

# OTHER DISCOVERIES IN VOULA

## The ancient Agora and related sites

Aixonidai Halai was one of the ancient municipalities situated outside the city of Athens and it participated in the Athenian parliament with six members. Excavations have identified two main settlements and the temple of Apollo Zostiras, a major religious center located on the modern site of Laimos in Vouliagmeni, next to Voula. The acropolis has been traced (but not yet excavated) on a hill, not far from the recently discovered market, commanding panoramic views of the sea-routes of the Saronic Gulf and the road that connected the area with the neighboring municipalities of Anargyrounton and Aixone, in the modern towns of Vari and Glyfada. The ancient cemetery of the municipality has been excavated at the site of Pigadakia where sarcophagi and cremations have been found. In 2006 another burial enclosure was discovered with six sarcophagi, six cremations and six child-burials in pots. The market (agora) of the ancient municipality of Aixonidai Halai came to light in 2005 during a rescue excavation of a plot of land that the Sklavenitis Company, a supermarket chain, intended to build on. The excavation was conducted by archaeologists Yannos Kourayos and Mary Giomalidi and a six-person team under the auspices of the Greek Archaeological Service, which is responsible for investigating the existence of archaeological finds before any new construction can take place. The team discovered a complex dating to the 5th-4th century B.C.E. built around an open courtyard with a cistern cut into the natural bedrock. Twelve rooms are situated around the courtyard, two of which are divided into two inner spaces. Another room has a prodomos (fore-court) and a sekos (main cella), suggesting a small shrine. A smaller square room with many pots in situ could have served as the temple's kitchen. To the south of the temple the excavations revealed a square altar enclosed by a semicircular construction (peribolos). North of the main building stands a rectangular peribolos measuring 25x25 meters.

The complex is defined to the east and south by strong protecting walls built of huge local stones. These walls also protect a well of fine masonry with a monumental mouth that measures 2x2 meters. The excavations unearthed three female figurines (one depicts a kourotrofos, or nursing deity, and another a pregnant woman), 40 bronze coins and 2 silver ones, 42 lead weights and 45 weaving weights. The discovery of the coins is very important for the history of the area, as it is the first time that such a large quantity of coins comes to light; what is more, it attests to the public character of the building complex. Another significant find is a bronze plate with the inscription **ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙ ΑΛΑΕ**, which testifies to the area's identification with the ancient municipality of Aixonides Halai. The discovery of this building complex -- most probably the ancient market -- is also significant because, until now, only private complexes had been found in the area. It provides a more complete picture of the way ancient municipalities were organized. Their Agora was a place of gathering and socializing, of economic transactions and of religious activity. Following the rescue excavation, the ancient agora, comprising only 1,500 square meters of the 5,500 square meter plot, remains visible and intact.

