

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT NOTION, 2022-23

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INTRODUCTION

Notion was an Ionian city on the western coast of Anatolia, 50 km south of İzmir. It was well known in antiquity for its important military harbor, and for its close associations with the nearby city of Colophon and the oracular sanctuary of Apollo at Claros. Textual sources for the history of Notion include citations in ancient authors such as Hecataeus, Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristotle, Polybius, Livy, and Pausanias, and a remarkable dossier of inscriptions from Claros.

As preserved, Notion is a grid-planned town, 35 hectares in area, surrounded by stout fortification walls (Map. 1). Important buildings within the walls include a Theater, a Bouleuterion, an Agora, a Heroon, and a small Temple of Athena, all surrounded by extensive residential housing districts. Thanks to its isolated location on two promontories overlooking the Aegean Sea, the site is very lightly buried; it is also unencumbered by modern buildings. Notion is thus unusually accessible – the foundations of hundreds of ancient walls are exposed – making it possible to study the city not as a patchwork of isolated structures, like many other archaeological sites, but as an urban whole.

Following short-lived excavation projects by French and Turkish teams in 1921, 1985-87, and 1994, a comprehensive archaeological survey of ancient Notion was carried out by the University of Michigan and Brown University between 2014 and 2018 (Demangel and Laumonier 1923; Demangel and Laumonier 1925; Atalay 1986; Atalay 1987; Büyükkolancı 1996; Ratté, Rojas, and Commito 2020). In addition to mapping the city and documenting its architectural remains, this survey included extensive collection of surface finds, which showed that Notion was most intensively occupied for a relatively short period, extending from the third century BC to the first century AD. The initial development of the existing town – the construction of new walls and the new city plan – embodied the community's response to the opportunities and the dangers occasioned by the conquests of Alexander the Great. The subsequent abandonment of the city was closely connected with the explosive growth of nearby Ephesus, promoted by the Roman imperial administration. This aspect of the archaeology of Notion contributes vivid and valuable new evidence for the turbulent history of Ionia in Hellenistic times, and for the different ways in which local communities responded to Roman rule.

In 2022, the University of Michigan received a permit to begin excavations at the site in collaboration with archaeologists from Sinop and Adnan Menderes Universities. The obje-

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citives of the ongoing research project include the following: 1) to complete the excavation and documentation of the main civic and religious buildings of ancient Notion, beginning with the Bouleuterion; 2) to carry out investigation of the residential areas of the city, which have remained largely unexplored, and which will provide detailed information both about the history and economy of Notion and about the household culture of the cities of western Anatolia in the Hellenistic period; 3) to study the immediate environs of the city, including its harbor and water supply; 4) to develop and implement plans for the long-term protection, conservation, and development of ancient Notion as a heritage site and tourist destination. In connection with these goals, we plan to construct an excavation house in the beach area southwest of the site, which will combine an archaeological research facility with a visitor's center and an open area educational display.

1. BOULEUTERION

Current research on the public architecture of Notion focuses on the Bouleuterion, an important building in the history of Greek architecture. It is one of the largest known Hellenistic Bouleuteria, notable for its transparent design and construction system. It is also one of the best-preserved buildings at Notion, and, when excavated and conserved, will form an important focal point for visitors.

The Bouleuterion lies at the northeast corner of the Agora (Map 1). It is rectangular building, 30.5 m wide from north to south and 24.2 m deep from east to west, built into the slope that leads down from the Agora to the east (Figure 1; the difference in elevation between the west and east sides of the building is 2.1 m). Its basic features are 1) an east-facing U-shaped auditorium, built of conglomerate blocks around a rectangular orchestra, which lies at ground level on the (lower) east side of the building, 2) a broad landing or ambulatory enclosing the auditorium, which lies at ground level on the (higher) west side of the building. The border between the ambulatory and the auditorium is defined by a series of 14 conglomerate columns, which helped to support the roof. Also important to the roof structure were two large columns placed in the northwest and southwest corners of the orchestra. The exterior walls of the building as preserved were built out of marble blocks, systematically clamped and doweled together. The long (north-south) dimension of the building is close to 100 feet of 0.295 m (the foot measure used in the city plan), and the building was clearly conceived of as a hecatompedon. The distance between the inner faces of the north and south walls is 96 feet, and all the major dimensions of the building can be expressed in multiples of 16 feet – 16 feet for the ambulatories, 16 feet for the seats of the auditorium, and 32 feet for the width (north-south) of the orchestra.

Excavation of the Bouleuterion began in 2023. Until this time, the building had remained unexplored except for a 4 X 14 m trench dug on the north side of the auditorium by the Ephesus Archaeology Museum under the supervision of Mustafa Büyükkolancı in 1994 and a small trench dug by illicit excavators in the winter of 2013/2014. Work in 2023 consisted

largely of cleaning for the purposes of architectural documentation, including the use of a crane to remove approximately 100 blocks that had obscured the exterior walls of the building, and of limited excavation on the north and south sides of the 1994 trench (Figures 2-3). To the north, excavation of foundation layers in the area of the ambulatory yielded fragments of moldmade bowls and other pottery, establishing a terminus post quem of the late third century for the construction of the building (Figure 4); cleaning on the north side of the building provided new information about the roof, including fragments of decorated eaves tiles. To the south, excavations revealed a number of architectural blocks previously exposed by M. Büyükkolancı, including fragments of a conglomerate column shaft and a marble Doric capital from the ambulatory, as well as the crowning molding of a bronze statue pedestal (see Fig. 3). This last block was reused in a podium built up against the east wall of the building, newly exposed in an extension of the 1994 trench. As preserved, this structure was 2.18 m deep (east-west) and 0.54 m high; its estimated width (north-south) is 5 m. Mason's marks carved on the faces of the orthostats of the podium show that, like the crowning molding mentioned above, they were reused in this position, possibly from another structure, possibly from an earlier phase of the same structure. The excavations carried out in 2023 also suggest that the core of the Bouleuterion is formed of rammed earth, resting on bedrock and held in place by a series of internal and external retaining walls; the floors of the ambulatory and orchestra and the seats of the auditorium rest either on bedrock or on this rammed earth core. The remaining parts of the building will be excavated in subsequent seasons.

2. RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE

Residential life is a major focus of the current project. It is clear that a new city plan was established at Notion in the early or mid-third century BC, and that the city was substantially abandoned by the mid-first century AD. But the details of both the growth and the decline of the city remain obscure. Was the city built up in a single campaign or gradually over time? Similarly, was it depopulated quickly or slowly over generations? Excavation of the houses in several different parts of the city may help us to answer these and other questions concerning the political, social, and economic life of the city.

A large house west of the Agora was chosen for initial investigation because of its prominent location and because of all the houses of Notion it was the one whose basic outlines were clearest in plan (Map 1, West Ridge House). The reason for its exceptional surface legibility is that it occupies an exposed location on the summit of the central ridge of the city and is therefore only lightly buried, and it was clear in advance that for this reason the floor levels of the house would not be well-preserved. Nevertheless, it seemed that this would be a good place to begin because it would be possible to excavate an entire house relatively quickly; the knowledge gained by this initial project would then be useful in the eventual investigation of more deeply buried and better-preserved buildings in other parts of the city. The western part of the house was excavated in 2022, most of the remainder in 2023. Study of the architecture and finds provide rich evidence for two main occupation phases, one late Hellenistic (late first century BC), one Classical (late fifth century BC).

Hellenistic phase. The house as preserved lies on the north side of a broad (5.9 m) street that runs into the center of the west side of the Agora (Figs. 5-6). It is a square structure, 18 m along a side, centered on a peristyle court (5.8 X 6.5 m in dimensions). The court was surrounded by porticos or corridors on all sides except the north. The porticos were 1.9 m deep on east and west, 2.5 m deep on the south. On the north were two small rooms, 3.3 m deep, one of which contained a cistern. The south portico lay next to the street.

To the west, north, and east, the courtyard complex was bordered by large rooms, between 3.7 and 3.9 m wide. Rooms 1-2 lie on the west side, 3-5 on the north side, and 6-7 on the east side. Only the foundations of the walls of these rooms are preserved (0.6 m wide on average), so the locations of doorways between them is unknown. Indeed, the only preserved threshold in the house is the main entry to the building from the street in the southeast corner. The foundations of the walls were built exclusively of local marble (but some large conglomerate and limestone blocks were used in the foundations of the peristyle; the main threshold block is also conglomerate). The masonry of the walls is unmortared and consists of a mixture of squared sub-ashlar blocks, ca. 0.15 m high and 0.35 – 0.50 m wide, and more angular stones, with chinking to fill in gaps. The upper parts of the walls were apparently of mudbrick. It is unclear whether the building was single- or multistoried. The fallen remains of the terracotta tile roof were well preserved in Rooms 2 and 3.

As noted above, the only preserved threshold marks the main entrance to the house, which leads from the street to the southeast corner room (Room 7). It is an index of the poor preservation of the house that no other doorways survive. Nevertheless, patches of the floors were preserved in several places, and study of the artifacts found in the house enable us to identify the functions of some rooms: dining pottery (such as plates and cups) was stored in Room 6; cooking pottery was concentrated in Room 3; a large number of flat-bottomed vessels in Room 2 suggest that this space was used for food storage; *amphora* fragments, also evidence for food storage, were clustered in the small room next to the cistern and in the west portico. Most of the pottery and other artifacts found in the house (such as coins, terracotta figures, lamps, and loom weights) date to the mid-first century BC, which seems to represent the latest phase of occupation (see Fig. 5), but a substantial quantity of earlier Hellenistic pottery suggests that the house was built in the early third century. Its earlier phases are represented by numerous walls and other features beneath late Hellenistic floor levels but laid out on the same orientation as the peristyle house.

Classical phase. Excavation beneath Hellenistic levels also revealed extensive traces of an earlier building, demolished by the construction of the Hellenistic house (Drawing 1). The remains of this building included walls incorporated into the foundations of the Hellenistic house, and abundant pottery.

The features on the north side of the house are the most legible. They include a series of narrow but well-built walls (0.4-0.5 m wide), defining rooms or courtyards running beneath Rooms 3, 4, and 5, on a slightly different, northwesterly orientation. The mud-mortared stone

masonry of these walls is different from that of the Hellenistic house, tightly fitted but with less regular coursing, in a more polygonal fashion. A number of walls with a similar orientation beneath the central and southern parts of the Hellenistic house also seem to belong to the classical phase.

The layout of the earlier building remains unclear, but the pottery is consistent with domestic occupation, and it provides a firm date of the late fifth century BC for the latest occupation phase. The date of the construction of the Classical house remains uncertain, but a sizeable quantity of sixth century pottery found in foundation levels suggests both that the house was approximately a century old when it went out of use, and that there was earlier occupation in the surrounding area.

The most important find associated with the Classical house was a hoard of Persian gold coins, buried in a small jug (*olpe*), found up against a wall beneath the peristyle court (Figures: 5, 7). The coins show a figure of a kneeling archer, the characteristic design of the Persian *daric*. Presumably the hoard was stored in this location for safekeeping, and for some reason never retrieved. The discovery of such a valuable find in a controlled archaeological excavation is very rare. According to Xenophon (*Anabasis* 1.3.21), a single *daric* was equivalent to a soldier's pay for one month.

Indeed, it is believed that a primary function of the *daric* was for the payment of mercenary troops, and the hoard may have been associated with military operations in the area. Several such operations are mentioned by ancient historians. At the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, the conflicting loyalties of the inhabitants of Notion and nearby cities are illustrated by a dramatic episode related by Thucydides (3.34). Between 430 and 427 BC, a group of Persian sympathizers from the nearby city of Colophon had occupied part of Notion with the help of Greek and "barbarian" mercenaries. In 427, the Athenian general Paches attacked and killed the pro-Persian mercenaries, after luring their commander into a trap. The Persian sympathizers were then expelled, and Notion was reorganized under Athenian supervision. This is exactly the kind of sequence of events that could have led to both the deposition and the loss of this hoard, but it is not the only possibility. In 406 BC, for example, a decisive naval battle in the conflict between Athens and Sparta was fought off the coast of Notion, which the Athenians were using as a naval base. Alternatively, the hoard could represent the savings of a rich citizen or retired soldier who died unexpectedly.

3a. HARBOR

In 2023, a series of archaeological test trenches was dug under the supervision of the Ephesus Museum on state-owned land at the east end of the beach west of ancient Notion, on the west bank of the stream (Hales River) that runs along the base of the site (see Map. 1). This land has been designated for use as the site of the excavation house that will serve as the headquarters of the Notion Archaeological Project. The northern part of this area is indeed empty, and so suitable as a building site. But to the south, the excavations uncovered the foundations of a late Roman warehouse (Fig. 8).

The late Roman building consists as exposed of a row of four large rooms, oriented east west, with a porch or corridor to the south. The external dimensions of the building as uncovered are 26.62 m (east-west) X 12.2 m (north-south). The east end of the building has been located at a point approximately 50 m east of the Hales River, but the building continues to the west. Other structures further to the west are visible in aerial imagery. The pottery found in association with the structure, including numerous fragments of transport jars (LRA 3; Fig. 9) as well as a smaller number of fragments of table wares (LRC), show that the building was in use from the fifth to the seventh centuries AD.

The layout of the building, the construction of the walls, and the character of the finds are consistent with a utilitarian building such as a warehouse, possibly connected with the late antique port of Notion. The discovery of this building was unexpected, not because it was not clear that there was late antique habitation at the south end of the Hales River valley, already well attested at Claros, but because prior research has suggested that the ancient shoreline lay further inland. The existence of this building thus provides important new evidence for the evolution of the local landscape.

3b. WATER SUPPLY

The water supply of Notion has been a major subject of interest since the beginning of the Notion Archaeological Project in 2014. The lack of fresh water is a significant deficiency of the site. In Hellenistic times, this disadvantage was apparently outweighed by the strategic location and natural defensibility of the rocky promontories overlooking the mouth of the Hales River, and the inhabitants of Notion collected rainwater in numerous capacious cisterns situated throughout the city. There is also some evidence on site for a supply of running water, in the form of at least 4 “pipe blocks” (cubic blocks of marble or conglomerate pierced by pipe-size holes, in one case with a terracotta pipe mortared into the hole) and remains of fountains in both the Agora (pipe block, *parapet* slab, architectural remains) and Sanctuary of Athena (*parapet* slabs). In addition, local inhabitants have long reported evidence for a terracotta waterline on the hill northwest of the city (Maydanoz Tepesi).

In 2022, investigation of these reports showed that indeed there are substantial traces of an aqueduct, which can be followed for a distance of approximately 2 km to the northwest. Its source of has not yet been identified. The aqueduct consisted of a terracotta pipeline supported by an unmortared stone wall, approximately 1.5 m wide or, in places where it runs around rocky hillslopes, carried by a channel cut into the native rock (Fig. 10). In the southern portion of the aqueduct, where the pipe runs along the top of a wall, it is approximately 0.16 m in diameter; it has a reddish pink fabric with many large white inclusions. In some places further to the north, two separate pipelines are preserved, running side by side in channels up to 1.5 m wide and 0.75 m deep. The pipes have an orange red fabric and range from 0.20 to 0.25 m in diameter.

The aqueduct apparently crossed the valley between this hill and Notion in an inverted siphon (Fig. 11). The west end of this siphon is preserved in the form of a series of arches (a venter bridge) built out of a single row of unmortared conglomerate blocks 1.0 to 1.1 m wide, running from west to east over a distance of approximately 50 m (Figure 12). A total of 6 arches are visible, varying in width (from center to center) from 7.4 – 8.9 m. The maximum preserved height of the bridge above the present ground surface is 1.6 m. It is oriented slightly north of east, and so must have turned at least one more time to the southeast on its way to Notion. The east end of the siphon has not yet been identified, but a fountain at the entrance to the Sanctuary of Athena, the highest point in the city besides the Theater, suggests that the siphon ran up the east or northeast sides of the city (see Map 1).

The date of the aqueduct is uncertain, but it is possible that it belongs to the same period as the construction of the city plan and fortifications. In any case it provides clear evidence for a fresh water supply to the city at some point in its history, and it shows that the bay of Notion did not extend this far north at the time the aqueduct was built. In publications of the results of the Notion survey, it was suggested that the lack of fresh water may have been one of the reasons why Notion was largely abandoned in the Roman period, and this may indeed have been the case. The aqueduct may never have been adequate to supply the needs of a Roman bath, and many of the fragments of the pipeline bear thick layers of sinter, suggesting that the waterflow may have been significantly attenuated in later periods of its use.

4. SITE MANAGEMENT AND EXCAVATION HOUSE

The final objective of our program concerns the development of a long-term site management program in collaboration with a broad spectrum of stakeholders ranging from local residents to international tourists. This program includes the protection and conservation of the immovable remains on site, as well as secure storage for the movable artifacts recovered in the excavations. The latter need will be met by the construction of a research facility which will also provide living and working quarters for the archaeological staff, i.e., a dig house, as well as a visitors' center and open-air museum. As noted above, we plan to build this facility on state owned land at the end of the beach immediately west of the site (see Map 1). An architectural rendering of the proposed excavation house is illustrated in Drawing 2.

CONCLUSION

The results of the first two seasons of excavation at Notion show how useful it is to follow up on the results of archaeological survey with excavation. In five years of archaeological survey at Notion, very little pre-Hellenistic pottery or other evidence for pre-Hellenistic occupation was recorded. It is now evident that our excavations will make a significant contribution to knowledge about Notion in the Classical as well as the Hellenistic period. Similarly, it was clear from the survey that there was very limited occupation within the fortified area of Notion after the early first century AD, but the discovery of a late Roman warehouse at

the base of the site shows that the harbor remained in active use for many centuries after that date.

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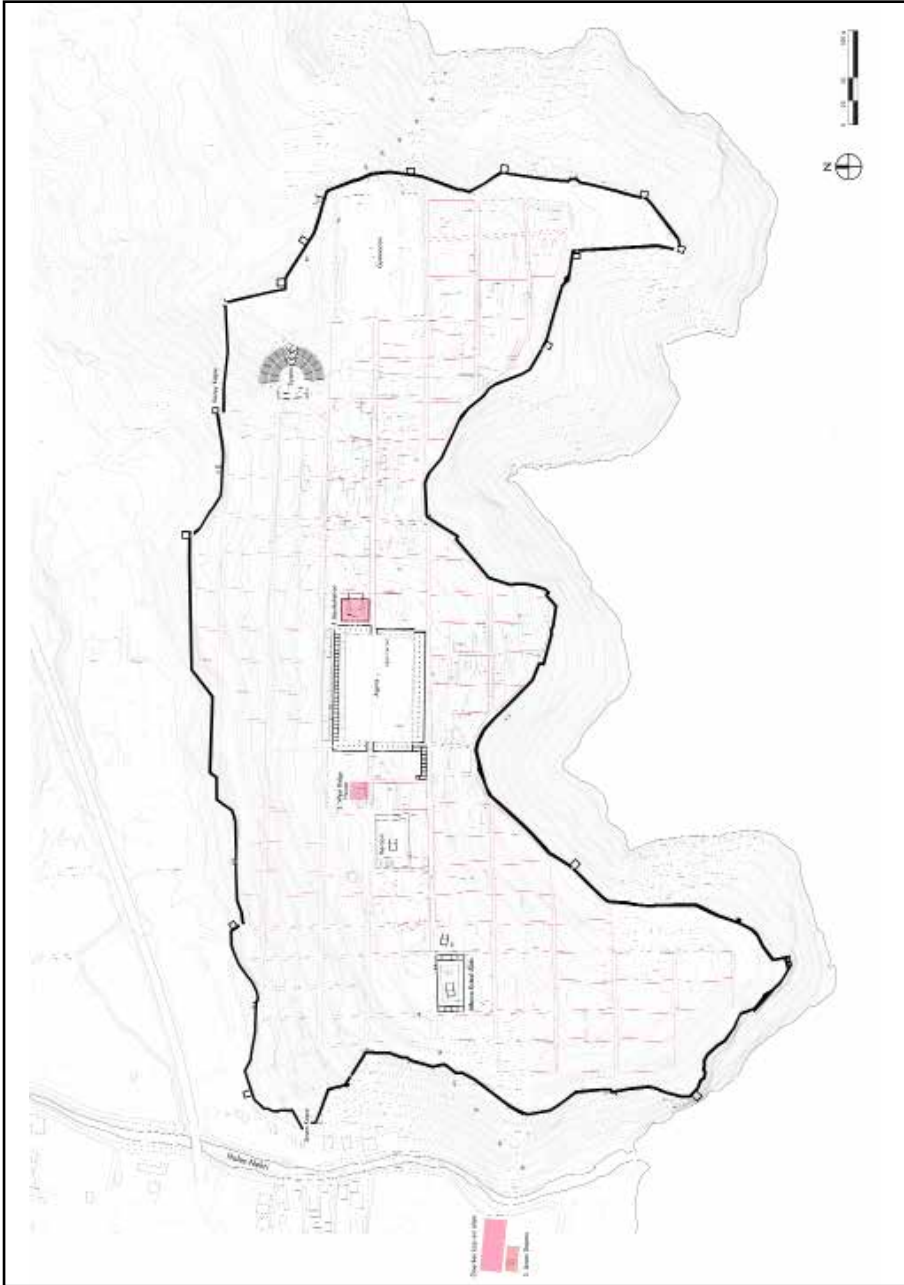
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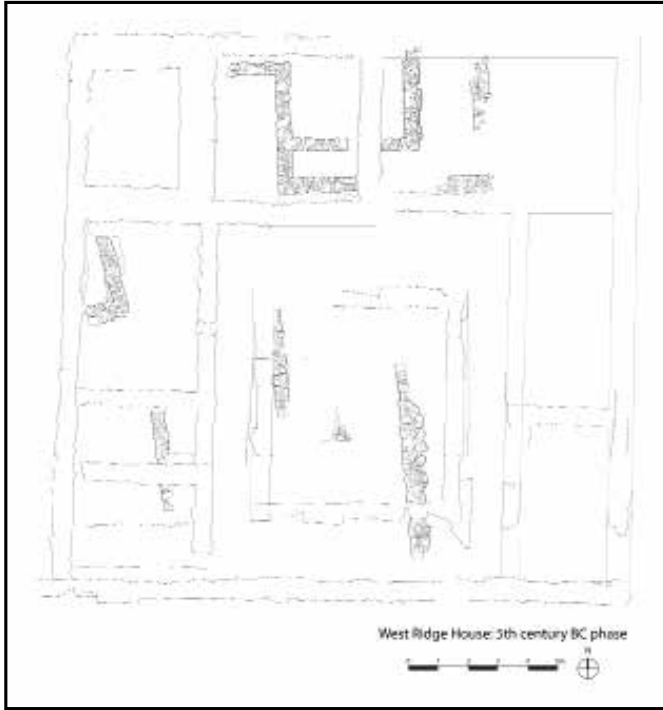
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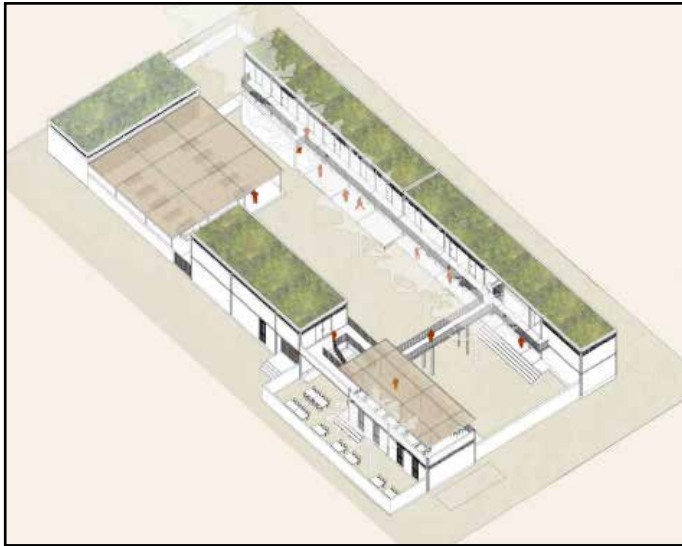
ILLUSTRATIONS



Map 1: Plan of Notion showing areas excavated in 2022-23



Drawing 1: Plan of Classical phase of West Ridge House



Drawing 2: Architect's rendering of proposed excavation house

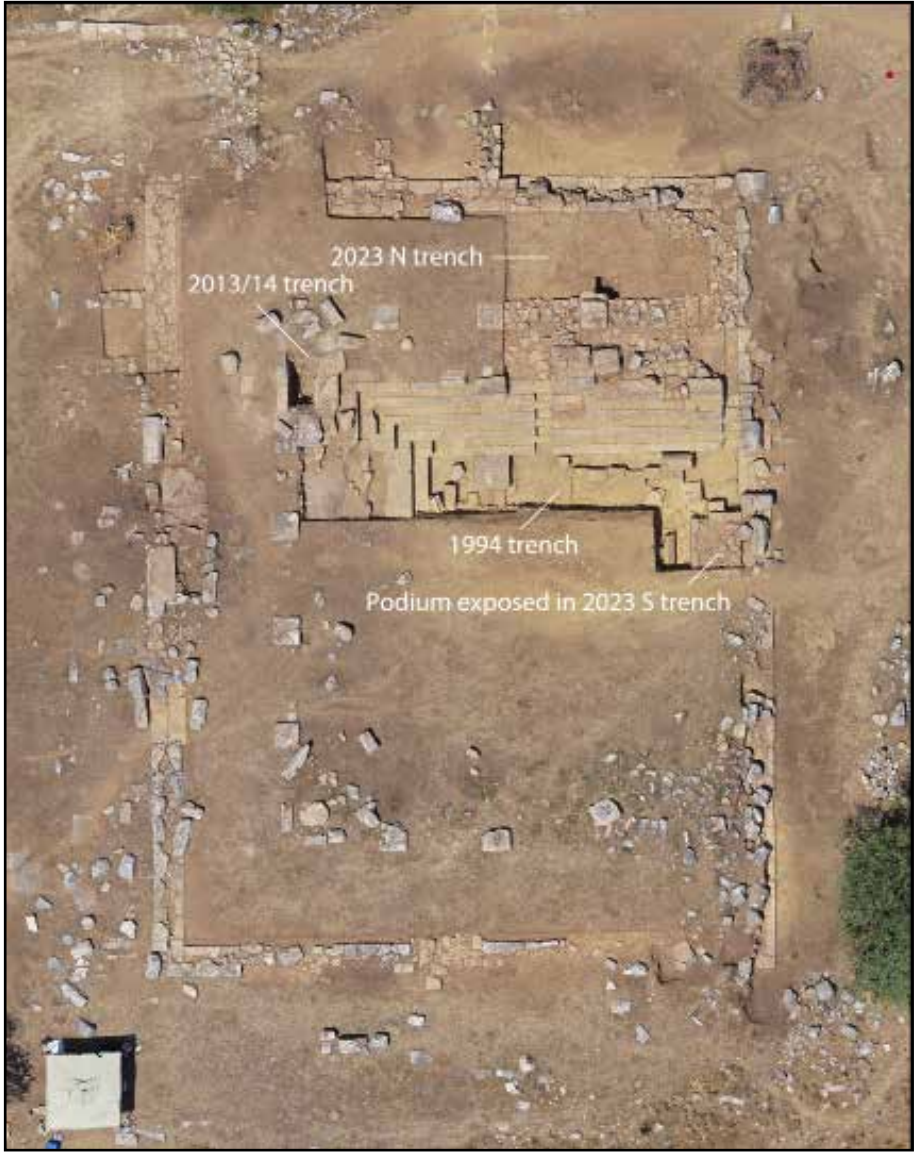


Figure 1: Orthophoto of Bouleuterion, showing areas excavated in 2023



Figure 2: View from southeast of north side of Bouleuterion



Figure 3: View from northwest of fallen blocks and podium of Bouleuterion



Figure 4: Pottery from foundation levels of Bouleuterion

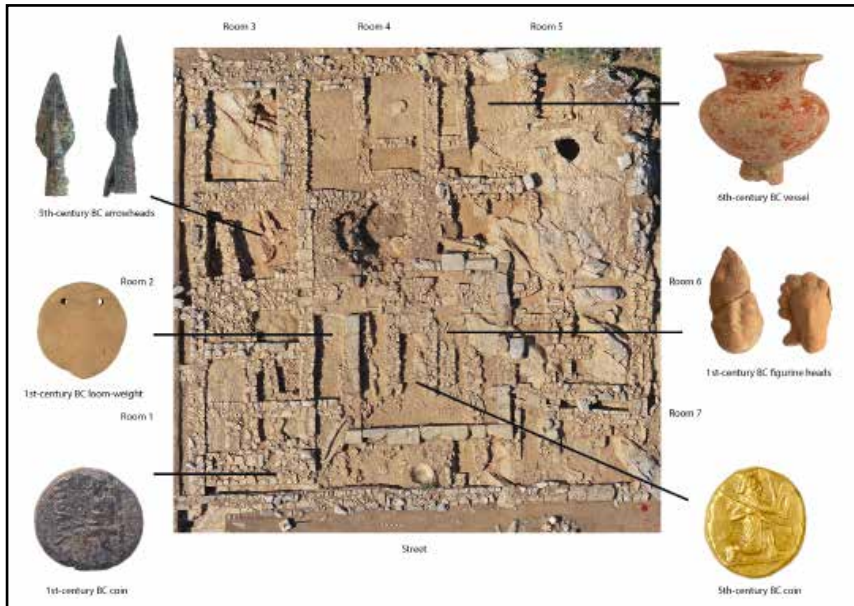


Figure 5: Orthophoto of West Ridge House, showing rooms and findspots of artifacts



Figure 6: View from northeast of West Ridge House during excavation in 2023



Figure 7: Persian daric

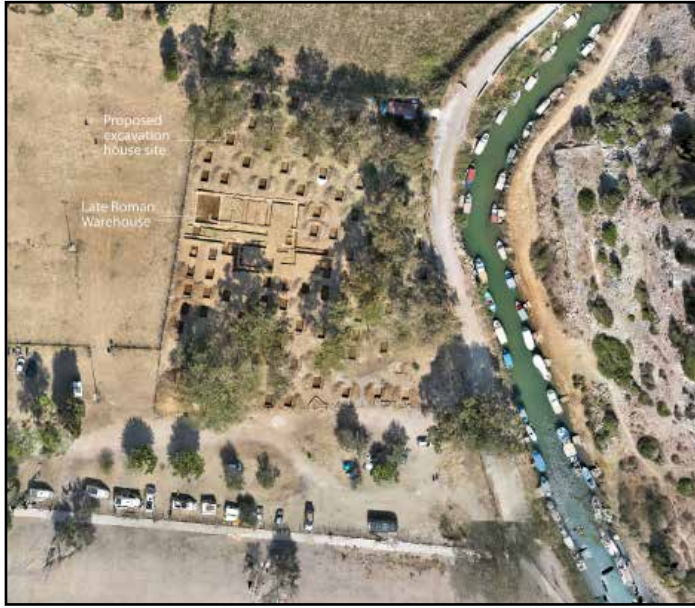


Figure 8: Orthophoto of Harbor area showing test trenches and late Roman warehouse



Figure 9: Fragments of LRA 3 *amphorae* from late Roman warehouse



Figure 10: View from northwest of channel of aqueduct



Figure 11: View from northeast showing location of siphon of aqueduct



Figure 12: View from northeast of venter bridge of aqueduct