

Labraunda East Stoa Project 2019

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The East Stoa Project at the sanctuary of Labraunda in southwestern Turkey aims to improve our knowledge of the chronology and function of the sanctuary.

Labraunda was architecturally monumentalised in the fourth century BC under the patronage of the local Karian dynasts, the Hekatomnids. This involved the construction of a series of terraces on the mountainside and a number of significant new monumental buildings, transforming the layout of the sanctuary. The *andrones* (dining halls), the temple and the monumental gateway can all be dated by inscriptions across their architraves that record their dedication, either by Maussollos or his brother Idrieus. No epigraphic dedication has been found for the East Stoa; however, on architectural grounds, the structure has long been thought to be another aspect of the Hekatomnid construction programme at Labraunda. The East Stoa Project seeks to test this hypothesis, through both the partial excavation of the stoa and the completion of a full architectural study of the building and the terrace on which it stands.

The focus of the three-week 2019 campaign was the excavation of Room 4 of the East Stoa. The intention was to dig down to the foundations of the building in order to establish a full occupational stratigraphy for the room, and with the hope of finding material that definitively established its date of construction. Exploration of the stoa is made difficult by the fact that the walls of the rooms have collapsed; the 2018 campaign had focused on clearing the vast majority of blocks from inside the room. The clearance of Room 4 continued in the 2019 season, with the removal of the remaining building blocks; a total of 120 have been moved out of the room. Significant rubble layers were encountered underneath, suggesting that the stoa had been used as a dump after the walls had collapsed. The size of the room (6.3m × 6.3m) and the density of the ground made progress difficult; in order to progress more quickly, it was decided to reduce the excavation area in the third week to the southeastern portion of the space. As the excavation progressed, we uncovered a protruding course that can be interpreted as the *euthynteria*, the last course of the foundations. It is estimated that the original floor level, which might have been made from wood, stood one course above this protruding course, meaning that there would have been a step down into the room from the threshold of ca 30cm.

The excavation area was subsequently reduced again to focus on an east-west trench running 1.5m from the southern wall. The earth became sandier with fewer material intrusions as the excavation went deeper. Different imported fill layers could be identified, which were perhaps intended



View of the excavations in Room 4, facing east.

to strengthen the foundations, though they were apparently not related to the original construction; the material from the lowest context reached during the campaign was mixed, with a date late in the Hellenistic period. We were unable to excavate this context fully in the available time; we will return to this in the next campaign. A drain was discovered in the southeastern corner of the room, the depth of which indicates that the base of the foundations is still over 2m down. The distance from the estimated floor level to this drain also measures ca 2m; the foundations of the stoa are thus of a greater depth than initially anticipated, over 4m below the threshold. The investigation of Room 4 will continue in the 2020 campaign, when the remaining space will be stepped down to reach the level of the foundations in the eastern part of the room.

The East Stoa (45m × 14.5m) was an ambitious building project at Labraunda, one of the largest at the site. A key aspect of the research programme aims to establish when it was built within the wider sequence of Hekatomnid construction. The architectural study of the building has revealed that it was structurally linked with the so-called 'palace', an elongated building to the west of the stoa, which was accessed from the level below, facing the South Propylon. The East Stoa and the terrace on which it stands were thus conceived and constructed at the same time; they were part of a conceptual whole that involved large-scale construction over two storeys (at least in part), which was completed before the terrace was filled in to create the open space in front of the stoa.

The stoa, 'palace' and terrace are referred to collectively as the East Complex in the project. A number of technical aspects of the building work, including dowel holes and

door and window details, are shared with other Hekatomnid structures at the site, notably Andron A and the Oikoi. This supports a date for the East Complex in the fourth century BC, though where it fits into the chronology of Labraunda remains to be ascertained precisely. It appears that the East Stoa was constructed at a later date than the monumental staircase that links the area in front of the ‘palace’ with the next terrace; the ‘palace’ was also not linked to the so-called ‘bastion’, which stands at the southwestern corner of the terrace, with the monumental staircase built flush against it. It is thus possible to identify different phases of construction at the sanctuary. The East Complex, however, appears to conform to the architectural design of other Hekatomnid constructions and may still have been part of their original scheme for Labraunda, even if it was undertaken at a later date.

A related question is the function of the East Complex within the sanctuary. The design of the stoa, with six square rooms and off-centre doors, encourages the idea that the building was used for ritual dining. Unfortunately, the excavation of Room 4 has not yet uncovered any material related to the original occupation of the building. It is hoped

that light will be shed on this question by studying the East Complex within the context of the sanctuary as a whole, considering mobility around the site, the activities that took place and any chronological differentiation between its construction in the fourth century BC and the late Roman Imperial period, when the stoa apparently started to be used as a dump. In particular, the issue of how visitors to Labraunda were meant to advance from the entrance of the sanctuary to the temple on the upper terrace remains unknown; after climbing the monumental staircase, they appear to have been directed north, past the ‘bastion’, yet their subsequent itinerary eludes us. By considering the sanctuary-wide dynamics, we can hopefully restore the place of the East Complex within the ritual landscape of Labraunda.

Next year, the immediate focus of the project will be to excavate Room 4 down to the level of the foundations, which will hopefully provide valuable evidence about the date of construction. Further exploration will also take place on the terrace, both in front of the building and at the western end of the space, towards the ‘bastion’, in order to establish its chronology and function.



Aerial view of the East Complex, facing northeast, with the monumental staircase in the foreground.