The excavations at Labraunda this year were very successful and lasted for eight weeks. Our main new discovery is obviously the gold coin from Philip II discovered in the “Open Air Sanctuary”, where also several prehistoric pottery sherds were revealed. Axel W. Persson, the well-known bronze age scholar from Uppsala came to Labraunda in 1948 to shed light on the possible bronze age connections between Minoan Crete and Karia, the landscape of Labraunda. To his big disappointment, Persson could never find any bronze age remains and it was left to us in the 2012 campaign to find prehistoric pottery. More about this below.

For the first time in many years our work took place inside the holy area of the temenos wall. This year’s large team of archaeologists and workmen were divided into four excavation areas and one test probe.

The test probe was started in August and was supervised by our architect Thomas Thieme. It was conducted in the southwest corner of Andron A, in order to see whether the building is standing on bedrock or not. Next year the building will be stabilized and the broken part of the southern wall will be rebuilt. For this work the engineers who are responsible for this work, from the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara, needed to learn about the foundation of the building. We followed the wall down for three metres and could establish that the building definitely is standing on bedrock, as is common in Classical architecture. The work of stabilizing Andron A has been going on since 2004, when the building was first recorded with a laser scanner and this work has been one of the main restoration projects in Labraunda during recent years.
The three-metre deep test probe at the southwest corner of Andron A

**Entrance excavation**

The first excavation zone was located at the entrance area. In 2003 the large terrace wall towards the road to Milas was cleared and it has been the wish of the excavation direction to follow this wall around the corner to establish how the ancient visitors entered Labraunda. The very interesting results revealed that the Classical terrace wall of big blocks ended two metres from the corner. However, the line of the wall was rebuilt several times, and in its latest phase it probably formed part of a defensive wall from the Middle Byzantine period.
The Akropolis Gate excavation

The fortress on the Akropolis was measured and drawn in 2004-2005. In order to make the fortress more comprehensible for both scholars and tourists, the Akropolis Gate area was cleaned this year. The area consists of two towers with a recessed gate opening in between. The clearing of the area from vegetation and bushes opened up an impressive space with hundreds of fallen blocks and ruined towers. The excavation trench was laid out on the inside of the gate, as we hoped to better understand the gate arrangement itself. A very interesting construction appeared. It consists of a large room surrounded by walls located immediately inside the fortress gate. It probably functioned as a second security and protection area in case the enemy broke through the outer gates. Such courtyards on the inside of gates are quite common in ancient fortresses.

The cleaned Akropolis Gate area with the east tower from the east

The excavation in the courtyard on the inside of the Akropolis Gate
The excavation in the so-called Open Air Sanctuary at the Split Rock

Where did the cult in Labraunda start? In the early excavations a terracotta figurine of Kybele was discovered. Where did she have her cult place? The Anatolian mother goddess Kybele lived in rocks and the very striking Split Rock of Labraunda with its nich cut into its west side could be her cult place. The excavations this year were meant to give some answers to this problem. The area has a steep slope, and three parallel walls in an east-west direction were uncovered. It is likely that all of them functioned as terrace walls at three different levels: the upper one in line with the back side of the Split Rock, the middle wall in the centre of the Split Rock and the lower wall in line with the front of the Split Rock. Below the upper wall a large pithos of the type with bands was discovered in situ. The bottom indicated that it was made to contain wine (it had a round receptacle for wine ‘impurities’). The wine pithos, dating to the Hekatomnid period in the 4th century BC, was placed one metre above a primitive wall. In this lower level several prehistoric pottery fragments were found together with an obsidian piece, all indicating that life here started in the Middle Chalcolithic period. Other fragments are from the bronze age and thus Axel W. Persson’s wish in 1948 to discover the bronze age of Labraunda was finally fulfilled in 2012. In front of the middle wall a gold coin, a *stater* from Philip II, minted at Amphipolis was found. It weighs 8.5 grams and it is the second gold coin to be discovered in Labraunda. The discovery of prehistoric pottery and a gold coin clearly indicate that this area was of very high cultic importance.
The final excavation area was laid out on the terraces below the Built Tomb, in order to better understand how visitors approached the tomb as well as finding more fallen architectural members. Fifteen new architectural pieces were discovered and we now know much better what the upper structure of the tomb looked like. Immediately below the tomb itself a new wall was found. At both ends of the wall, perpendicular walls project out. The entire arrangement looks like a very large altar or a bench where the ancient visitor could leave a votive gift to the dead. If the person buried in the tomb was Hekatomnos, the founder of the dynasty and the satrapy, it seems likely that he was the object of cultic acts, reminiscent of the later cult of Augustus as the founder of the Roman Empire. The excavations revealed several good pottery pieces, such as wine jars and an excellent Attic black-glazed lekythos from the early 4th century, supporting the interpretation that the tomb is Hekatomnos’ (died 377 BC).
Cultural Heritage management

Marble conservator Agneta Freccero continued her work with cleaning and consolidating the architectural marble pieces. The work included the well-preserved Maussollos dedication inscription from Andron B. For the first time in many years this inscription is now clearly readable. Also the famous letter to Olympichos in the walls of Andron A was conserved.

Finally, the roof over our excavation storerooms, until now built with big sheets of asbestos, a dangerous material, had to be taken away. The Turkish authorities insisted that we replaced these with a new metal roof, which should also be safer against burglary. This was done to a large cost, which was covered by Stefan Lersten and Maggie Dan-Lersten, for which we are very grateful. Furthermore, two new information signs donated by the Labranda Society were placed at the West Church and the other at the Stadion. A new iron net fence, to prevent cows from entering the sanctuary was built west of Andron A. Four new staircases in metal for the tourists were placed in the excavation areas below the tomb and in the Slit Rock area.

The excavations this year were supported by generous grants from Stefan Lersten, Maggie Dan-Lersten, the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History of Uppsala University, Åke Wibergs Stiftelse and Magnus Bergvalls Stiftelse as well as the French Institute in Istanbul.

Lars Karlsson, Excavation Director, October 7, 2012