APHRODISIAS 2015
A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SEASON
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The 2015 season at Aphrodisias was exceptionally fruitful, with important discoveries, exciting new marble finds, and striking progress on restoration and site conservation. The New York University team carried out a four-month conservation season, from 1 June to 6 October, with a two-month season of research and excavation from 5 July to 31 August. We consisted of some sixty senior staff and graduate students and ninety-six local workers. The government representative was Nail Uyar (Denizli Museum). Beside discrete research projects, major work focused on excavation in the South Agora and Tetrapylon Street, anastylosis of the Sebasteion’s Propylon, and conservation in the Hadrianic Baths (Fig. 1).

The projects in the South Agora and Tetrapylon Street are designed to connect these two important urban zones and to create a new visitor route through the centre of ancient Aphrodisias. There were important results and finds in both areas. These two projects are parts of a larger vision for making the centre of Aphrodisias and its major monuments accessible – notably, the monuments that have been restored by our team in recent years (Sebasteion, North Agora colonnades, and Hadrianic Baths). Generous sponsorship for both projects has come from Mica and Ahmet Ertegün, the Leon Levy Foundation, the 1984 Foundation, Baron Lorne Thyssen-Bornemisza, the Headley Trust, the Malcolm Hewitt Wiener Foundation, and the Gilbert and Ildiko Butler Family Foundation.

1. EXCAVATION: SOUTH AGORA AND POOL (Figs. 2-8)

Part of the South Agora pool, at its east and west ends, was excavated by Kenan Erim in the 1980s. After a detailed survey of the water system of the pool in the South Agora in 2011 and test trenches in 2012, a five-year project, funded in the name of Mica and Ahmet Ertegün, to complete the excavation of the pool and its surrounding basin construction was begun in 2013. Excavations in 2015 continued the investigation of the large ornamental pool and overlying medieval and post-medieval levels, and the plantings surrounding the pool. Work focused on two main areas: Trench 15.1, over and around much of the eastern half of the pool (Figs. 3-4), and Trench 15.2, between the north edge of the pool and the north stoa or ‘Portico of Tiberius’ (Fig. 7). Work also continued on the architectural documentation of the complex. The work in the South Agora was supervised by Allison Kidd, Ben Russell, and Andrew Wilson, with Ayçe Gökdag, Miłosz Klosowski, Allison Macintosh, Marlee Miller, and Joshua Thomas.

*Trench SAg 15.1* (Figs. 2-5). Trench 15.1 united the previous years’ trenches SAg 14.1 and 13.2, and measured 65.41 m E-W by 37.67 m N-S, covering an area of 2,464 m². The aims were: to continue the stratigraphic excavation in the centre of the South Agora; to record and date field walls and structures built over the filled-in pool; and to reach the earliest phase of the pool and to expose its surrounding wall. The excavation of SAg 15.1 removed some 1590 m³ of soil and stone. In total, 127 distinct contexts were identified and opened in-phase and in conjunction with the contexts identified in SAg 13.2 to reach an overall total of 191 contexts. Excavation uncovered four phases of a medieval and post-medieval settlement built over the filled-in pool and extending across the entirety of the trench (Figs. 2-4). A clear and important historical conclusion seems to be that this area was part of medieval Geyre, which turns out to have been a considerably larger settlement than was thought before. The settlement was not confined to the theatre hill alone. The season’s finds consist of 206 marble fragments, 76 coins, and 317 miscellaneous small finds, and include some high-quality early Ottoman ceramics.

In the south-western part of the trench a large area of rubble was exposed south of the pool wall, reminiscent of the rubble spread excavated in 2013 directly over the pool wall but separated from it by c. 15 cm of earth. Within the rubble spread were found a fragment of the upper arm of a life-sized cuirassed statue (inv. 15-78), and a fragment of Diocletian’s Edict on Maximum Prices (inv. 15-63, Fig. 6), containing the beginning of lines 20–29 of chapter 12, dealing with furniture and wooden items. This joins, or nearly joins, three fragments of the same lines found in 1969, 1970, and 1971. The Edict was originally inscribed on the front of the Civil Basilica, so that this fragment had moved some distance by the time it was deposited in the rubble dump. The rubble incorporates within it an east-west wall, which may represent the earliest medieval activity following the post-destruction clean-up. The other phases of medieval and post-medieval settlement overlie or cut the rubble deposit.
Trench SAg 15.2 (Fig. 7). Trench 15.2 combined the areas of trenches 12.2 and the northern part of 13.1. It was focused on the Roman imperial and late antique ground levels and investigated features cut into them. In the western part, extensive trowelling of the imperial-period ground surface showed that the planting trenches investigated in 2012 belong in fact to a second phase, and were re-cut into earlier, wider, planting trenches filled with clay, and laid over a layer of rubble at the base. A coin of Leo I (AD 457–474) was found within the fill of the later, southern, planting trench, showing that it was indeed late antique.

Further investigation and excavation of the late antique dumped fill around the pool revealed a circular pit, probably for planting a tree, as well as smaller holes probably for bushes or smaller plants. These features may represent plantings to be associated with the restoration project in the South Agora of the fifth-century local notable Ampelios – at least in its final form. A rectangular stone-lined well was excavated in this area, and was filled with a quantity of Ottoman pottery of the second half of the fifteenth century, including much of a glazed plate and a green-glazed jug. This well provides further evidence, in addition to the square building found in trench 12.1 in 2012, for the extension of the medieval and later settlement of Geyre this far west across the South Agora.

Documentation. Architectural documentation was pursued as follows. The state plan of the surrounding porticoes was continued with the hand-drawing of the west stoa and half of the south stoa (Amrita Ghosh). The full elevation drawing of the 20m-tall retaining wall of the Theatre (Fig. 8), begun in 2014, was also completed (Lindsay Wong). And drone survey and photogrammetry were carried out by Seth Dugger and Harry Mark.

2. EXCAVATION: TETRAPYLON STREET (Figs. 9-19)
The Tetrapylon Street runs north-south from the Tetrapylon to the Propylon of the Sebasteion. Its excavation, begun in 2008, is designed eventually to open this part of the street for visitors, to help control the ground water in this area, and to bring new information about the history of late antique, Byzantine, Seljuk, and Ottoman Aphrodisias. Work in 2015 was concentrated in two areas: (1) between the Propylon and the Agora Gate, and (2) between the tall masonry structure on the west side of the street (‘Niche Building’) and the Sebasteion’s Propylon (Fig. 9). Major finds included several remarkable pieces of high-quality marble statuary.

With a new grant from the Headley Trust, work began on the deep overburden over the street immediately south of the Propylon of the Sebastion (Figs. 10-11). The aim is to extend the street excavation to the south in order to connect the street with the back of the Agora Gate at the original Roman level, both to enhance the visitor circulation in the site and to investigate a key urban hub in the city plan. Many large blocks from the Agora Gate had been stored here in the 1980s, and these had first to be removed by crane to a newly arranged block field. The upper parts of the overburden were then removed. Finds here were entirely modern (shoes, shovels, medicine bottles, oil filter for tractor) and demonstrated that the high ground level in this area is due to the dumping of earth from the 1980s excavation of the Agora Gate, as well as to a rise in the ancient ground level and in the course of the street. The tall and extensive old spoil heap was removed to near the earlier level.

North of the Propylon, excavation continued to examine the late Roman street and its overlying post-antique structures (Figs. 9 and 13). One large trench was laid out (NAve 15.1), comprising the area between the so-called Niche Building to the north and the Propylon of the Sebasteion to the south. The aims were to excavate to the level of the Roman paving, to clarify the function of the Niche Building, and to study the street’s chronology from the pottery and coin finds. Trench NAve 15.1 was a continuation of NAve 14.1, with the addition of the area east of the Niche Building, which was partially excavated in 2013 (NAve 13.3). The trench measured 10.6 m E-W and 51.5 m N-S. In addition to stauatory finds, considerable advances were made in understanding the chronology and relative phasing of the street area. The excavation was supervised by Alexander Sokolicek with Blake Coleman and Doğuç Coşar.

Roman imperial phase. The first attested buildings in the street area were the Propylon of the Sebasteion, built in the AD 20s, and the Niche Building, probably erected in the same period by one Myon Eusebes. The Niche Building was connected with a wall that extends 40.5 m to the south, to a well-built corner. This west street-wall was constructed in a similar ‘petit appareil’ technique to that of the Niche Building. The modern spoil heap (of the 1980s) behind the Niche Building was removed, and excavation revealed its direct connection with the adjoining street-wall. It also revealed (1.00 m
south of the south-east corner of the Niche Building) the top of a brick arch integrated into the west wall, which however was too low (1.20 m) to have been an access point. At a higher level behind the arch, a niche, 2.30 x 4.00 m, opened to the west with remains of revetment and fragments of tubuli in front of its south wall, both likely in situ. Investigation stopped at the level of the revetment and tubuli. They indicated a wall-heating system and so part of a bath complex, which should probably be identified with the Gerousian Baths (baths for the Council of Elders) mentioned on the statue base for Myon Eusebes. The base belonged in the front of the Niche Building, which was also surely part of the Gerousian Baths, probably its north-east corner.

During cleaning behind the Niche Building, the head of an over-lifesize female statue was found (inv. 15-30, Fig. 12). The head was lying face down (top of head to north) in a pile of stones, placed next to the south-west corner of the Niche Building. It seems to have been deposited here with stones and rubble after the collapse of the Gerousian Baths. The head has a strong dynamic turn and wears a veil and a stephanē (divine crown). Its nose was repaired in antiquity with two small iron dowels in a prepared surface.

It is now clear that the well preserved door-frame (visible in Fig. 13) embedded in the west street-wall 15 m south of the Niche Building, discovered in 2013, belonged to the same structure to be identified with the Gerousian Baths – or rather ‘Gerousian Complex’, as it may also have comprised other parts, such as a palaestra. This complex measured about 30 x 40 m and was defined by the North Agora in the west, by the niche building in the northeast, and by the petit appareil street-wall in the east. The south-western corner of this area was partially excavated in 2000 and 2004, when a mosaic floor and on top of it a marble floor were uncovered. These floors, though late antique in date, lay probably at the southern limit of this ‘Gerousian Complex’.

Seventh-century destruction. Its east colonnade was the most imposing part of the Tetrapylon Street. Finds in 2012 and 2013 suggested a construction date of c. AD 400. The colonnade’s destruction goes with that of the street-wall on the west side of the street. The impressive surviving collapse of both was surely the result of earthquake(s) and conflagration. More of this collapse was excavated in 2015. The brick collapses are from a brick façade of the west street-wall as well as from the arched construction in the upper storey of the east colonnade. Examination of coins from 2015 and the previous years by A. Tolga Tek showed (1) that the coin hoard found in the colonnade in 2011 dates to AD 616/617, and (2) that coins under or in the destruction layer date to AD 610/611. These dates indicate that the colonnade was destroyed in the years between AD 610/11 and AD 617 – whether or not as a result of violent external force (Sasanian?) is not yet clear.

Ninth-century statue deposits. Above the destruction layer, there were two later dirt-and-gravel roads. The later road was part of a re-organisation of the street area dated by associated pottery to the ninth century. A 40-m wall ran north-south on the east side of the trench, and a small high-quality himation statue (inv. 15-69, Figs. 13-15) was found here face down, feet to south, built into its foundations at the southern end of the wall. It represents a young boy wearing chiton and himation and is of mid-imperial date.

Three rectangular structures or platforms of different sizes were built at the level of the ninth-century re-organisation of the area, against the west street-wall at the south end of the trench. The second or middle structure was excavated in 2012 and employed two headless late-antique statues in its foundations, one a himation statue (inv. 12-09), the other a togatus (inv. 12-10). The southern structure (3 x 2.5 m), excavated in 2015, was built of spolia and rubble. Its south wall was found to contain part of a column from the Propylon of the Sebasteion and a statue base with an inscription for Tiberius Caesar (Gemellus), son of Drusus, son of the emperor Tiberius (inv. 15-70, Fig. 30). Its form and text show that it was originally part of the statuary displayed on the Propylon. The interior of the structure was filled with bricks, mortar, stones, and marble. A lead seal (C2015-11), probably of the ninth century, was found here.

In the centre of the platform there was a large column (H: 2.25 m) from the Propylon, and on either side of the column two high-quality late antique marble portrait heads were found, used as rubble filling. One head, found face down, head to south, on the west side of the column represents a bearded male with a characteristic Theodosian hairstyle (inv. 15-31, Fig. 16). The other head, found face up, head to south, was an unusual portrait of a lean-faced man with a goatee-style beard (inv. 15-32, Fig. 17-18). Both portraits are of c. AD 400. The lean-faced portrait head (inv. 15-32) fits break-to-break on the headless himation statue (inv. 12-09) found in 2012 about 3 m to the north in the
second of the three rectangular platform structures (Fig. 19). This new portrait head with its full body is a striking and unusual addition to the late antique statuary of Aphrodisias. Further north, immediately south of a neat Byzantine hydraulic structure built against the west street-wall, excavation in the same layer revealed the lower part of a large high-quality statuette of a draped female figure (inv. 15-33).

These spolia structures built of statuary and material from the Sebasteion and its Propylon suggest that the ninth century was a period of considerable urban refurbishment. The street was cleared of debris, and the spolia structures were of a relatively high-quality building technique: they indicate a time when attempts to regain living and working space were feasible.

**Documentation.** A new state plan of the part of the street immediately south of the Tetrapylon was drawn (Pennie Liu). Drawings of the Niche Building and a state plan of the 2015 trench were completed, and an overall state plan of the street from the Tetrapylon to the Sebasteion Propylon was assembled from drawings made in the period 2008-2015 (Seth Dugger).

3. ANASTYLOSIS: SEBASTEION PROPYLON (Figs. 20-21)
Architectural restoration, under the direction of Thomas Kaefer and Gerhard Paul, concentrated on anastylosis of the Propylon at the Sebasteion’s west end, begun in 2012. Work focused in 2015 on completing the planned anastylosis of the first, Ionic storey of the structure. The project was sponsored by the J.M. Kaplan Fund. The same procedure was followed first on the south aedicula and then on the north aedicula. The temporary trial restoration of 2014 was dismantled so that the stylobates, columns, and entablatures could be assembled in their correct positions. First, the stylobates were fixed, then the column bases adjusted and fixed in position with stainless steel dowels in line with static calculations. The elements above – column drums, capitals, architrave-friezes – were then mounted in their correct positions. Any parts of the architrave-friezes that were missing at load-bearing points were added in artificial stone and reinforced with stainless steel. These added parts were carved by hand. The cornice layer was also mounted but requires further documentation before fixing. The first physical assembly of all parts of the Propylon’s first storey is now complete (Figs. 20-21).

4. SITE CONSERVATION: HADRIANIC BATHS & THEATRE (Figs. 22-27)
Conservation, restoration, and site presentation projects were supervised by Thomas Kaefer, Gerhard Paul, and Trevor Proudfoot in the Hadrianic Baths and in the Theatre.

**Hadrianic Baths.** The major project in the Hadrianic Baths, begun in 2010, was pursued with conservation and restoration work on the main fabric of the complex. The project is funded by the World Monuments Fund and the Friends of Aphrodisias Trust in London. Conservation of the walls, floors, and hypocausts was concentrated in the great central hot room of the complex, the **caldarium** (Room 4). Work focused on the east end of the chamber and its wide pool (Fig. 22). The pool was cleared of loose and fallen masonry, and revetment panels from the bench-style steps into the pool were relocated and fragments re-joined by bonding with weatherproof epoxy resin and small stainless steel dowels. The joints of the paving in the pool base were cleaned and re-pointed (Fig. 23). Exposed plain brick and mortar that lay behind the revetment were re-pointed, and where large areas of old screed-mortar were crumbling, they were covered with a partial protective coating of pink brick dust and lime mortars. Some loose areas of the main marble flooring of the room were re-laid on a new brick-dust screed. Old screed lost beneath the pavings was repaired. Some of the ledger stones of inferior schist that spanned the hypocaust columns were collapsing and were temporarily supported with screw-jacks. The main part of Room 4 was cleared of old accumulated earth infill in order to expose the brick hypocaust columns. Failing hypocaust columns were repaired with lime mortars and re-pointing.

Four large new information panels were set up in Room 6 to explain the baths and their conservation (Fig. 24). In September, four fully-restored chambers of the baths were opened to the public – Rooms 6, 7, 13, and 14, with views into the restored Rooms 5 and 12. Stainless steel barriers were installed in Room 6 to prevent damage to sensitive parts of the restored floors (Fig. 25). The work was carried out by Nick Barnfield, Merve Bayar, Trevor Proudfoot, and Johanna Skwiercz. Detailed architectural documentation was continued by Arzu Öztürk, and Allyson McDavid completed her doctoral dissertation on the Baths in late antiquity.

**Theatre.** In the Theatre, a major seven-week project was undertaken to remove parts of the
overburden of earth from the upper cavea (auditorium) that was in danger of sliding or ‘slumping’ onto the diazoma (walkway) below (Fig. 26). The projecting overburden was carefully excavated in terraces, and the slope of the theatre hill was graded to an angle of c. 45 degrees. This excavation produced some interesting stray finds, including a high-quality torso of a naked male statuette (inv. 15-68, Fig. 27), an inscribed marble loculus cover for a man called Apphianos (inv. 15-02, Fig. 31), and a small stele with a frontal portrait bust of a veiled woman (inv. 15-01, Fig. 33a). This work was supervised by Ayça Gökdag. A project was also prepared to conserve the retaining wall of the north side of the Theatre and to remove or fix any blocks that may pose a risk of falling into the South Agora below (Fig. 8).

5. PUBLICATION, DOCUMENTATION, OTHER RESEARCH
The program of detailed archaeological, architectural, and site recording begun in 1991 was supervised by Julia Lenaghan, Harry Mark, and Esen Öğüş. The goals remain to record, study, and publish the finds and building complexes uncovered in the excavations of Kenan Erim (1961-1990) and in succeeding years.

Architecture and surveying. Documentation and publication projects were pursued on the following complexes: the Hadrianic Baths (Arzu Öztürk, Allyson McDavid), Bouleuterion (Ursula Quatember), ‘Gaudin’s Fountain’ (Esen Öğüş), the archaic temenos of Aphrodite (Kenan Eren), the Roman and Byzantine phases of the Temple of Aphrodite (James Coulton) (Fig. 28), the South Agora (Andrew Wilson and Benjamin Russell), the Stadium (Katherine Welch and Andrew Leung), the Sebasteion Temple and Propylon (Phil Stinson), and the Triconch Church (Hugh Jeffery) (Fig. 29). The survey coordinates of the site were checked in order to rectify details in the city map (Christian Kurtze).

Inscriptions. A team of epigraphists supervised by Angelos Chaniotis (Takashi Fujii, Masataka Masunaga, and Benjamin Wieland) recorded graffiti, masons’ marks, and fifteen new inscriptions (I 15.1-15), among which the most interesting and most complete are the following: (1) the base for Tiberius Gemellus found in the Tetrapylon Street (inv. 15-70; I 15.1) (Fig. 30); (2) the modest epitaph written on a small loculus slab, found out of context in the Theatre’s upper cavea, of the third or fourth century for a man called ‘Apphianos, also known as Marmaros’ – his nickname indicates he was involved in the local marble industry (I 15.8) (Fig. 31); (3) an inscribed garland sarcophagus of the early third century, re-used in the late third or fourth century, for the burial of an ‘Achilleus ... archigrammateus’, that is ‘chief secretary’, probably of the international association of athletes (Fig. 32); (4) a large pier later inscribed with a Christian prayer that asks ‘Lord Pantokrator God’ to help and protect ‘his servant Philippos’ (I 15.14).

Sculpture. The study of different categories of marble sculpture discovered at the site was pursued with recording and photography of objects in the depots. Publication projects were pursued on the following groups of material: Bouleuterion statues (Christopher Hallett), columnar sarcophagi (Esen Öğüş), and late antique statues (Julia Lenaghan). A new fragment of the figure of Troilos from the Troilos and Achilles group with the blue-grey marble horse from the Basilica was recognised in a large fragment of a dynamic youthful torso in the depots (inv. 86-77).

The rich new statuary finds were assessed and recorded. From excavation of the upper cavea of the Theatre came the very small, high-quality torso of a naked male statuette (H: 6.20 cm, inv. 15-68, Fig. 27) and the battered stele that preserves the relief representation of a veiled female portrait bust emerging from a leaf-calyx (inv. 15-01, Fig. 33a). Finds from the South Agora included fragments of a scroll support with strapped right ankle from late antique togatus (inv. 15-07), in addition to the upper right arm from a cuirassed statue (inv. 15-78) mentioned above. The most important new marble finds came from the Tetrapylon Street, as described earlier: the large head of a female divinity (inv. 15-30, Fig. 12), a headless himation statue of a boy (inv. 15-69, Figs. 14-15), two late antique portrait heads (inv. 15-31 and 15-32, Figs. 16-18). The lower left corner of a new Sebasteion mythological relief from the second storey of the Sebasteion’s South Building with the right ankle and foot of a male figure wearing winged boots (inv. 15-71, Fig. 33b) came from the same context. A lower arm fragment (inv. 15-14), also from the street excavation, was found to join the broken upper left arm of Armenia in the Nero and Armenia relief from the Sebasteion (Fig. 34). The most striking discovery was that one of the new late antique heads (inv. 15-32), a remarkably individual and high-quality portrait, was found to join break-to-break to the headless...
himation statue (inv. 12-09) found nearby in 2012 (Fig. 19).

**Coins.** The initiative to catalogue all the excavation coins from recent years, begun in 2013, was pursued by Ahmet Tolga Tek with Hüseyin Köker. Among 1013 coins studied, the following were identified: 27 Greek, 57 Roman Provincial, 16 Roman Imperial, 11 Gothic (imitations of Roman Imperial coins), 419 Late Roman, 403 Byzantine, and 6 Crusader/European. The Byzantine coin hoard found in 2011, from the North Avenue comprising 338 coins was also studied, and the remaining 241 coins were recorded. This hoard was closed in AD 616/617. The coins and small finds were conserved by Merve Bayar, Federica Divita, Christine Haynes, and Val Munday.

**Ceramics.** Work on Roman and Late Roman ceramics was supervised by Ulrike Outschar, and the project on Seljuk and Ottoman ceramics begun in 2013 was continued by Muradiye Öztaşkıın. About 1.2 tons of ceramics were processed, mainly from classical Ottoman layers in the South Agora. Glazed pottery represented about 30% of the total. The central area of the settlement on top of the pool in the South Agora produced the following highlights: (1) a partly intact vessel of unusual Beylik or classical Ottoman form (14th-16th century) filled with earth that was kept for later archaeobotanical analysis (Fig. 35); (2) large amounts of imported pottery, such as Miletus ware and Iznik ware in substantial numbers of fragments (15th-16th century), including a well-preserved part of an Iznik plate, an imitation of Chinese imports of this period (Fig. 36); (3) a few fragments of opaque green Celadon ware of genuine Chinese manufacture; and (4) some finely-made local painted wares made in local clay, decorated with green or yellow in a dotted style.

**Seminars.** Research results of senior and junior team members were presented and discussed at weekly seminars, on the Sebasteion Propylon, statues from the Bouleuterion, the Triconch Church, the Temple of Aphrodite, the Tetrapsilon Street, and the South Agora.

**STAFF 2015** (Fig. 37)


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