

# The East Stoa Project at Labraunda

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The sanctuary of Labraunda was located in the mountains to the north of the ancient city of Mylasa, in southwestern Anatolia. Occupation at the site dates back as far as the Bronze Age and continued into late antiquity, when Labraunda appears to have become a centre of Christian activity. The overall layout of the sanctuary, however, was not the result of gradual accretion, but was primarily due to a period of intense construction during the fourth century BC under the direction of the local Karian dynasts, the Hekatomnids.

The Hekatomnids, named after the first dynast Hekatomnos, were native to Karia and Mylasa; after the rule of Persia over Asia Minor had been confirmed by the King's Peace in 387/386 BC, they were promoted to being regional satraps. They remain best known today, as they were in antiquity, for the reign of Maussollos, who constructed his monumental mausoleum at Halikarnassos, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Their architectural legacy in southwestern Anatolia, however, was much broader, most notably at Labraunda.

*The Hekatomnids at Labraunda and the East Stoa Project*  
Under the patronage of the Hekatomnids, the sanctuary of Labraunda was completely transformed. A series of terraces was constructed on the hillside and new monumental buildings were erected on each level, including a new temple, two *androne*s (dining halls), a structure identified as the *oikoi* and a new entrance gate (*propylon*) to the sanctuary. These are all identified by dedicatory inscriptions, made by either Maussollos or his brother Idrieus, to the titular deity Zeus Labraundos. Another structure at the eastern side of the site, identified as a stoa, has long been thought to be of Hekatomnid date, though it has not been excavated.

The aim of the East Stoa Project is to identify the different chronological phases of this building and to understand its relationship with its direct architectural environment. The East Stoa itself measures 14.5m × 45m and consists of a Doric marble colonnade in front of six square rooms. It is structurally connected to an elongated building further to the west, traditionally known as the 'Palace'. This structure originally consisted of a row of four or five rectangular rooms entered from the south, in the area below the East Stoa terrace, next to the *propylon*. The East Stoa Project takes the East Complex, incorporating the stoa, the terrace and the 'Palace', as a whole.

The Hekatomnid dynasty was at the forefront of a number of architectural innovations in southwestern Anatolia, commonly called the 'Ionic Renaissance'; the East Stoa is

an important witness to such developments. The intention of the project is to take a holistic approach to this structure and the surrounding area. The stoa itself will be partially excavated and a full architectural study of the building will be undertaken in order to determine its functions and chronology; the working hypothesis is that it was used for ritual dining during festivities at the site. The project will further enable us to reconstruct more completely the nature of Hekatomnid patronage at the site, in particular the Hekatomnids' dual role both as Karian dynasts and Persian satraps. Under the Hekatomnids, the profile of Labraunda as a sanctuary rose dramatically, and it came to be the major religious centre of Karia; however, it also served as a centre of dynastic self-representation. The East Stoa is the missing piece in this picture; the project will open up this area of the sanctuary to in-depth research, integrating it into our understanding of Labraunda as a unified architectural and dynastic project.

## *The 2018 campaign*

This year's campaign focused on three different aspects: the excavation of one of the rooms of the stoa, namely Room 4; the investigation of the open court located in front of the stoa; and a renewed architectural analysis of the East Complex, which includes the strong terrace wall commanding the *propyleia* area, the so-called 'Palace'.

In its current state of preservation, the layout of the East Stoa remains visible; however, the walls have collapsed into the rooms, which impedes investigations. Efforts were directed towards the excavation of Room 4 for practical



View of the East Stoa from the north.



View of the East Stoa terrace.

reasons: its internal surface seemed to contain less blocks and their extraction could be facilitated by the presence of a sizable flat area located to the back of the room where the blocks could be stored. In total, 90 blocks were removed and numbered. Due to the time it took to remove the blocks, and the size of the room ( $6.3\text{m} \times 6.3\text{m}$ ), a full excavation of the room was not possible in this campaign. It was decided instead to open a small trench ( $2.5\text{m} \times 1.4\text{m}$ ) in its southeastern corner in order to get an idea of the stratigraphy. As the topsoil around the blocks was removed, a mixed pottery sequence was unearthed, containing glazed sherds from the Byzantine era and late Roman ware, as well as glass. This suggests that the room may have been used as a dump after the walls had collapsed. Below this level, a sandy layer was reached; this can be interpreted as a natural deposition made after the destruction of the roof but before the collapse of the stone walls. Below this, a very dense layer of roof tiles was discovered. The homogeneity of the material and its dispersion across the trench surface leaves little doubt that it is the collapse layer of the roof. Whether this is the original Hekatomnid roof or a later one remains to be ascertained. This level provided a mix of Hellenistic to Roman ceramics, indicating that the building collapsed in Roman times. The material has yet to be studied and drawn, but it clearly contains a wide range of ceramic types from fine wares (drinking cups, plate fragments) to coarse (pithoi, amphorae), as well as glass, bones and metal; three coins have also been retrieved.

No layers of material have yet been found dating back to the original occupation of the building in the fourth century BC. The roof-tile layer rests on a level which is located approximately 88cm below the threshold level, and thus below what one would expect to be the floor layer. The circumstances surrounding this stratigraphy, and the sequence of occupation in the stoa, will be explored next

year, with the full excavation of Room 4. Interestingly, however, a comparable sequence was encountered in a test trench, Trench 1, on the terrace in front of the building. This provided a sequence spanning approximately 2.3m, with a concentration of material of late Hellenistic/Roman Imperial date occurring below the stylobate of the East Stoa itself. The majority of the material appears to have been deposited as part of a fill layer. It seems that the terrace was cleared of its deposits in the first to second century AD, with fill material subsequently deposited on the natural deposit encountered at the bottom of the trench. A clean sand layer was excavated above the fill deposits, which has been interpreted as an imported bedding layer for the terrace. An extension of Trench 1 to the east determined that this sand layer hit the stylobate just below its surface, indicating that the new terrace layer was meant to permit access to the building.

#### *Future research*

The unexpected discovery of Imperial materials in both Room 4 and Trench 1 at a level significantly below that of the stoa stylobate suggests that the occupation of the East Stoa and the terrace was disrupted at some stage. Future campaigns will be focused on determining what precisely happened at the East Complex between its construction in the fourth century BC and the Roman Imperial period – also, when and why this occurred. One working hypothesis is that structural damage to the East Complex required the building to be underpinned and the terrace reworked with strengthening fill layers.

The full excavation of Room 4 will be the focus of the 2019 campaign, which will hopefully provide evidence allowing fuller comprehension of the occupation levels in the building. The focus will then turn to the terrace in subsequent seasons, again seeking to establish a full stratigraphy, both alongside the stoa and towards the western end of the terrace. The long-term aim is to reconstruct the role of the East Complex within Labraunda, considering mobility around the site, the activities that took place and any chronological differentiation.



View of the ‘Palace’.