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MINISTRY OF CULTURE
GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF ANTIQUITIES & CULTURAL HERITAGE
EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES OF LESBOS

**The Consolidation and Rehabilitation
of the NE Enceinte (Area B) of the Upper Castle Project
and the Reconstruction of an Ottoman Residence
at the Lower Castle of Mytilene**

MYTILENE 2023



**OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME
NORTH AEGEAN 2014 - 2020**

Co-financed by Greece and the European Union



1. Photographic view of the outer side of the NE enclosure (area B)

From ancient times, the Castle of Mytilene, which spreads over an area of 14.8 acres, was a naturally fortified site **(1)** that enabled the control of the city's two harbours: the northern and the southern one. It had a strong fortification, while its NE side was founded on the rocky outcrops of the terrain.

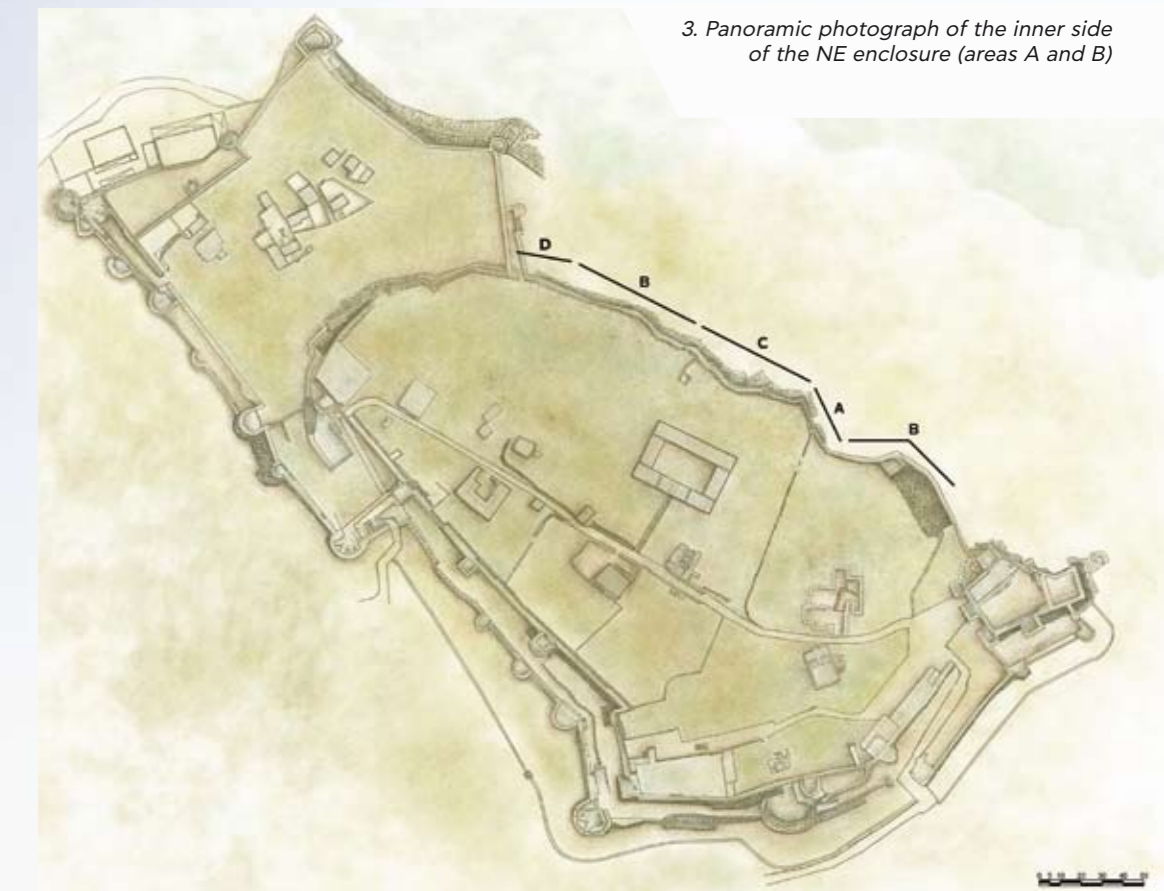
In its current form it is arranged **(2)** in three enceintes: the upper one, on its SE edge (Upper Castle), is the last line of defence of the castle, comprising the central defence tower and the gunpowder magazine. With in the middle enceinte (Middle Castle) are the prison buildings, the *Medrese* (seminary) and the *Tekke* (dervish monastery), the Byzantine cistern and the crypts, as well as a second gunpowder magazine. This main enceinte was accessible from the south through two gate complexes and through the so-called *Orta Kapou* from the west. Two other smaller gates to the north of the enceinte facilitated traffic to and from the residences of the Lower Castle, *Saplitza* and the hammam (bath), which are part of the third enceinte (Lower Castle), and are surrounded by the coastal fortification wall. The multi faceted fortification of the Castle as a whole (walls, cannon emplacements, monumental towers and bastions, impressive gates) was an integral part of the great fortification works built on Lesbos during the Medieval and Modern times.

In the framework of the project "Consolidation and Restoration of the NE Enceinte (Area B) of the Upper Castle and Reconstruction of an Ottoman-era Residence at the Lower Castle of Mytilene" funded by the North Aegean Operational Programme 2014-2020, the required soil removals and the necessary exploratory excavation works – carried out along the inner side of the enceinte– revealed a part of the fortification (of overall length 130m and maximum height 14.20m) which dates back to at least two successive construction phases **(3, 4, 5)**: the upper visible part of the fortification (of maximum height 14.20m, 1.20m width) dates back to the time of Ottoman rule (18th-19th c.). Its superstructure was reconstructed and repaired several times, due to natural disasters or war attacks. Different types of masonry are discerned, which probably correspond to different chronological phases.

In the underlying, late Byzantine fortification (14th c.) (length 74m, maximum height 5m, width 2.20m), the foundation rests on the carved rock. The formation of the flat surface at its inner face, the uniform size of the selected stones and the stability achieved thanks to their elaborate carving and the use of mortar, as well as the joining of its two sides with transverse stones (*diatoni*), document in terms of construction the building technique used during the time of the Gattilusi. The built-in marble architectural members, such as column shaft drums, small columns, capitals, triglyphs, architraves, inscribed stone blocks and columns, etc., bear witness to the repairs and additions made by the Gattilusi, incorporating parts of the walls of the Byzantine period. Representative examples of colourful, glazed pottery **(6)**, as well as coins, dated to the 14th-15th c. and 18th-19th c., confirm the dating of the enceinte to the aforementioned centuries.



3. Panoramic photograph of the inner side of the NE enclosure (areas A and B)



2. Topographic plan of Mytilene castle (restoration areas A, B, C and D)