

PRESS RELEASE

HELLENIC MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SPORTS

16.3.2017

UNDERWATER RESEARCH IN SALAMIS, 2016

In November-December 2016 an underwater survey, as part of a three-year collaborative project between the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities (E.U.A.) of the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Hellenic Institute of Marine Archaeology (H.I.M.A.), was conducted off the eastern coast of Salamis in the Saronic Gulf (namely in the area of Ambelaki-Kynosoura) under the direction of Dr. Angeliki Simossi, Head of the Ephorate, and Yannis G. Lolos, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Ioannina and President of the Institute, with the involvement of the Laboratory of Marine Geology and Physical Oceanography of the University of Patras under Professor George Papatheodorou, and with substantial financial support from the Honor Frost Foundation.

It should be noted that this is the first systematic underwater reconnaissance to be initiated by Greek institutions (with the participation of a 20 member team) in a severely loaded marine environment, yet in a crucial area of historical importance.

The main focus of the 2016 research was the inner (western) part of the Bay of Ambelaki, formed by the peninsulas of Pounta and Kynosoura. This is the commercial and plausibly military harbour of the Classical and Hellenistic town or *demos* of Salamis and certainly the closest and most important harbour of the city-state of Athens, after those of Piraeus (Kantharos, Zea and Mounichia). It is also the gathering place of the united Greek fleet on the eve of the great sea-battle of 480 B.C., found in close proximity to well-known monuments to the naval success: the *polyandreion* or tumulus of the dead victors and the *tropaion* (trophy), on the long peninsula of Kynosoura. References to the ancient port of Salamis occur in the works of the geographer Scylax (of the 4th cent. B.C.), the geographer Strabo (of the 1st cent. B.C.-1st cent. A.D.) and the traveller Pausanias (of the 2nd cent. A.D.).

One of the main results of the 2016 research was the identification/documentation of submerged ancient remains on all three sides (north, west and south) of the Bay of Ambelaki. These are invariably found above or under water, according to the change of the sea-level, the fall of which, especially in the month of February, reaches its lowest, i.e. about half a meter(!).

The ancient architectural remains, which have been identified on the shore and in shallow waters, in the inner Bay, comprise portuary installations, fortification works and various other structures. By employing a combination of methods and techniques (aerial photography, photogrammetry, topographical and architectural documentation), the first underwater archaeological map of the area, with all visible elements, has now been

constructed, which will be used as basis for further investigation in the historic Bay.

An essential part of the 2016 survey off Salamis was the geophysical research, carried out by a team from the University of Patras, and using a side scan sonar, a marine magnetometer and a special device with an attached underwater camera. The main aims of this investigation were: the identification of elements of archaeological interest on the sea-bottom and also the determination of the coast-line in the Bay in the Classical period. The high quality digital data collected during the geophysical survey will be of great value for the reconstruction of the coastal palaeogeography of the area.

Of special interest is an “enclosed” or protected area (partly a marsh) in the northwest part of the Bay of Ambelaki. It is defined, on the south, by an impressive long wall (or “jetty”) extending to ca. 160 m. and ending in a strong round tower (with a diameter of 7 m.), of a type known from other fortified harbours; while, on the east, it is bordered by a modern mole, 48 m. long in a North-South axis, built with ancient stone material, and arguably lying on ancient foundation.

Immediately west of the modern mole, a parallel row of large ashlar blocks, uncovered by surface clearing, and running for 12 m., seems to belong to the foundation course of a strong well-built structure, possibly of public character.

Further west, in the same area, another large submerged structure, measuring 21 x 9.20 m., has been located.

On the south side of the bay, the submerged remains, documented in the course of the 2016 survey, include (as seen from west to east): Breakwaters, a mole with a length of 40 m. in a North-South axis; also a wall, ca. 30 m. long and parallel to the shore-line, with an attached square tower-like structure (6 x 6 m.).

Finally, within the context of the 2016 survey, a large quantity of diagnostic surface finds was collected, in nine (9) sectors, on the north and west side of the Bay of Ambelaki. The surface collection has yielded numerous sherds from commercial jars and other vases of various periods, a bronze coin of Corinth (of the 4th cent. B.C.) and some small objects. The largest proportion of the surface potsherds can be securely dated to the Classical and Hellenistic periods, apparently associated with the function of the main installations of the harbour of Salamis during the flourishing phases of Athenian history.



Salamis. View of the Bay of Ambelaki, from southwest (photo Chr. Marabea).



Salamis. Long wall (or “jetty”), extending to about 160 m., in the northwest area of the Bay of Ambelaki (Aerial photo V. Mentoyannis).



Salamis. Round tower (diam. 7 m.) of the fortified Classical harbour, Bay of Ambelaki (Aerial photo V. Mentoyannis).



Salamis. Part of the foundation course of a strong well-built structure of the Classical period, close to a modern mole constructed with ancient stone material, on the north side of the Bay of Ambelaki (photo Chr. Marabea).