and structure of the foundations of ancient shipsheds.

I revisited Salamis in September 2015 but sand had returned to cover the features photographed in 2013. For about 120 m, further north of the point, however, there was evidence along the shoreline of both cut

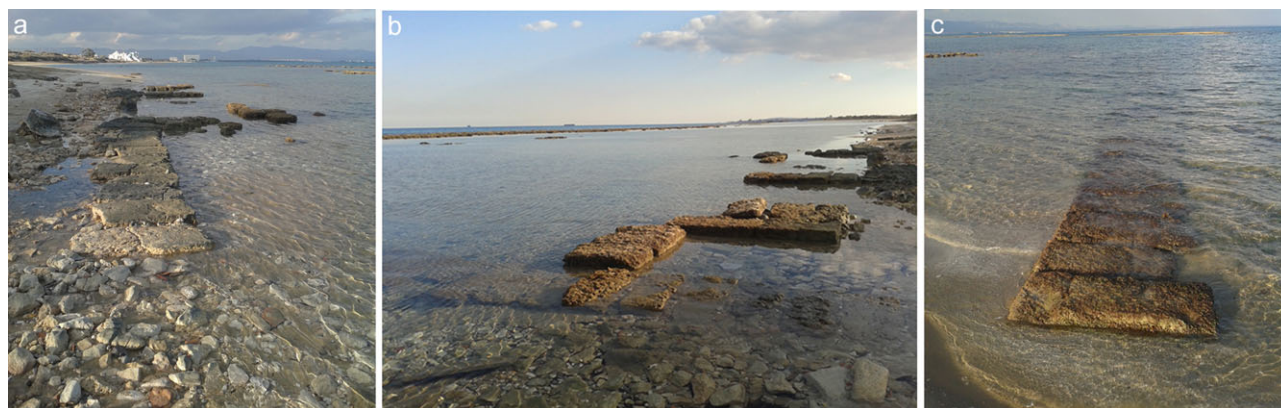


Figure 1. Photographs taken at the 'north point' in 2013: a) looking north, showing a line of cut ashlar stones, roughly on a N-S orientation with parallel lines of cut stone running out at right angles into the lagoon; b) looking south from the same position, showing the ancient shoreline and stone features inside the reef, which may mark the line of the outer defensive wall of the harbour; c) looking NE towards the old shoreline. The ashlar stone construction dips below the lagoon, indicating the stones were laid on a gradient. (Courtesy of S. Kanay)

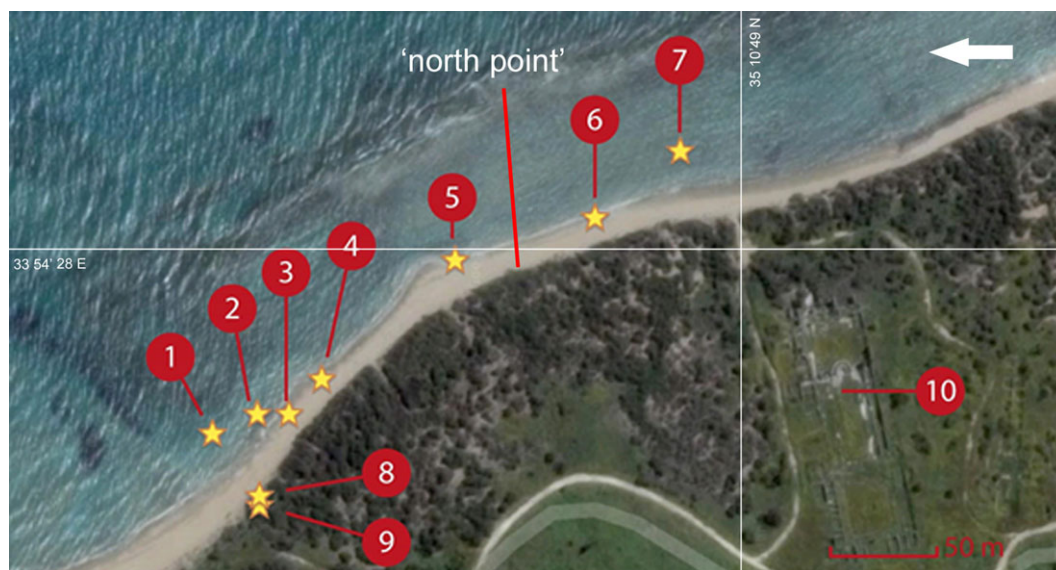


Figure 2. Aerial view. Key: 1. single column; 2. single standing column; 3. single column; 4. group of six columns; 5–6. area photographed in 2013 (Fig. 1); 7. single column c. 30m. from shore; 8. foundations of the eastern city wall; 9. foundations of NE corner of the eastern city wall; 10. Campanopetra Basilica. (Images courtesy Google Earth 2016; Imagery ©Landsat)

ashlar stones and ten circular columns (Fig 2), which were similar to the column/roof supports featured in the photograph taken at the excavated, ancient harbour at Zea in the 1890s (Blackman and Rankov, 2014: 7, fig. A2.1). The columns were all about 1 m in length. A standing column, recorded in 2010, was still *in situ*, about 90 m to the north of the point (Figs 2.2, 3b). Because of the high degree of protection from the open sea that the present shoreline is given by the old shoreline, it was concluded that these columns were unlikely to have moved very far and offered evidence of the position and extent of the shipsheds that were sited north of the point as well as at the 'north point'. It was also considered that one group of six columns

appeared to be lying more or less where they had fallen (Figs 2.4, 3a). There was no visible evidence of cut ashlar stones or columns further north of this area. South of the 'north point', there was intermittent evidence of cut ashlar stones and one column (Fig. 2.7). A quantity of tile was visible on the tide line adjacent to this column. Further south of this column there was no evidence of shipshed remains.

The photographs taken by Kamay are interpreted as showing the line of the wall at the back of the shipsheds with the remains of the stone partitions between the slipways of the shipsheds running out into the harbour at right angles to the wall and on a gradient. These features, together with the presence of the stone



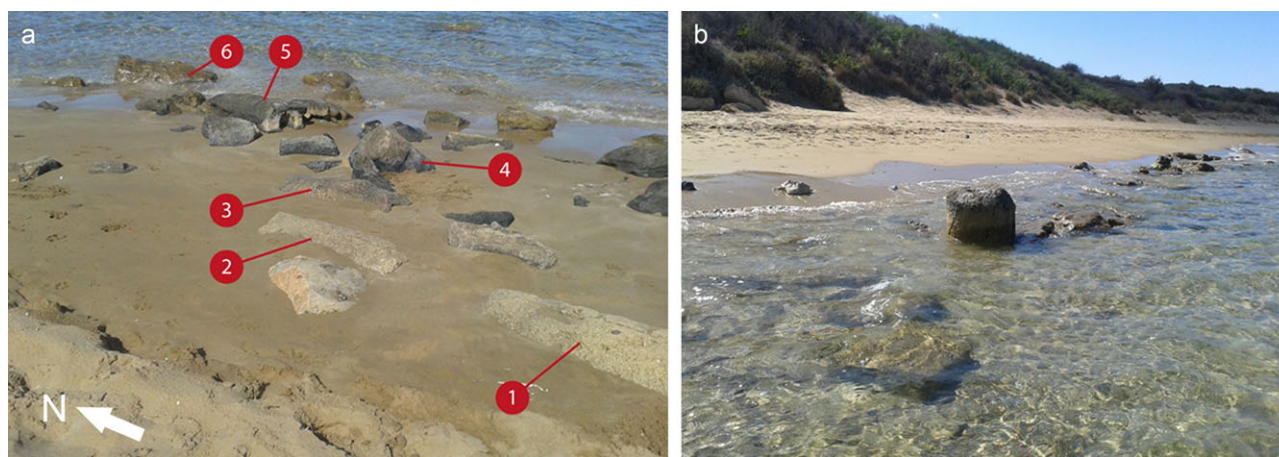


Figure 3. a) A group of six fallen columns in 2015; b) one remaining standing column. (Philip Davies)

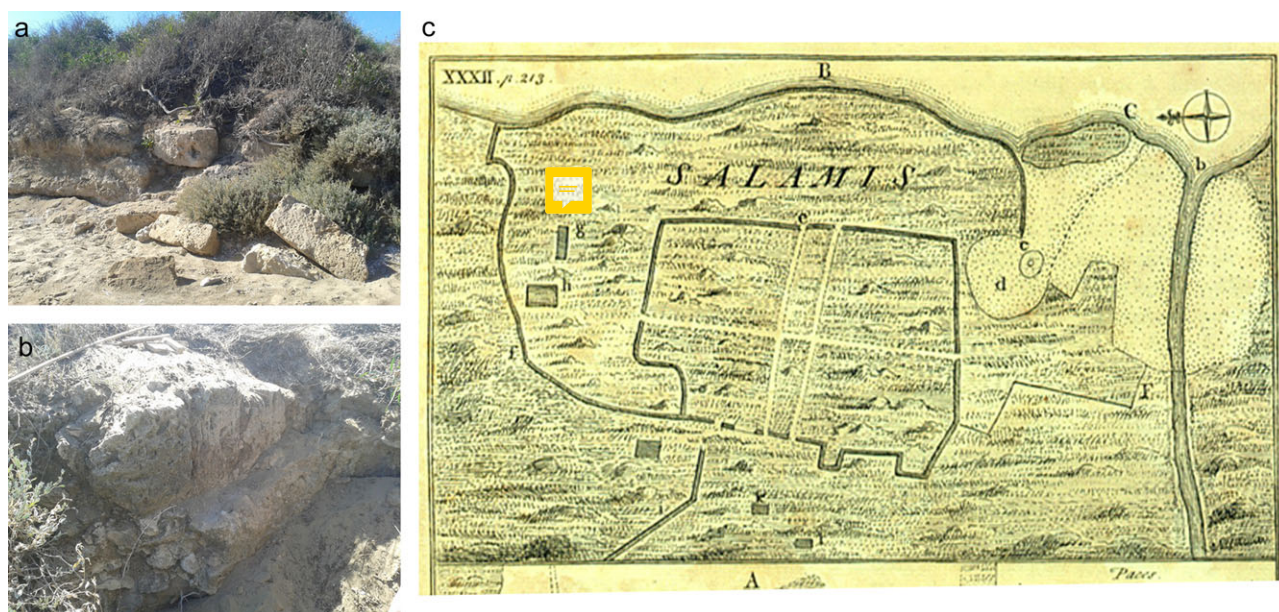


Figure 4. a) Massive cut ashlar stones interpreted as the foundation of the eastern city wall, looking south-west; b) stone orientated east-west interpreted as the north-east corner of the wall (Philip Davies 2015); c) Pococke's sketch dated 1737–1741; Key: b. River Pedius; e. The walls of the later town; f. The walls of ancient Salamis; i. Remains of an aqueduct. (Pococke, 1745: 212, Plate XXXII B)

columns, which would have supported the tiled roof of the shipsheds, were all characteristic of Classical shipsheds. The evidence indicates that the shipsheds for Evagoras' fleet of *triremes* extended from just north of the Campanopetra Basilica (Fig. 2.10), to a point c.120 m north of the point, a distance of about 230 m. A theoretical calculation, allowing about 6 m per shipshed, suggests that this would give enough capacity for about 38 *trireme* shipsheds.

### Evidence of the ancient city wall

Remains of the ancient city wall of Salamis, which divided the naval harbour from the city of Salamis, were

observed and noted in the sandbank at the back of the beach at the north end of the harbour in 2010 (Davies, 2012: 368, fig. 5). By 2015 it had become clear that these large, cut ashlar stones were laid down lengthwise in a N-S direction, parallel with the shoreline (Figs 2. 8, 4a). I observed a few metres to the north of this area, what appeared to be the north-east corner of the city wall. Here the stones were laid down in an E-W direction and there was no evidence of any further stone work further north of this point (Figs 2.9, 4b).

Richard Pococke, a bishop of the Church of Ireland but better known for his travel writings, visited Salamis sometime between 1737 and 1741 and recorded his findings in *Description of the East and Other Lands* in

1745. He wrote: 'There are still large heaps of ruins on the spot of the ancient city (Salamis) and great remains of the foundations of the walls, which seem to have been between 3 and 4 miles in circumference' (Pococke, 1745: 216–7). Pococke attached a sketch map of the area showing the ancient city wall boundaries and the walls of a smaller city within, which he describes as 'later' (Pococke, 1745: 212, Plate XXXII B). This smaller city has the characteristic layout of a Roman town and was serviced by an aqueduct, noted by Pococke (Fig. 5c).

Pococke's sketch of Salamis, although lacking a scale, gives us a picture of the large size and extent of Evagoras' city and shows the line of the city wall that divided the city from the naval harbour. He also shows where the south wall of the city ran parallel to the river, a feature, which was later identified by Raban (1995: 163–4). It seems very probable, also, that the

feature identified as the north-east corner of the city wall coincides with the position of this same feature shown on Pococke's sketch map.

It is worth noting that the description and sketch of Salamis, which Pococke put to paper in 1745, gives us a unique view of the ancient city before the stone-robbing that must have taken place subsequently, along with the natural sand cover that has accumulated over the site since that time. It offers the logical starting point for any future archaeological exploration of the city of Salamis, when political accord returns to Cyprus.

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