

Archaeological Research at Notion, 2014-2015

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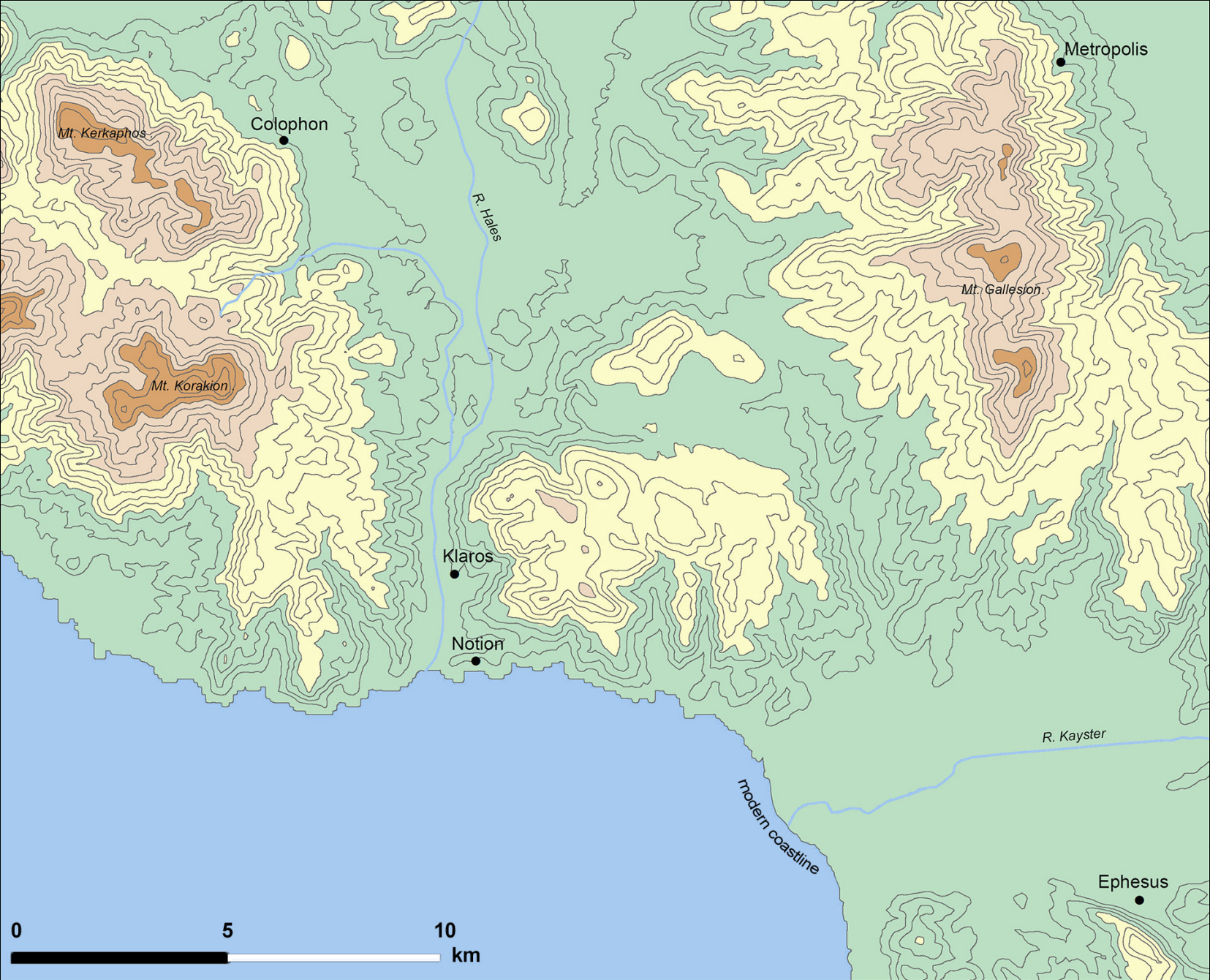
Map of the Mediterranean region



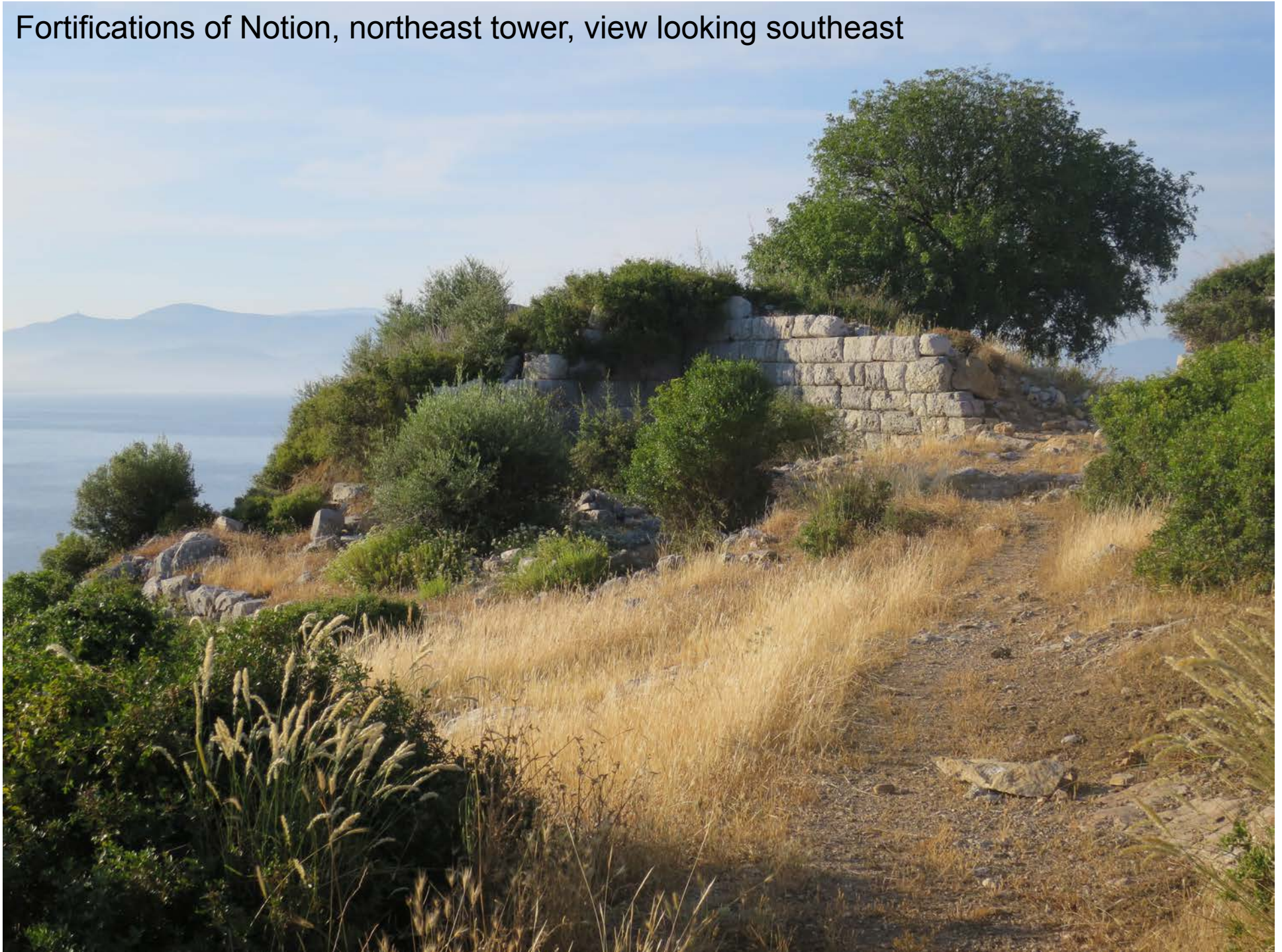
Aerial view of Notion, looking northeast



Regional map of Notion and environs



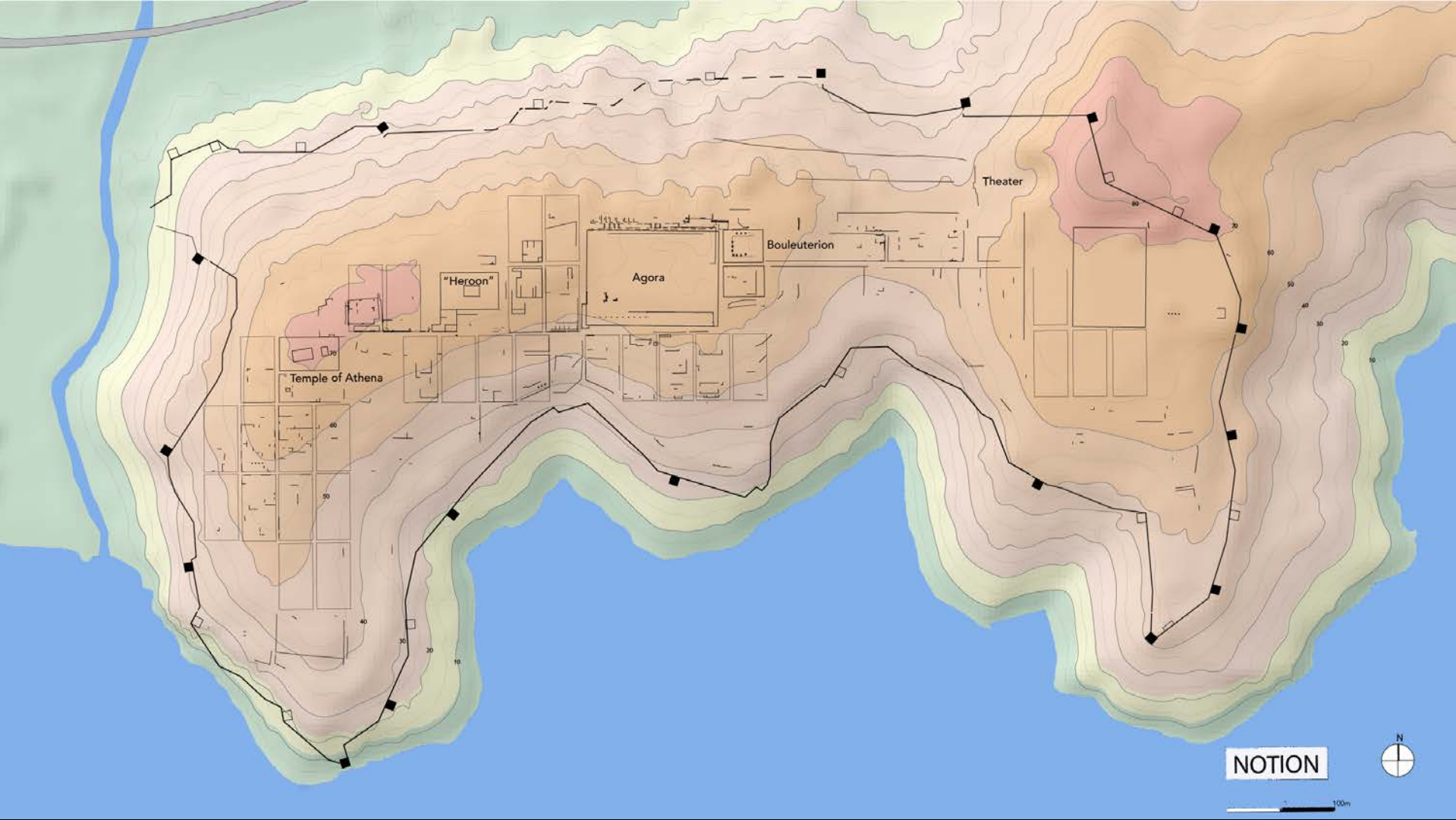
Fortifications of Notion, northeast tower, view looking southeast



Satellite view of Notion



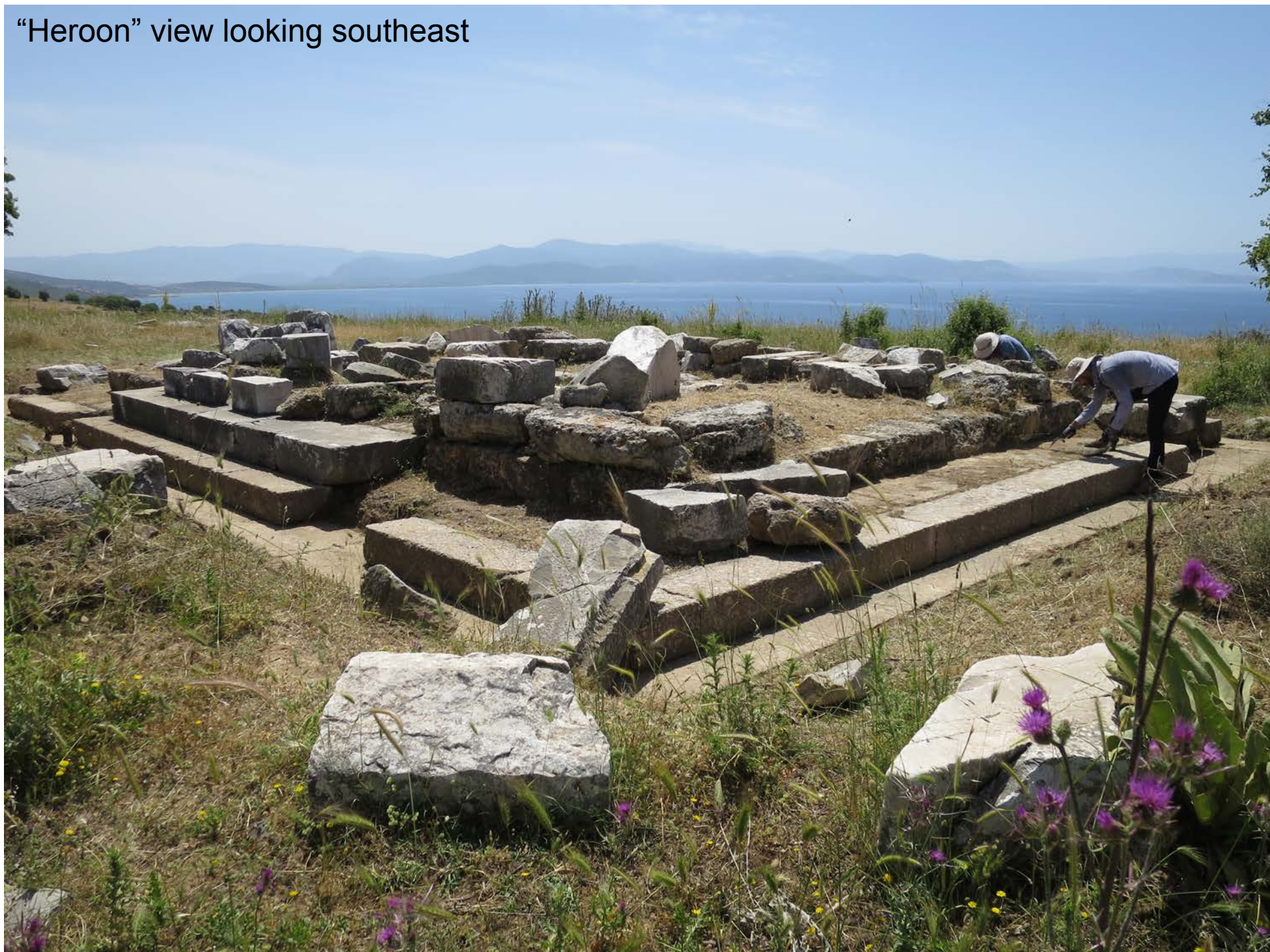
Map of Notion



Temple of Athena, view looking southwest



“Heroon” view looking southeast



Bouleuterion, view looking east with Theater in background

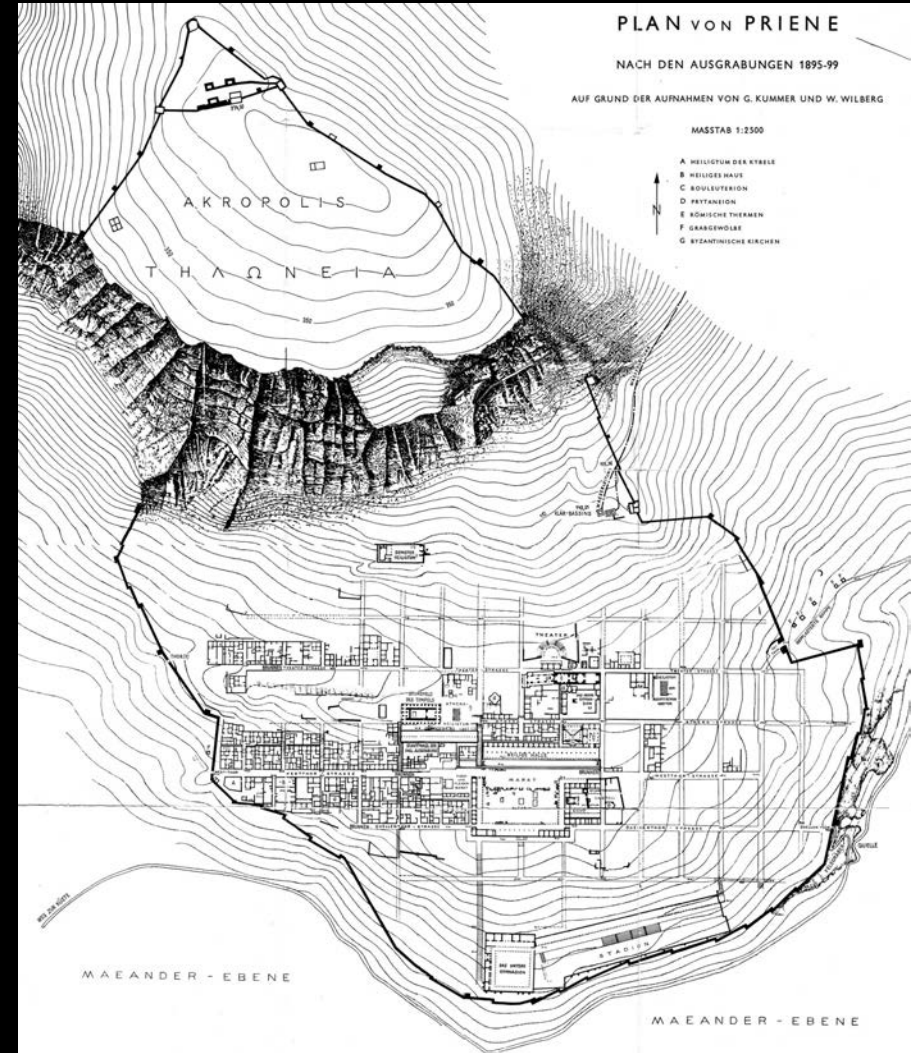


“Heroon,” view looking south with 2015 Notion staff



Fortifications of Herakleia under Latmos

City plan of Priene



Collection of surface finds



Selected red
gloss pottery
from one 30 X
30 m sampling
area



Fortifications



Fortifications, Northeast tower



Fortifications
Pulvinated (left) and chamfered (right)
masonry in north wall



Fortifications

Repaired section of west wall



Orthorectified photomosaic



Orthorectified thermal imagery



Plot of geophysical (magnetic gradiometry) survey



Orthophoto of Agora



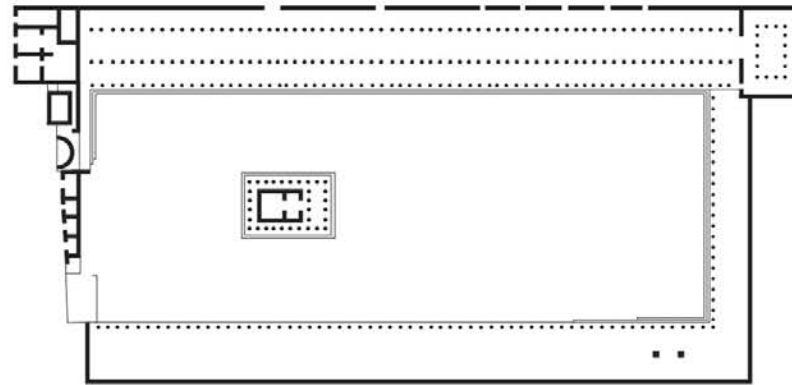
Bouleuterion, view looking east



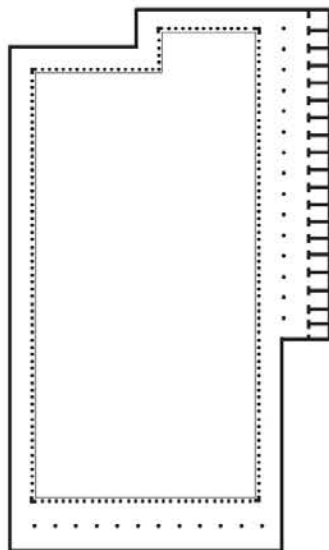
Schematic plans of Agoras at Notion, Ephesus, Herakleia, Kolophon, and Priene



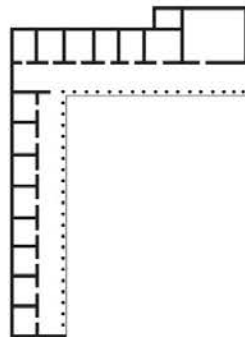
Notion ⊕



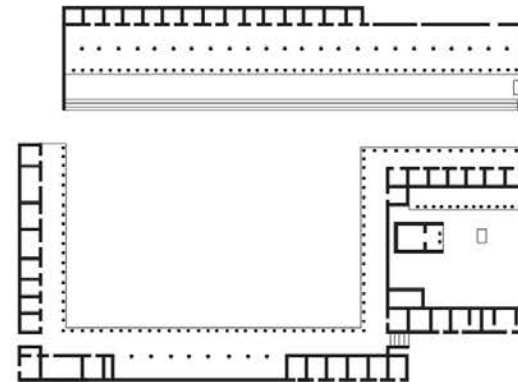
Ephesus Upper Agora ⊕



Herakleia ⊕



Kolophon ⊕



Priene ⊕

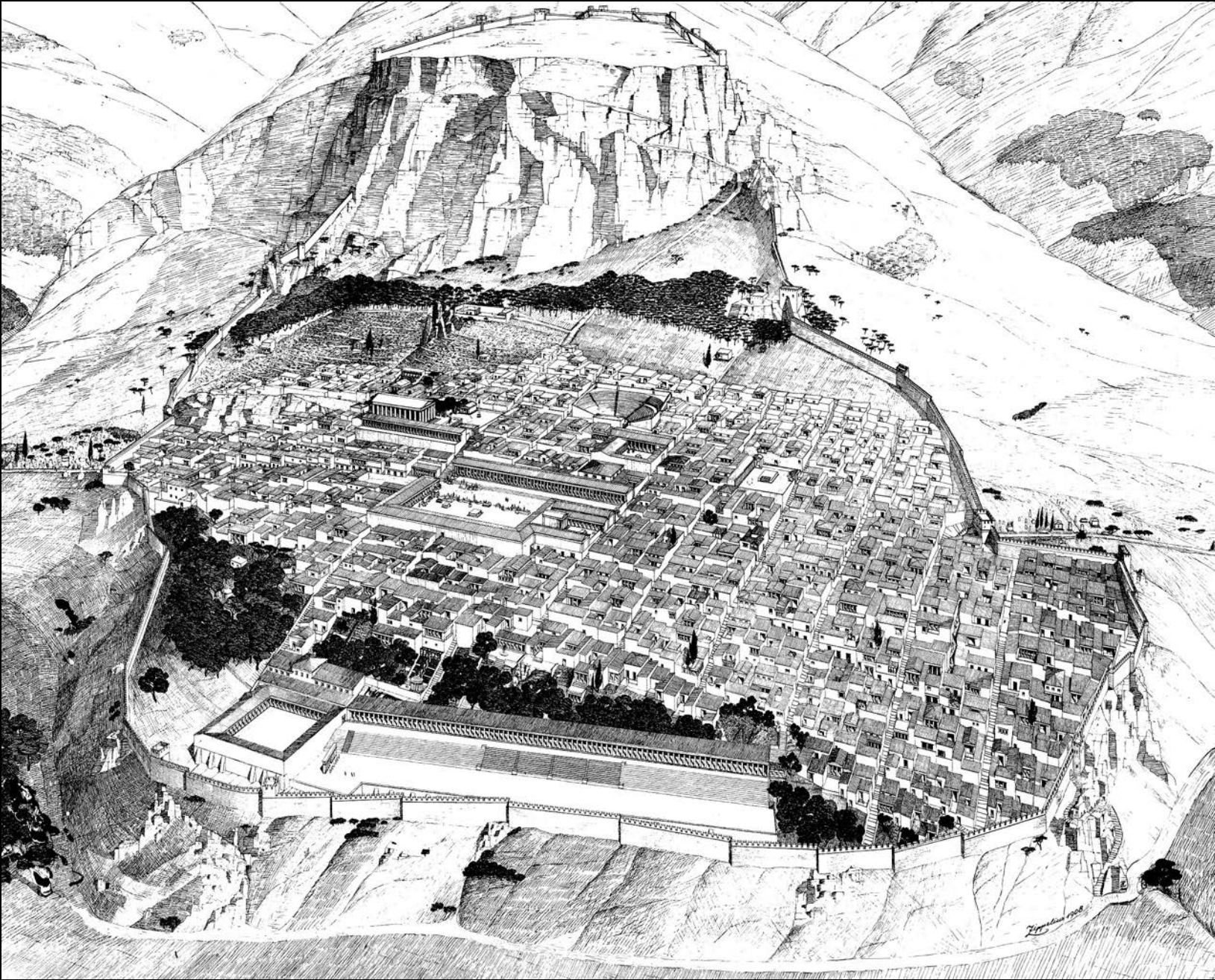
COMPARATIVE AGORA PLANS

0 25 50 100m

In-situ threshold block, view looking southeast



Restored view of Priene



General view of Notion, looking southeast toward Ephesus



ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT NOTION

Christopher Ratté and Felipe Rojas

Notion is a largely unexplored ancient city on the west coast of Turkey, just 15 km northwest of Ephesus. Situated on two promontories jutting into the Aegean Sea, its isolated location has ensured that Notion is only lightly buried, making it an ideal candidate for archaeological survey. We know from textual sources that Notion had a long life, extending from at least ca. 500 BC until the late Roman period. Of particular interest is its relationship with two neighboring locations: the sanctuary of Apollo at Klaros, 1.5 km to the north, and the city of Colophon, 15 km to the northwest. Together, these three sites and the enclosing valley form a classic Mediterranean microenvironment, with Notion providing crucial access to the sea.

In many ways Notion thus encapsulates the long-term history of the Mediterranean city, but two seasons of archaeological survey suggest that its particular history was more complicated than at first appears. Most interesting is evidence suggesting that the site identified as Notion was only intensively occupied for a few centuries, between ca. 200 BC and the first century AD. Was Notion originally situated elsewhere? If so, why was it relocated to this site? Why was that relocation apparently unsuccessful? And what happened to the city afterward? I will return to these questions at the end of this talk. First, I will say a bit more about the location of the site and the textual evidence for the history of the city, before proceeding to summarize the preliminary results of work to date, focusing on surface pottery and urban architecture.

Notion lies at the mouth of the Hales River, near the modern village of Ahmetbeyli. As already mentioned, the site occupies two promontories jutting into the sea on the east side of the river. The promontories are joined by a narrow ridge, and the more or less level area on top, approximately 35 ha, is enclosed by 3 km long fortifications. The walls are preserved to heights of over 2 m in places, and almost the entire circuit is visible, including numerous gates and towers. Within the walls, the layout of the city is remarkably clear. The bedrock is exposed in many places, including two large artificially leveled terraces, and the foundations of literally hundreds of walls are visible. The locations of numerous streets are immediately apparent,

showing that the city is a grid-planned town, organized around a large central square, presumably the Agora. Other monuments recorded by the earliest visitors to the site and still visible today include a small temple on the western edge of the city, the Theater on the eastern side of the city, and the Bouleuterion on the eastern edge of the Agora.

The identification of the site rests on its location. Among other considerations, all the literary sources agree that Notion was the port of Kolophon, and the Hales River valley provides the closest and most direct connection between Kolophon and the sea. Indeed the name, to Notion – the southern place, as in English Southbury or Southwick – seems to refer to its location with respect to Kolophon.

The earliest literary references to Notion date to the late 6th and 5th centuries. According to Hecataeus (FrGrHist 1A, 1, F fr. 233), Notion was a city of Ionia, while Herodotus considers it one of the cities of Aeolis (1.149.3). Thucydides (3.34) describes Notion as “a city of the Kolophonians,” and Aristotle (Pol. 1303b) cites the combination of Notion and Kolophon as an example of a city united politically but subdivided geographically, and therefore susceptible to civil unrest. During the Peloponnesian war, an important sea battle fought off the coast of Notion in 406 led to the downfall of the Athenian general Alcibiades.

Inscriptions show that in the late 4th century, Notion and Kolophon formed a sympolity, after which the twin cities shared laws and a calendar. According to Pausanias, when the early Hellenistic warlord Lysimachus captured Kolophon in 294 BCE, part of the city’s population was resettled at nearby Ephesos, and Notion may also have been implicated in this resettlement. At this time the port city was apparently renamed New Kolophon or Kolophon-by-the-sea, and the inland city, now known as Old Kolophon, lost its importance and prestige. Historical sources for the Roman period are meager, but we know that a bishop of Kolophon – presumably New Kolophon or Notion – took part in the Council of Nicaea in 431.

The history of Notion thus touches on numerous subjects of contemporary interest: the formation of new cultural identities associated with the so-called Ionian and Aeolic migrations; the effects of the Persian conquest and the Peloponnesian wars on the cities of western Anatolia; the

consolidation of local communities in the Hellenistic period through institutions such as synoikism and sympolity; Romanization and the advent of Christianity. Earlier archaeological research has been very limited. The site was identified by the German archaeologist Carl Schuchardt in 1886, and small-scale excavations were carried out by a French team in 1922-23 and by Turkish teams in 1985-86 and again in 1994.

A new archaeological survey project was started by the University of Michigan and Brown University at Notion in 2014. Two seasons of 5-year program of investigation have now been carried out: a 2-week preliminary reconnaissance by a team of 10 persons in 2014, and a month-long program of research by a team of 13 persons in 2015. Work to date has focused largely on the area within the city walls and has involved the following components: mapping; geophysical prospection; collection of surface finds; geological investigation; and study of specific aspects of the architecture and infrastructure of the city, including the fortifications, the water supply, the domestic architecture, and the late Roman and mediaeval churches. My colleagues Angela Commito and Catie Steidl will be reporting on their research on the water supply and the evidence for ancient quarrying at Notion later in this session, and Matthew Naglak and Gregory Tucker presented a report on mapping and geophysical prospection earlier this morning. My purpose is to give an overview of the results of current research to date, and to address some of the general questions raised by those results.

Let me begin by discussing the evidence for the chronological range of occupation at the site. It has long been clear that the major visible monuments of the city belong to the late Classical and Hellenistic periods – the 4th to 1st centuries BC. Those are the dates of fortification circuits comparable both in military design and in construction techniques, as well as of comparable city plans. Well known examples include the walls of Kolophon, epigraphically dated to the early Hellenistic period, the walls of Ephesus, also dated to the early Hellenistic period, and the walls and city plans of Herakleia under Latmos and Priene.

We began a program of systematic collection of surface finds last summer, and that has provided much better chronological resolution. First, I should say that we recovered significant quantities of diagnostic pottery, including a generous representative sample of the typical late Hellenistic

and early Roman wares commonly found in Asia Minor, such as Hellenistic mold-made bowls, Italian Sigillata, Eastern Sigillata A, early Eastern Sigillata B, and Roman lead glaze ware. We found no pottery clearly datable to before about 200 B.C. That in itself is not terribly surprising; we would not have expected the earliest pottery from the site to have been present on the surface in the same quantities as later pottery, and in any case the development of the city plan was clearly the result of a radical expansion or relocation of the original settlement. It is possible that habitation was much more restricted before this period, or indeed that the original settlement was situated elsewhere -- closer to the harbor and the Hales River, for example, in which case it is now likely buried beneath river-borne silt.

More surprising is the total absence in the material collected so far of recognizable later Roman fine wares such as African Red Slip ware, or of late Roman amphora types – although this is consistent as already noted with certain aspects of the architecture of the site. If Notion as preserved does indeed represent a radical expansion or relocation – a virtual re-foundation – of the original town, it now also seems likely that this ambitious program was relatively short-lived. Planned on a grand scale by a people whose sense of the life-span of cities certainly extended over many centuries, the new site may have been largely abandoned only generations after it was initially developed.

Before discussing the implications of this hypothesis, let me now turn to the architecture of the site, focusing on the fortifications and city plan. The fortifications of Notion are the city's best-preserved monument, conspicuous both by land and by sea. The walls are built largely out of white and blue-grey limestone, with some use of marble and of a distinctive and highly erodible breccia. The masonry is isodomic, in some places trapezoidal isodomic, except in cases of repair. The walls are 2.5 m thick, and probably stood at least 4 m high. A total of 16 certain and 29 possible towers have been recorded. Three gates are apparent on the north (landward) side of the walls, as well as three possible gates on the west, one definite and one possible gate on the south, and one definite and one possible gate on the east. The most distinctive feature of the trace of the wall is the salient at the northwest corner – which was probably connected with a gate opening onto the harbor.

Architectural details of the walls may illuminate not only concerns with defense at the time they were built but also the more general social and historical circumstances of their construction. In the north, best preserved section, for example, the walls exhibit not only different kinds of stone but also different construction techniques, possibly because they were built in episodes over a long period of time, or by contractors responsible for different parts of the wall. In either case, their piecemeal construction might suggest that they were financed and constructed at local initiative, rather than by Lysimachus or a comparable figure – but continued detailed documentation and analysis will be necessary to test this hypothesis.

The walls also exhibit evidence for the later history of the city, especially on the south and west sides, which have been extensively repaired. Two different kinds of repairs are attested; one exhibiting large spolia set in hard white mortar, the other smaller scale dry laid limestone blocks. There is no internal or external date for these repairs – similar repairs in other wall circuits are often associated with the late Roman period, but there is no reason why these repairs could not be earlier. The west side of the wall occupies the steepest and most precarious slope, and so might have started to fail relatively soon after it was built.

I turn now to the area within the walls. Its remarkable surface legibility makes Notion an ideal candidate for archaeological survey, and our first step has been to make a detailed topographic map and site plan, using a combination of different methods, including aerial photogrammetry, geophysical prospection, and traditional surveying. The precise methods used and the ways in which they both overlap and complement each other have been discussed by Naglak and Tucker. I will show you just a few images, here an overall view of the site taken by a camera carried by a tethered blimp; an orthorectified photograph of the center of the site, based on imagery taken by lightweight drones; a thermal map of the same area, also based on data collected by drones; and a plot of the results of geomagnetic survey of a somewhat larger area.

The geophysical survey, study of aerial imagery, and examination of visible remains have clarified essential aspects of the organization of the Agora and city grid. The Agora is an oblong area enclosed by stoas on all four sides. On the south is a split-level double colonnaded stoa. The upper level apparently opens on to the Agora; the lower level on to an east-west street

running south of the Agora at an elevation ca. 2.5 m below the Agora level. Behind the east stoa at the northeast corner of the Agora lies the Bouleuterion, a square structure opening on to the east. The exterior dimensions of the Agora are 129.7 m X 96.9 m, similar to the size of the Agora at Herakleia, which is 135 X 90 m in area, much larger than the Agora at Priene, at 92.1 by 94.8 m. Its proportions are 3:4, or 330 X 440 Ionic feet (0.295 m).

As noted above, the Agora is embedded in a rectangular grid. The distance between the centerlines of east-west streets, some of which run the full width of the city, ranges from 64.0 to 64.8 m. North-south streets are more closely spaced, at 33.35 m between centerlines. The proportions of the blocks are thus close to 1:2, or 110 X 220 Ionic feet. We have not yet begun thorough study of the houses that occupied these blocks, but it is worth noting that we have documented both here and elsewhere across the city 47 in-situ threshold blocks, which record the original ground levels wherever they are found, and provide good entry points, literally and figuratively, to the study of the domestic architecture of the site. Further investigation of domestic areas may help us to understand the later history of the site – if we detect evidence for multiple building phases, for example – as well as its larger cultural milieu – for example, similarities with or differences from the houses of Priene.

Let us now review the results of research at Notion to date. Although Notion existed as a city at least as early as the time of Hecataeus in the later sixth and early fifth century, the earliest evidence for occupation of the substantial planned town overlooking the mouth of the Hales River dates to the late classical or Hellenistic period. The original town was probably located closer to the harbor and the Hales River, and is now buried beneath river-borne silt.

The apparent relocation of the city to a new site on top of the promontories next to the harbor and the establishment of a new city plan may or may not be related to one of the epigraphically attested events in the history of the surrounding region, such as the resettlement attributed to the Macedonian general Lysimachus of portions of the population of Kolophon at Ephesos and, apparently, Notion in and after 294 BCE. Whatever the precise circumstances of the “re-founding” of the city, many other communities of western Asia Minor shared similar experiences in this period, as local populations and foreign warlords engaged in complicated and shifting

maneuvers in pursuit of their sometimes conflicting, sometimes mutual interests. One of the objectives of our project is to examine how can archaeology help us to understand the circumstances of this particular example: to distinguish, for example, between top-down and bottom-up initiatives in the construction of features such as the city wall.

A surprising result of preliminary research is the absence of pottery later than the 1st century CE. This narrow window of occupation is remarkable, since the re-founding of the city was an enormously ambitious undertaking. I have discussed the construction of the fortifications and the layout of the city plan. Catie Steidl and Angela Commito will talk about other aspects of the radical transformation of the local landscape required for the creation of a new city, and the extensive measures taken to provide water to a site with no natural springs. Despite these investments, the new city may have been largely abandoned after only a few centuries of occupation. In other words, it seems that Notion was ultimately a failed urban experiment.

Failure could have been due to any number of factors. Perhaps fewer of the inhabitants of Kolophon and other nearby communities than had been expected were willing to relocate to the new town, or resources for the development of the town were inadequate. It is also possible that the project quickly fell victim to changing circumstances, such as the increasing nucleation of the regional population at the nearby metropolis of Ephesos. Ongoing, finer-grained analysis of both architecture and surface finds will help to clarify this picture, showing whether habitation lasted longer in certain areas of the site than in others, as well as distinguishing between different forms of occupation. For even if Notion did not live up to the dreams of the people or authorities responsible for the development of the new city, the community did continue to exist until the late Roman period, and there are clear traces of later occupation in a number of places – including a structure tentatively identified as a church. Did certain sectors of the town remain inhabited while others were abandoned? What made these areas more attractive than others for long-term occupation, and what do these choices tell us about the relationship between the surviving community and the larger region, including the harbor and the sanctuary at Klaros?

The city was the fundamental unit of social organization in the Greek and Roman worlds, and ancient history is replete with urban foundation stories. Some of those new towns – Naples,

come to mind – are still with us. But many others were short lived, and much can be learned from the study of the failures as well as the successes. In this respect, research at sites like Notion can make useful contributions not just to ancient history, but also to urban and cultural studies in general. How does the study of unsuccessful urban experiments in antiquity help to illuminate similar phenomena today? Can the study of ancient responses to failure shed new light on distinctive aspects of Greek and Roman civilization? To return in closing to a narrower focus on ancient western Asia Minor, research at Notion may also help us to reevaluate other, better known sites, such as Priene.

Like Notion, Priene was an ancient Ionian city refounded on a new site – perhaps only a generation or two before Notion. The two cities are similar in size (Priene occupies about 40 ha, its lower city about 15 ha), and Priene provides some of the closest parallels for both the fortifications and the city plan of Notion. But one tends to forget that Priene was also ultimately much less successful than the often-reproduced city plan and the reconstruction drawing by Adelhard Zippelius imply. It only looked like this, if it ever did, for a relatively short period, for the entire western side of the city was destroyed in a fire in the late second century BC and never reoccupied. Research at Priene, as at Notion, reminds us that the life cycles and the life spans of ancient cities could vary tremendously. Each city requires its own biography, and a better biography of Notion is the aim of our research.