



KMA KELSEY MUSEUM OF
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Opposite page (left). Olynthos: View over the area excavated in the early twentieth century, toward the new excavations.

Opposite page (right). Gabii: Consolidation of an ashlar wall.

Left. Notion: Aerial view of part of Notion, showing outlines of buildings.

BRIEFS ON FIELDWORK IN GREECE, ITALY, AND TURKEY

NEW FIELD PROJECT AT OLYNTHOS

This year marks the start of a new field project in Greece, cosponsored by the University of Michigan along with the 16th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Archaeology (Thessaloniki) and the University of Liverpool (U.K.), under the auspices of the British School at Athens. The project sees the return of U-M archaeologists to Greece after a break of nearly twenty years, in order to work at the city of Olynthos in northern Greece. In its heyday during the late fifth and early fourth centuries BC, Olynthos was a regional power, before it was (reputedly) destroyed by Philip II of Macedon in 348 BC. To archaeologists, the city is equally famous for the large numbers of houses excavated there in the 1920s and 1930s, which remain our single best source of information about ancient Greek households. The research design of our new project is a multidisciplinary one that focuses on the use of modern scientific techniques to extend and enhance our understanding of Olynthian households, while at the same time contextualizing them within a larger urban framework. The project is also intended to build opportunities for student volunteers to become involved, learning field methods and working as part of an international team.

Olynthos lies on two adjacent hilltops and spills onto the plain to the east below. Previous research suggests that these different areas had their own distinctive characters and settlement histories. Today, the two hills lie within the boundaries of the archaeological area that is preserved and protected by the Greek Ministry of Culture, while the remainder of the site is under cultivation. This year's work focused on the North Hill, the largest sec-

tor of the city, part of which was shown by earlier excavation to have been laid out on an orthogonal grid plan. Resistance and magnetic surveys conducted in the spring revealed a continuation of the grid beyond the area of the old excavations. Over the summer, a four week excavation season saw the opening up of six trial trenches within the geophysical survey grid, to investigate some of the magnetic anomalies and explore the standard of preservation of different houses indicated by the resistance. Among the studies that were initiated during the excavation season was a micromorphological investigation aimed at discerning house floors and investigating formation processes. At the same time, analysis was begun of micro-debris (small artifacts less than 5 mm long, recovered from heavy fraction during flotation) in order to evaluate the range of activities undertaken in different areas. Neither of these techniques has previously been used in Greece on a site of this date. Alongside the excavations, a field survey team also spent two weeks recording surface finds in the cultivated area east of the site, in order to establish the original boundary of the settlement. Excavation and survey work at Olynthos is planned to continue next year.

Lisa Nevett

EXCAVATING MONUMENTAL ASHLAR ARCHITECTURE AT GABII

The Kelsey Museum has just completed its sixth consecutive season of excavations at the Latin city of Gabii, Italy. The Gabii Project, directed by Professor Nicola Terrenato, had as one of its main objectives in 2014 the investigation of a monumental building complex that was, until recently, known only very partially. The Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici

di Roma exposed tantalizing fragments of this complex in the 1990s, but its systematic excavation was first launched by the Gabii Project in 2012. In 2013 the discovery of a grandiose staircase belonging to the complex broke through important media outlets, including the leading Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, *The New York Times*, and *Archaeology Magazine*.

Defining the limits of the building, revealing its complete plan, and recording extant features digitally were among the goals for 2014. A generous gift from Ann and Clayton Wilhite provided funding to tackle the many logistical challenges posed by the excavation, consolidation, and conservation of the monumental remains.

The results allowed us to clarify the relationship between the complex and the local topography and to reconstruct the construction phases. The complex, also known as “Area F Building,” occupies an entire city block, measuring some 60 × 35 m. It is prominently situated at one of the most central locations within the city, on the main urban thoroughfare at the important intersection of the ancient roads from Tibur, Praeneste, and Rome. The building is organized on three artificial terraces that regularized the slope of the volcanic terrain. The lower terrace was dominated by a monumental portico, the column bases of which survive and which opened onto a series of rooms paved in tufo slabs. The middle terrace develops around a large courtyard, paved in slabs, delimited to the east and west by a symmetrical arrangement of *alae* and small rooms, and to the north by three larger rooms. Most of these rooms were adorned with fine *cocciopesto* floors consisting of geometric patterns of limestone

tesserae in a field of crushed red ceramic, and with painted plaster walls reminiscent of the First Style. To the west is a smaller portico delimiting a courtyard with an impluvium at the center, one of several features that attest an elaborate subterranean hydrological engineering system. Access to the upper terrace—a large, open space with walls in semi-polygonal masonry—was gained by means of the now famous staircase, and the transition between elevations was further emphasized by a spectacular façade, a retaining wall built in ashlar blocks.

The complex has no parallel in the region of Rome, so its interpretation is difficult. The preliminary hypothesis is that it was a public building, with spaces designed for a variety of political and ritual functions. Stratigraphic evidence and construction techniques tentatively date the original phase of the building to middle of the third century BC, making it one of the few—and certainly the grandest—examples of mid-Republican public architecture other than temples and fortifications in central Italy. Study of the architecture in the coming seasons will shed important light on the development of Latin cities in the crucial and obscure period between the end of the Latin Revolt and the beginning of the Second Punic War.

Marcello Mogetta
Managing Director, *The Gabii Project*

NEW FIELD PROJECT AT NOTION

A major concern of contemporary archaeology is how archaeological sites come to be the way they are when we find them.

How are settlement mounds formed? What causes buildings to fall down, and why do they decay the way they do? Why are archaeological sites buried? The technical name for this set of concerns—what a normal person might call “ruination”—is “taphonomy,” the law of burial.

As readers of this newsletter know, the Kelsey Museum began a new archaeological project at the site of Notion in western Turkey in June, together with the Joukowsky Institute of Archaeology at Brown University. Notion is a port town about 15 miles northwest of Ephesus, and it was occupied from the early first millennium BC through the Middle Ages. The first stage in our project is a thorough survey of the site, and so we are naturally concerned to understand the “taphonomic” processes that lie behind its current condition.

In the case of Notion, however, taphonomy is something of a misnomer because in fact the site is not at all deeply buried. It occupies a pair of isolated promontories projecting into the Aegean Sea, and apart from airborne sediment, and earth that erodes down from the upper parts of the site to the lower parts, there is really nowhere for earth to bury it to come from. One interesting index of this condition is the number of exposed thresholds visible throughout the site—we counted a total of forty-six—so in at least forty-six places, not even enough sediment to cover the entrances to buildings has collected.

The thresholds have survived because they are large and well-founded blocks of stone. The walls of the rooms and build-

ings associated with them were generally built out of rubble, and they have almost all crumbled to the ground. The remains of these walls are clearly visible, however, as lines of stones, and thus the ground plans of individual buildings—and indeed the layout of the entire city plan—are quite legible, especially when seen from the air. In this respect, the site is extremely well preserved.

That makes it all the more surprising that there are very few traces of columnar buildings. We know, for example, that the agora, the main public square, was enclosed on all sides by colonnaded porticos, but very few column drums or pieces of the entablatures (the monumental lintel courses) of these porticos remain. Where have all these large blocks gone? Examination of nearby villages suggests that they were not reused in medieval and modern buildings, nor do they seem to have been burnt into lime, for there are no traces of limekilns on the site. We considered the possibility that they had all rolled down the hillside and into the sea, but if that were the case, they would surely be visible in the clear waters along the rocky shoreline, and they are not. There is, however at least one other possible answer to this conundrum, in a word, Constantinople. The new Rome was built substantially out of reused materials, and port cities such as Notion were prime sources of readymade columns and other architectural blocks. In this way, the buildings of Notion may have continued to function long after the site had been largely abandoned.

Christopher Ratté