THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE THEATER AT APHRODISIAS IN LATE ANTIQUITY

by

ALLISA K. DIEKMAN

(Under the Direction of Jordan Pickett)

ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the social life of the Theater at Aphrodisias into Late Antiquity. With a focus on the epigraphic record of the city, this thesis examines the original construction of the theater complex, its patronage, and its intended use in order to better understand how these factors translated into a late antique context. Even with shifts in benefaction over time, the importance of acclamations, and the political nature of the theater itself, the theater complex maintained a strong connection to its past. This was made evident through decoration, continued funding and upkeep, and the prolongation of customs.

INDEX WORDS: Classics, Aphrodisias, Theater, Benefaction, Late Antiquity, Acclamations

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ALLISA KATHERINE DIEKMAN

B.A., The Ohio State University, 2018

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2021

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ALLISA KATHERINE DIEKMAN

Major Professor:	Jordan Pickett
Committee:	Christine Albright
	Naomi Norman

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2021

DEDICATION

Κλειόνι

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Literature Review

Much research has been done on theaters and other performance spaces of the ancient world. They have been examined typologically, in details of their construction and distribution, and in regard to performance theory.[1] Classical Greek theater – from Aeschylus to Aristophanes – and Imperial Roman spectacle have been written about extensively.[2] Additional work has also been done on performance politics, the sporting factions in Byzantium, theaters of Western Roman provinces, and the lives of performers.[3] However, less work has been done on the functionality of these spaces within late antique provincial cities of the Roman East. Although these performance spaces were standardized architecturally, there is evidence of local variation in use over time and in the longevity of their use. Regional studies of theaters in the Roman East typically do not go far beyond the Imperial period and do not offer an in-depth look at

[1] For a broad architectural study of Roman theaters see: F. Sear, *Roman Theatres: An Architectural Study*, Oxford Monographs on Classical Archaeology (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006). For a history of Roman amphitheaters see K. Welch, *The Roman Amphitheatre from its origins to the Colosseum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and D.L. Bomgardner, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre* (London: Routledge, 2000). For a general look at ancient spectacle see B. Bergmann and C. Kondoleon, *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (Washington DC, 1999).

[2] For a general sourcebook on Roman games see A. Futrell, *The Roman Games: A Sourcebook* (Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

[3] For a look at the politics of the circus factions see A. Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). For information on the lives of performers see P. Easterling and E. Hall (eds.), *Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For a look at select theaters in the Roman West see T. Wilmott, *Roman Amphitheaters and* Spectacula: *a 21st-Century Perspective: Papers from an International Conference Held at Chester, 16th-18th February, 2007* (Archaeopress: British Archaeological Reports, 2009).

social relations, including funding, patronage, and societal and religious changes.[4] Therefore, a look at the social life of the theater in the late antique province city of Aphrodisias will be a helpful addition to this field of study.

Due to Aphrodisias' availability of publications and relevant history of research, the site provides a suitable sample for better understanding the social life of its theater. However, it is important to remember that, due to variation in levels of building conversion, maintenance, and spoliation due to access to materials, the privatization of sponsorship, individual city wealth, natural disasters, geography/location, the individual incorporation of Christianity, and more intangible factors (e.g. patronage and local preferences), Aphrodisias cannot represent all theaters in Asia Minor as a whole. Rather, the site provides one important case study towards a more extensive look at theaters in the region.

Due to Aphrodisias' long history of visitors and excavators, much has been published about the site. Its sizable epigraphic record, city walls, and monuments have provided visitors since the eighteenth century with a wealth of information and, in return, they provided drawings and records. The first official excavations ran from 1904-5 and were directed by Frenchmen Paul Gaudin and Gustave Mendel.[5] This excavation brought to light various architectural finds and portrait statues, primarily from the Temple of Aphrodite and the Hadrianic Baths.[6] Following this was a short excavation by another

[4] For an overview of theaters in the Roman East see H. Dodge, "Amphitheatres in the Roman East", in *Roman Amphitheaters and Spectacula: a 21st-Century Perspective: Papers from an International Conference Held at Chester, 16th-18th February, 2007*, ed. T. Wilmott (Archaeopress: British Archaeological Reports, 2009).
[5] "Early Exploration," Aphrodisias Excavations, University of Oxford, 2019, http://aphrodisias.classics.ox.ac.uk/exploration.html.
[6] Ibid.

French team, directed by André Boulanger, in 1913. Later, an Italian team, directed by G. Jacopi also came for a short season in 1937.[7]

It was not until 1961 that New York University's Kenan T. Erim began the most recent and continuous excavations of the site. Erim, who worked at Aphrodisias from 1961 until his death in 1990, concentrated on the central areas of the city, including the Theater, the South Agora, the Bouleuterion, the Basilica, the Sebasteion, and the aforementioned Temple of Aphrodite. The Aphrodisias Museum, built in 1979, houses many finds from these sites. The project is currently led by R.R.R. Smith of Oxford University and Katherine Welch of the NYU Institute of Fine Arts.[8] Current fieldwork focuses on the "anastylosis in the Sebasteion, conservation in the Hadrianic Baths, and excavation in the South Agora and Tetrapylon Street", the latter of which is intended to "connect these two important urban zones and to create a new visitor route through the centre of ancient Aphrodisias".[9]

The Aphrodisias Excavations since 1961 have produced a large volume of publications relating to the site, including nearly yearly excavation reports, five volumes of *Aphrodisias Papers*, ten volumes of *Aphrodisias Monographs*, various dissertations, and a plethora of articles relating to topics like pottery, numismatics, sculpture, epigraphy, etc. In addition, the theater more specifically has been featured in various publications, including *Aphrodisias Monograph VIII* (De Chaisemartin and Theodorescu), *Aphrodisias Papers 2* (edited by Smith and Erim), *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite* (Erim), and "Urbanism in Western Asia Minor" (Ratté), among others.

[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

There are over 1500 inscriptions from Aphrodisias with over 200 inscriptions related to the theater area and its patrons. These inscriptions are easily accessed via the Inscriptions of Aphrodisias website, the Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity website, and Charlotte Roueché's publications, all of which provide remarkable information related to the epigraphic evidence from the city. Among the primary scholarship from Aphrodisias relating to its epigraphic evidence are *Aphrodisias and Rome* (Reynolds), *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* (Roueché), and "Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire" (Roueché), all of which have been especially helpful in the research for this thesis.

Questions and Methods

One way to understand the social life of theaters in Late Antiquity and their function as urban institutions is to look at changing urban environments. This includes discussions of the physical place of theaters within the fabric of Roman cities, the interaction between local elites and spectacle, and if/how these spaces were being maintained. Therefore, when examining the Theater at Aphrodisias, it will first be necessary to analyze the original Roman context for these structures. This process will involve examining: 1) the original construction of the site; 2) the original patronage and funding associated with the site; 3) the historical significance of the theater's date of original construction; and 4) the original intended use of the structure. While modern excavations, city plans, and contemporary writings are relevant to the analysis of this performance space, inscriptions will be the principal source for theater use throughout this thesis. Although epigraphic evidence for the social life of the theater will be clearer and more numerous for the Imperial period, their subsequent modes of reuse and display will also be evaluated. The modes in which inscriptions were (or were not) reused reveal

the continuing (or diminishing) importance of the local elites that were investing in the theater.

Therefore, this thesis will then examine how these earlier Roman contexts translated into Late Antiquity. This will be done by tracking the modification, abandonment, or maintenance of the theater and its related inscriptions, and by reexamining the questions above, i.e.: 1) architectural modifications to the site; 2) how Late Antique patronage and funding has/has not changed from earlier periods; 3) consideration of important societal and religious changes during Late Antiquity; and 4) later use of the site (e.g., modifications, maintenance, abandonment, and reuse). Due to the theater's substantial architectural remains and inscriptions, this thesis will use evidence from the Imperial period and Late Antiquity to better understand its social life. In addition to the ideas mentioned above, the primary question posed in this thesis concerns the relationship between money and theater use, i.e., who was paying and why? This question will involve an evaluation of the change in patterns of investment or investors over time. While inscriptions, statuary, and other forms of physical evidence in general will be highly relevant to this study, there are certain archeological elements and remains that will be especially helpful. At Aphrodisias, this includes seating fragments, the Archive Wall, and the city wall adaptations – among various other statues and epigraphic evidence.

This thesis will look at the original construction of the site, its patronage, and its intended use in order to better understand how these contexts translated into Late Antiquity. It will look at the physical changes that were taking place at this space over time, the political and religious changes that were taking place, and, most importantly,

how the elite interacted with this space, i.e. looking at who funded events and construction at the theater, and whether these types of elites persevered into Late Antiquity. Additionally, examining the afterlife of this building and how it was altered throughout Late Antiquity helps in understanding its later funding and usage, and its importance to the city. I will use epigraphic evidence from Aphrodisias to better understand how performance spaces of the late antique Roman East acted in their roles as social centers with distinct social lives. More specifically, this thesis will discuss the continuity present at the site over time and the role that benefaction, acclamation, and propaganda played in the city's identity.

Introduction to Aphrodisias

Located in modern southwestern Turkey, the ancient city of Aphrodisias (Fig. 1) flourished throughout the Roman period as a center of religion and art – due to its sanctuary of Aphrodite and renowned marble sculptors – and largely remained as such until the general abandonment of the city in the early seventh century.[10] Following the death of Alexander in 323 BC and subsequent disputes over the control of the empire, western Anatolia was under the control of the Seleucid dynasty until the early second century BC. At this time, the region fell under the control of the Attalids of Pergamon. The final Attalid king, Attalos III, bequeathed his kingdom – which included Caria – to the Romans upon his death in 133 BC.[11] Aphrodisias had already been founded in the second century BC as a Greek city-state; it was the site of a pre-existing sanctuary of Aphrodite which had already been attracting worshippers from at least the sixth century

[10] C. Ratté and R. R. R. Smith, "Archaeological Research at Aphrodisias in Caria, 2002-2005", in *American Journal of Archaeology* 112, no. 4 (2008): 723.
[11] K.T. Erim, *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1986), 18.

BC.[12] Although the site was originally centered on a local fertility goddess, Aphrodite began to be identified with the cult center during the Hellenistic period. A temple was built in first century BC in the location of the earlier sanctuary as the cult site drew in more visitors and the sanctuary was granted the status of asylum.[13] As the city grew, it centered around the sanctuary site and adjacent agora – a typical "Ionian" agora, "very similar to the plans of other Late Classical and Hellenistic cities in the Meander valley region".[14] The temple remained central to the city until its alteration in the fifth century into a Christian basilica.

Another one of the primary features well-represented in Aphrodisias' archaeological record was its large-scale production of white marble statuary and inscriptions. Due to various quarries being located nearby and – consequently – a large number of marble craftsmen, Aphrodisias' "local sculpture workshops continued to flourish well into Late Antiquity, and the scale and quality of the sculpture found at Aphrodisias exceed that of other urban sites across the Mediterranean".[15] This access to large amounts of white marble provided the city with money and resources and led to a very productive sculptural school.

For these reasons, Aphrodisias was already a well-known and wealthy city. However, the city received additional merit when – due to his special relationship with the city and its main benefactor, Zoilos – Augustus provided Aphrodisias with the special

[12] C. Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity," in *Urbanism in Western Asia Minor: New Studies on Aphrodisias, Ephesos, Hierapolis, Pergamon, Perge, and Xanthos*, ed. D. Parrish (Portsmouth, RI: *Journal of Roman Archaeology* Supplement 45, 2001), 119.
[13] L.R. Brody, "The Cult of Aphrodite at Aphrodisias in Caria," *Kernos* 14 (2001): 94.
[14] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity," 119.
[15] L. Long, "Marble at Aphrodisias: The Regional Marble Quarries," in *Aphrodisias Regional Survey: Special Studies*, ed. C. Ratté and P. De Staebler (Aphrodisias Final Reports: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2012), 193.

privilege of immunity from imperial taxation. As a result of this, the city was involved with many large-scale building projects. Aphrodisias not only had the typical features of a Roman city – including a Bouleuterion, baths complexes, fountains, houses, and agoras – it also was the home of a grand theater, large stadium, sculptors' workshop, and the Tetrastoon. The city provides modern scholars and archaeologists with a plethora of information due to the well-preserved nature of its buildings.

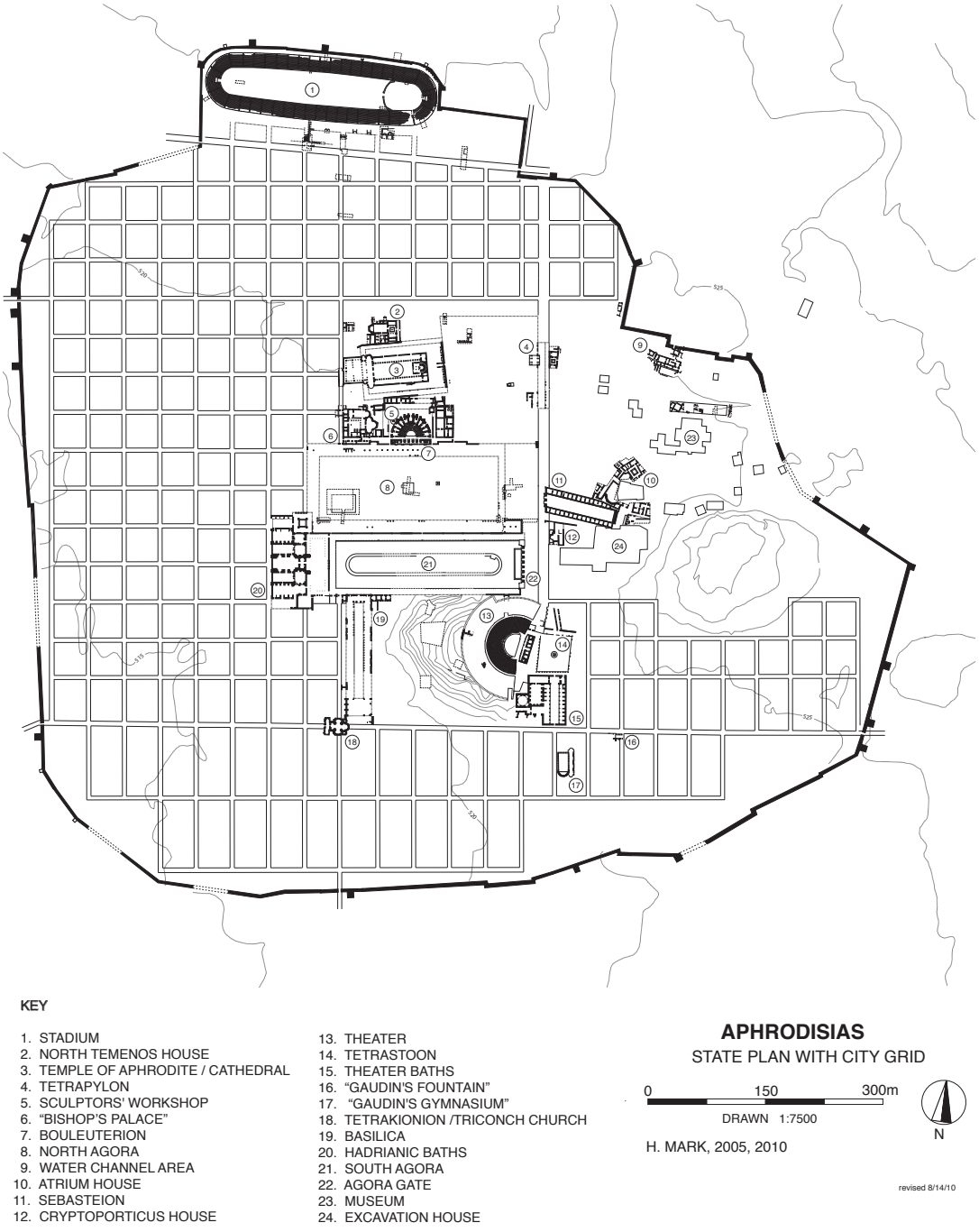

Fig. 1. City plan of Aphrodisias with grid. Mark 2010.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE THEATER

Eric Csapo and Peter Wilson described the ancient theater as "a tool of diplomacy and propaganda" – a description especially applicable to the Theater at Aphrodisias, which throughout the centuries not only housed dramatic performances and athletic competitions, but was also a center of civic and political life.[16] The space was used for congregation, entertainment, and the display of civic identity. While the ways in which the Aphrodisians interacted with their past did shift over time, the public memory of the city nevertheless remained central to the relationship between Theater and Demos.

The Theater at Aphrodisias was originally constructed in the late first century BC in the south-central part of the city below the south agora (Fig. 2).[17] Standard in form, the theater included a semicircular *cavea* surrounding a stage at the front. Although it was initially intended as a cultural and civic center, the building was altered in the mid- to late-second century AD to accommodate athletic competitions and gladiatorial games via the incorporation of "a deep orchestra and a tall podium wall" (Fig. 3).[18] Therefore, it became a location for not only musical and theatrical performances – including mimes, pantomimes, acrobats, tight-rope walkers, and other such performers – but also for

[16] E. Csapo and P. Wilson, *A Social and Economic History of the Theatre to 300 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 727.
[17] Erim, *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite*, 79.
[18] K.T. Erim and R.R.R. Smith, "Sculpture from the Theatre: A Preliminary Report," in *Aphrodisias Papers 2: The Theatre, A Sculptor's Workshop, Philosophers, and Coin-Types*, eds. R.R.R. Smith and K.T. Erim (Ann Arbor, MI: *Journal of Roman Archaeology* Supplement 2, 1991), 86.

gladiatorial combats and beast hunts.[19] It also seems to have been an important place of assembly for the city's citizens.[20] In addition, a bath complex was constructed to the southeast of the theater around the same time.[21] Referred to as the Theater Baths, this was a large public bath complex that included a caldarium, a vaulted hall, a frigidarium, and a basilical hall. It was connected to the theater by the Tetrastoon, a colonnaded square paved with marble (Fig. 4). Originally built in the first or second century AD, the Tetrastoon underwent a grand restoration in the mid-fourth century when we have evidence for a large number of portrait statues being housed there. These modifications, in addition to the political nature of the space, made the theater a multifaceted center of Aphrodisian society for centuries (Fig. 5). Although architectural, epigraphical, and sculptural elements of the building were spoliated in the mid-fourth century to aid in the construction of a city wall, the theater remained in use until at least the seventh century.[22] After the theater was damaged in the seventh century, the stage-building was incorporated into a spoliated Byzantine fortification wall and was no longer used for its previous purposes.[23]

The civic identity of Aphrodisias was of great importance to its citizens and was promoted by a sense of continuity with the past. For example, the Aphrodisians chose to highlight their longstanding relationship with Rome and the emperors in order to demonstrate their political significance. At the theater, various dedications and statues

[19] C. Roueché, *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias in the Roman and Late Roman Periods with Appendix IV by Nathalie de Chaisemartin: A Study Based on Inscriptions from the Current Excavations at Aphrodisias in Caria* (London: *Journal of Roman Studies* Monograph 6, 1993), 36-7.
[20] Idem 1.
[21] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity," 121.
[22] Erim, *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite*, 52.
[23] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 139.

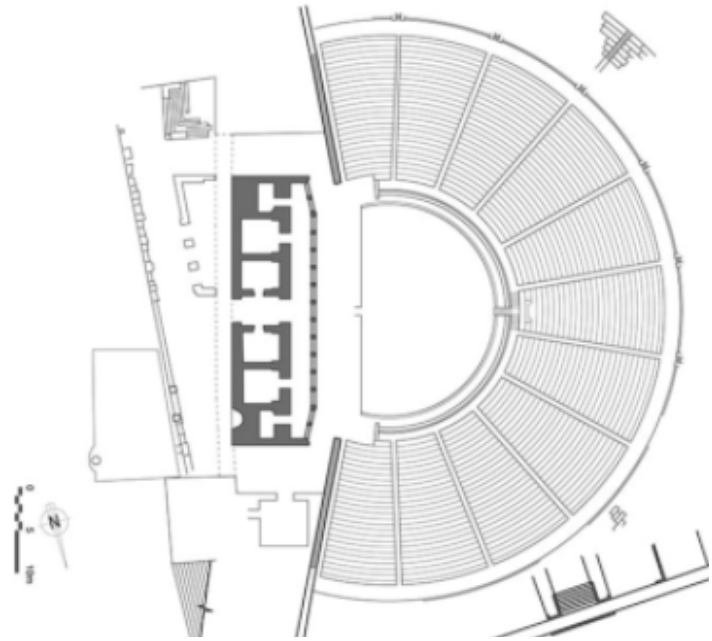

Fig. 2. Plan of the theater. http://aphrodisias.classics.ox.ac.uk/theatre.html.

Fig. 3. Theater during excavation. Erim and Smith 1991.

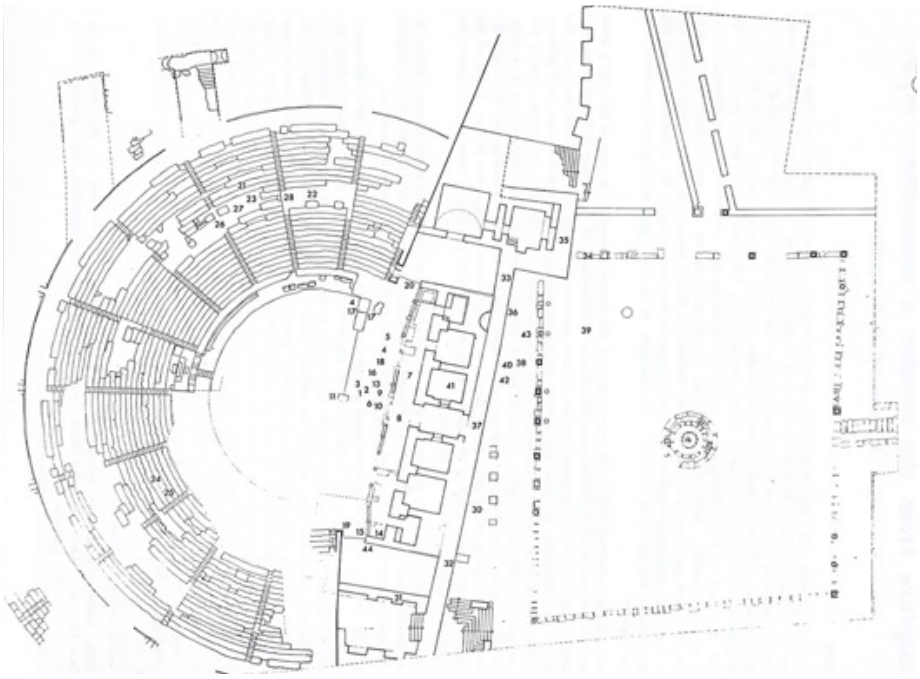

Fig. 4. Plan of the theater, with Tetrastoon. Erim and Smith 1991.

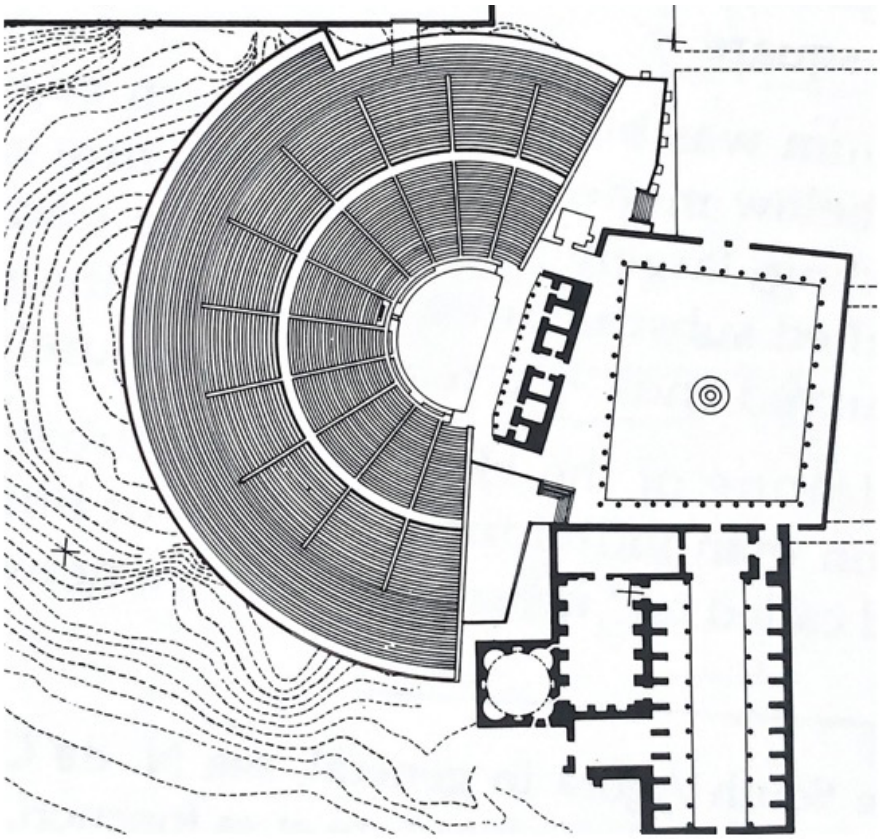

Fig. 5. Plan of the Tetrastoon and bath complex. Ratté 2001.

had – for centuries – alluded to their imperial connection, but it was not until the creation of the Archive Wall in the third century that this idea came to full fruition. The propagandic nature of the theater reached not only the local citizens who frequented the theater for performances, athletic competitions, and civic assemblies, but also the plethora of people from all over Asia Minor who visited Aphrodisias' theater for important festivals.

Based on epigraphic evidence, the Archive Wall – located on the north wall of the stage-building – was inscribed in the early- to mid-third century AD (Fig. 6).[24] This wall showcased the "decrees, treaties, laws, and privileges of which they were particularly proud" – with some dating back to the Hellenistic period – as well as many letters from emperors from the first to third centuries AD.[25] Although the current remains of the Archive Wall are only a fragment of what was originally published there, the current record includes various letters addressed primarily to Aphrodisias (and Plarasa/Aphrodisias), as well as the senatorial decree, the triumviral decree, and extracts from awards given to the sympolity. Among the letters not addressed to the city, there are three imperial letters addressed to the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, and Samos (from Octavian and Trajan), as well as a letter from Octavian to a man named Stephanos and a letter from Stephanos to the province of Plarasa/Aphrodisias. The extant imperial letters addressed to Aphrodisias were sent by Hadrian, Commodus, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Severus Alexander, and Gordian III, all attesting to the positive relationship

[24] For debate over the dates of inscription, see J. Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome: Documents from the Excavation of the Theatre at Aphrodisias Conducted by Professor Kenan T. Erim, Together with Some Related Texts*, (London: *Journal of Roman Studies* Monograph 1, 1982), 36-37.
[25] Erim, *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite*, 1.

between Aphrodisias and the Roman Imperial government.[26] Visitors to the theater would have viewed these texts and been aware of the special status the city had with Rome. These transcriptions, in addition to other features, allowed Aphrodisias to accept the shift from local elite benefactors to gubernatorial benefactors by maintaining and promoting their established relationship with Rome. The notion of continuity then persisted in the following centuries, although in a different manner: in Late Antiquity, we see a return to benefaction by leading civic fathers and the maintenance of funds for theater building-projects.[27]

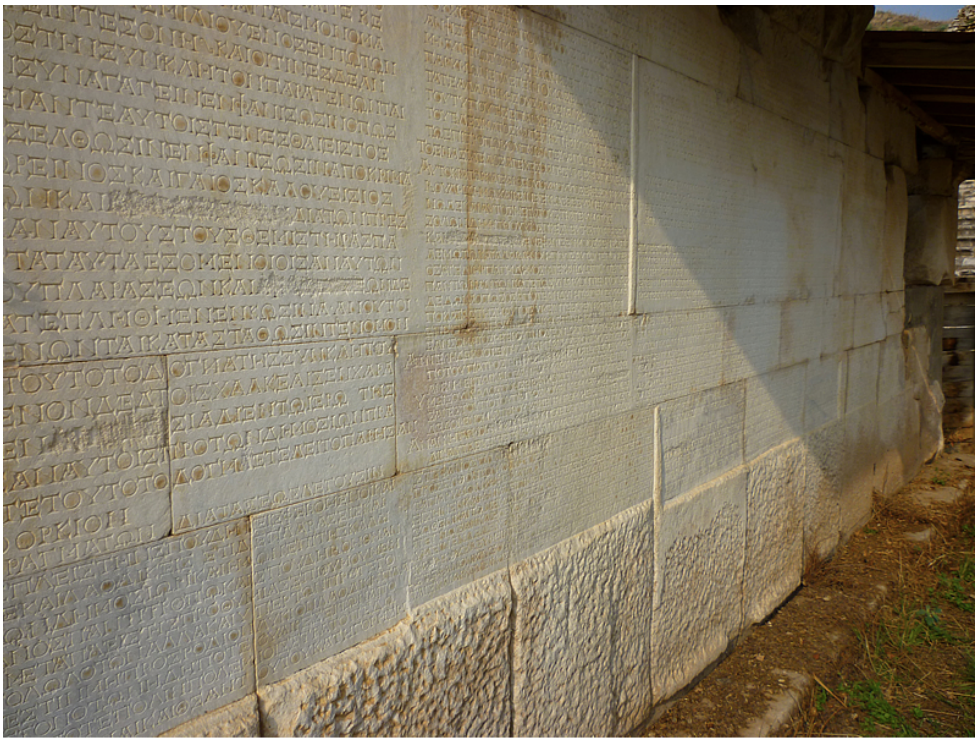

Fig. 6. Archive Wall. http://aphrodisias.classics.ox.ac.uk/archivewall.html.

[26] Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome*, 37.
[27] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 145.

Roman Beginnings

C. Julius Zoilos, a freedman of Octavian and ten-times *stephanephoros* of Aphrodisias who was active in the 30s BC, is credited in two inscriptions with the initial construction of the *logeion* and the *proskenion* of the stage-building.[28] As *stephanephoros*, Zoilos would have contributed large sums of money to the feasts and festivals of the city through his role as a civic patron and the construction of the theater highlights this relationship between civic activities and local entertainment. In addition to these contributions, this prominent local benefactor is credited with work related to the Agora and the Temple of Aphrodite.[29] These three structures – the triple-storeyed theater, the double-colonnaded agora, and the newly constructed Temple of Aphrodite – made up the central buildings of city at this time. This impressive building program was likely the result of "Aphrodisias's support of Rome in the Roman civil wars and of Zoilos's personal connections with Octavian" and, therefore, Zoilos' name, dedications, and even his statue – all visible to visitors of the theater – would have called-to-mind the history the space had with the Roman Empire.[30]

Following the assassination of Caesar and apparent invasion of the territory by his assassins, Aphrodisias' positive ties to Rome were later re-established by Octavian/Augustus, most likely in large part due to the influence of Zoilos.[31] In one letter, Octavian refers to his "affection for [his] friend Zoilos" and the free status he has granted the city.[32] Additional inscriptions from the Archive Wall – including a triumviral

[28] *IAph2007* 8.1.i and *IAph2007* 8.5.
[29] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 119.
[30] Ibid.
[31] For the apparent invasion of the city's region at this time, see Erim, *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite*, 29.
[32] *IAph2007* 8.29.

decree, a *senatus consultum*, a treaty, and a law – reveal that Octavian granted the city special privileges: freedom, the status as a non-taxable entity, and "increased asylum rights of inviolability in Aphrodite's sanctuary".[33] Interestingly, Octavian also describes Aphrodisias thus: the "one city I have taken for mine out of all Asia".[34] Clearly, the city had special ties to the imperial family, a feature the Aphrodisians highlighted to theater visitors in perpetuity by carving the transcripts on the north wall of the stage building.

This relationship between Aphrodisias (and its citizens) and the Empire is again apparent in Zoilos' construction of the Temple of Aphrodite. Although the sanctuary had been attracting visitors for centuries, a new temple was built on the sanctuary site during the first century BC under the financial backing of Zoilos:

> Γάϊος Ἰούλιος Ζώ[ι]λος ὁ ἱερεὺς θε̣ο̣ῦ Ἀφροδείτη[ς]
> ν. σωτὴρ καὶ εὐεργέτης τῆς πατρίδος ν. τὸ ἱερὸν Ἀφροδε̣ίτῃ
>
> C. Julius Zoilos, priest of the god Aphrodite, saviour and benefactor of his country (?gave) he sanctuary to Aphrodite.[35]

The site of the sanctuary (and temple) was then granted asylum status by Octavian in 39 BC via the *senatus consultum de Aphrodisiensibus*, as found on the Archive Wall and as mentioned above. Notably, this area of the city was central to Aphrodisias' identity as a sanctuary of Aphrodite and as a source of the city's prosperity. And, it is worth remembering that the *gens* Julia claimed direct descent from Venus, the Roman equivalent of Aphrodite; the connections between Aphrodisias and the imperial family were thus manifold. The temple was later fitted with outer columns during the first

[33] Erim, *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite*, 30-31.
[34] *IAph2007* 8.29.
[35] *IAph2007* 1.2.

century AD and then "enclosed in an elaborate colonnaded court" in the second century AD.[36]

The imperial connections of the theater were furthered by what Erim and Smith argue is an additional allusion to Augustus: a large number of Nike statues found at the theater (Fig. 7). The figures, likely contemporaneous with the constructions of Zoilos, contain three or four pairs of Nikai and seem to "represent the wider political significance of the new theatre façade as a monument to Augustan victory".[37] Due to references to military Victory and Egyptianizing motifs, and the association of victory as an imperial attribute, these statues would have brought further meaning to a building already ripe with cultural and civic meaning (and later, athletic associations). The politicizing of the theater as a space for showcasing imperial victory demonstrates its conception "as a monument with additional contemporary meaning beyond its immediate theatre environment".[38]

Another early benefactor of the theater was a Carian named Aristokles Molossos, whose family was likely active during the Julio-Claudian era, possibly into the Flavian period.[39] Multiple inscriptions from the theater refer to work undertaken by Molossos and his family and indicate several additions, including acroteria, roofing, buttresses, and seating.[40] As a leading patron of the city, Molossos was expected to expend financial resources on the maintenance and construction of important civic buildings. Even after

[36] "Temple of Aphrodite and Church," Aphrodisias Excavations, University of Oxford, 2019, http://aphrodisias.classics.ox.ac.uk/templeofaphrodite.html.
[37] Erim and Smith, "Sculpture from the Theatre", 67.
[38] Idem 79.
[39] J. Reynolds, "Epigraphic Evidence for the Construction of the Theatre: 1st c. B.C. to mid 3rd c. A.D.," in *Aphrodisias Papers 2: The Theatre, A Sculptor's Workshop, Philosophers, and Coin-Types*, eds. R.R.R. Smith and K.T. Erim (Ann Arbor, MI: *Journal of Roman Archaeology* Supplement 2, 1991), 16.
[40] *IAph207* 8.113, 8.112, 8.111, and 8.108.

the death of Aristokles Molossos – who was already "supported in euergetism by Kaikos Papias, his brother, and by Ammia, his wife" – the theater building activities were continued by his adopted son, Hermas.[41] It is, therefore, quite telling that this family donated so generously to the theater; it was clearly an important meeting-place for the citizens of Aphrodisias, making any political allusions all the more significant. As a priest of the deified Augustus at Aphrodisias, inscriptions bearing the name Molossos held political associations outside of a local civic context.

An inscription found in the south-west walls of the city contains a decree of honors for Aristokles Molossos, illuminating his position as priest and noting the distribution of his money into perpetuity.[42] The establishment of a foundation in Molossos' name helps to explain the continued euergetism carried out by his brother, wife, and son even after his death. While this foundation apparently set aside additional funds towards the theater, funds could also be used for less monumental benefactions, such as sacrifices, feasts, shows, and hand-outs.[43] Thus, even when – in Late Antiquity – the construction of these large monuments ceases, it is likely that these smaller forms of benefaction carried on.

However, it was not only imperial associations that were relevant to the social life of the theater. Ti. Claudius Zelos, active in the mid-second century AD, was both a "high priest of the imperial cult and lifelong priest of Aphrodite".[44] His inscription dedicates stage and orchestra modifications "to Aphrodite, Antoninus Pius as emperor, Marcus

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[41] Reynolds, "Epigraphic Evidence for the Construction of the Theatre," 19.
[42] *IAph2007* 12.803.
[43] J. Reynolds, "Honouring Benefactors at Aphrodisias: A New Inscription," in *Aphrodisias Papers 3: The Setting and Quarries, Mythological and Other Sculptural Decoration, Architectural Development, Portico of Tiberius, and Tetrpylon*, eds. C. Roueché and R.R.R. Smith (Ann Arbor, MI: *Journal of Roman Archaeology* Supplement 20, 1996), 122-123.
[44] Sturgeon, "Dedications of Roman Theaters", 421 and *IAph2007* 8.85.i.

Fig. 7a-b. Nike statues from the theater. Erim and Smith 1991.

Aurelius as Caesar, and his beloved country".[45] Additionally, the second century saw alterations by other local benefactors. M. Ulpius Carminius Claudianus, a prosperous man from Attouda, married a woman from an elite Aphrodisian family and renovated the *cavea*.[46] The name of one of his female relatives (a certain Carminia Claudiana) has been

[45] Reynolds, "Epigraphic Evidence for the Construction of the Theatre," 19.
[46] Sturgeon, "Dedications of Roman Theaters", 421.

preserved in an inscribed theater seat.[47] A man named M. Aurelius Menestheus Skopas dedicated his own theater constructions in the same manner as Zelos, "to Aphrodite, the emperor, the imperial house and family, and to his beloved country".[48] Following these inscriptions, there is almost no other epigraphic evidence for theater construction after the third century.

As has been noted, early Imperial benefactors at Aphrodisias saw to multiple large-scale building projects around the city. Zoilos not only funded the 3-tiered stage-building at the theater, but he was also associated with the construction of the Temple of Aphrodite and the double-colonnaded porticoes around the North Agora.[49] After Zoilos until the early third century, other benefactors contributed funds to additional building projects – most notably, the civic basilica and Hadrianic Baths of the South Agora, the Sebasteion, the stadium, and further modifications to the theater.[50] These projects were accompanied by large numbers of inscriptions and statuary, often promoting those wealthy civic patrons who funded the expenses. Due to the free status of the city, the patrons – who mostly held offices in the local bureaucracy – were dedicating their constructions to the emperors with no obligation to do so. This incredible period of building activity was largely the result of the extreme competition between provincial cities, each trying to outdo the others in order to showcase their city's wealth and to attract imperial esteem.

[47] *IAph2007* 8.81.
[48] Reynolds, "Epigraphic Evidence for the Construction of the Theatre," 20 and *IAph2007* 8.115.
[49] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 119.
[50] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 119-121.

Early Third Century to Mid-Fourth Century

Therefore, from its initial construction, we see that the theater possessed symbolic meaning to the Aphrodisians as a political center with connections to Rome. While this connection began with clear allusions to Augustus in a society characterized by civic euergetism, it transformed in subsequent centuries to allow for changing political practices. Through this historic relationship between Rome/the Empire and Aphrodisias, the city was able to accommodate the increasing importance of and be inviting to governors in the provinces. This idea is embodied through the construction of a loggia behind the theater seating during what was likely the late-Roman period.

While the theater already contained rows of *prohedriai*, or "seats of honor", the insertion of a loggia alludes to the increased importance of Roman imperial administration to the city.[51] The loggia was clearly added at a later date than the original construction and likely reflects the appearance of a "new kind of official"; one who held greater political power than the local civic officials and elites.[52] Seating arrangements at performance spaces could represent the social hierarchy of a city; the insertion of this loggia as separate from, and greater than, the *prohedriai* alludes to the recognition of a "new top layer of authority [that] had now become a more or less permanent part of the civic hierarchy".[53] This new role of the government in civic affairs is not only represented at Aphrodisias, but also in the epigraphic records of other cities in western Asia Minor. For example, at Perge, there was a similar increase in honorific inscriptions

[51] Roueché, "Inscriptions and the Later History of the Theatre", 100.
[52] Ibid.
[53] A. Zuiderhoek, "Government Centralization in Late Second and Third Century A.D. Asia Minor: A Working Hypothesis," in *The Classical World* 103, no. 1 (2009): 40.

for imperial officials and decrease in those for local elites that we see at Aphrodisias.[54]

Following the establishment of the province of Caria and Phrygia in the mid-third century, it is possible that Aphrodisias acted as the provincial capital, although it is uncertain. Nevertheless, following the fourth century division of Caria and Phrygia into three separate provinces (Caria, Phrygia Prima, and Phrygia Secunda), Aphrodisias "certainly served as capital of Caria".[55] Therefore, the addition of the loggia to the important seating at the theater signifies not only the implementation of a new power structure, but also the presence of political competition between cities vying for imperial regard. Aphrodisias wanted to make clear its ability to accommodate these officials in what had previously been a primarily civic context; its monumental nature needed to surpass the smaller towns scattered throughout the region.[56]

From the Archive Wall, readers can better understand how this relationship between the city and Rome continued over the following two centuries. As visitors from all over – including delegates from other cities in Asia Minor – came to Aphrodisias for its festivals and spectacles, the civic leaders must have thought it worthwhile to make clear the city's free status and relationship to the imperial capital. Foreign notables might have been introduced to the standing of the city via the wall before taking their seat in a *prohedria* at the theater for spectacles and "gatherings of the citizen body".[57] This would have hopefully impressed the guests and increased their political value.

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[54] Idem 40-41.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 119.
[57] C. Roueché, "Inscriptions and the Later History of the Theatre," in *Aphrodisias Papers 2: The Theatre, A Sculptor's Workshop, Philosophers, and Coin-Types*, eds. R.R.R. Smith and K.T. Erim (Ann Arbor, MI: *Journal of Roman Archaeology* Supplement 2, 1991), 102.

As noted by Christina Kokkinia, a visitor to this area of the theater would have viewed the Archive Wall on their left and a portrait of Aristokles Molossos, who had "donated the theater's marble auditorium many generations earlier", on their right.[58] Further on, there would have been additional statues of earlier local benefactors, including that of Zoilos. Clearly, the involvement of these aristocratic families in the production of their city was not to be obscured. Aphrodisians – especially the descendants of its most extravagant benefactors – were interested in perpetuating Aphrodisias' history and the men who had made it all happen. These deliberate epigraphic and sculptural references to the city's history and splendor reminded the public of Aphrodisias' early Roman connections and of the "good relations [that] were not gained by chance but were instead the result of the efforts of Aphrodisias' worthy citizens".[59] This message was expressed carefully and intentionally, with the overall objective of highlighting Aphrodisias in an honorific context.

Following the intense period of construction up to the third century, the city saw a dramatic decrease in building activity and the accompanying epigraphic record. While there was continued maintenance to the existing monuments from the third century onwards, the only significant building projects were the creation of the city walls, the modifications to the stadium, the conversion of the Temple of Aphrodite into a Christian church, and the Byzantine fortification of the theater hill. Nevertheless, this shift in building practices does not necessarily reveal an overall change in Aphrodisias' prosperity. Rather, it reflects the number of monuments already in place – making further additions unnecessary – as well as periods of instability throughout the region.

[58] C. Kokkinia, "The Design of the 'Archive Wall' at Aphrodisias," in *Tekmeria* 13 (2016): 14.
[59] Kokkinia, "The Design of the 'Archive Wall' at Aphrodisias", 51.

While it is unclear the extent to which the Gothic invasions, rapid succession of short-tenured emperors, and civil wars of the "third century crisis" affected Aphrodisias, it is clear that the resulting Diocletianic reforms did cause a decrease in euergetism and subsequent lack of significant building projects in this period. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, the reforms may have also been the result of the decrease in population after the Antonine Plague of the 160s AD. As Arjan Zuiderhoek argues, the sudden loss in numbers of those who could work, pay rent, and pay taxes negatively impacted the resources of both the government and local elites; this would have resulted in the growth of the central government and its "attempts at direct control of local surpluses and increased exploitation of the non-elite population".[60] In addition, a decline in rents being paid to local elites could mean a parallel decline in their desire to hold offices and perform benefactions.[61] This decrease in large-scale benefaction is clear at Aphrodisias and is evidenced throughout Asia Minor for the third century.[62]

The instability of the third century ultimately led to changes in the administration of Asia Minor, first in the 250s under Valerian and Gallienus, and later via the Diocletianic reforms – which changed the structure of the imperial government, reorganized provincial divisions, and standardized and increased tax rates. Aphrodisias was now likely the capital of the new province of Caria and Phrygia.[63] While this did mean a loss of autonomy dating back to at least the mid-first century AD, it also increased the city's status and political influence and helps explain the shift in patronage

[60] Zuiderhoek, "Government Centralization in Late Second and Third Century A.D. Asia Minor", 39.
[61] Idem 48.
[62] See Zuiderhoek, "Government Centralization in Late Second and Third Century A.D. Asia Minor", 48; and A. Zuiderhoek, *The Politics of Munificence in the Roman Empire: Citizens, Elites, and Benefactors in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), fig. 1.2.
[63] For further discussion of Aphrodisias as provincial capital, see *ALA2004* I.9.

from local civic benefactors to Roman governors. Aphrodisias' provincial status continued in a similar trajectory when, towards the end of the century, it "retained its status as a provincial capital under the Diocletianic settlement".[64] Nevertheless, while the settlement reforms eventually contributed to the city's prestige, the tax reforms hindered the euergetistic efforts of its prominent citizens, leading to an overall decrease in the benefaction of large-scale projects.

More clearly, under Diocletian and the Tetrarchy, a "uniform…procedure for collecting levies" was established to curb the unfair collection of taxes that was taking place.[65] Censuses were taken throughout the Empire and tax rates increased.[66] With these reforms, the fiscal burden of local elites tended to increase, and the levies took away funds and man-power that had previously gone towards large-scale benefactions.[67] Additionally, the need for a more uniform and bureaucratic method of tax-collecting resulted in an enlarged imperial presence in the provinces, which, previously, had enjoyed much more self-government. At Aphrodisias, as in Italy and in certain other provincial cities with a tax-free status, this reform also meant the loss of their "fiscal immunity".[68] The local elites of the city were no longer the ones with the financial means to act as its patrons; rather, the imperial officials that were taking on new governmentally-appointed positions were the ones with the funds necessary to subsidize benefactions.

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[64] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 125.
[65] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 123.
[66] A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: A Social Economic and Administrative Survey Vol. 1* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), 62-4.
[67] Idem 67.
[68] Idem 64.

This decrease is reflected in the epigraphic record from the theater after the mid-third century, with inscriptions picking up again in the mid-fourth century. Only two inscriptions have been found at the theater and its related structures (i.e. the Theater Baths and Tetrastoon) that can be dated to this intermediary period. Both are honorific inscriptions and were found at the theater, itself, however their original locations may differ. The first is fragmentary and refers only to a φίλον τῶν βασιλέων. The plurality seems to point to the Constantinian or Theodosian dynasties, who occasionally ruled in pairs and the lettering dates the fragment to the first half of the fourth century – thus leaning towards a Constantinian date. We do not have any additional text to tell us more about who was receiving the honors or why, however the importance of imperial connections is still apparent.

The second inscription found at the theater from the mid-third to mid-fourth century refers to a statue erected by the Aphrodisians in honor of Cornelia Salonina, wife of the emperor Gallienus (Fig. 8):

[Ἰουλίαν Κορνη]-
λίαν Σαλων[εῖ]-
ναν Σεβαστὴν
vacat
ἡ λαμπροτάτη Ἀ-
φροδεισ[ι]έων πό-
scroll [λις] *scroll*

[?Julia Corne]lia Salonina Augusta. The most splendid city of the Aphrodisians (put up her statue).[69]

This inscription – initially part of a statue base and later altered with a large central hole – was one half of a pair dedicated to the family of the emperors Valerian and Gallienus, under whose rule the provinces of Asia Minor were reorganized in the 250s (Fig. 9):

[69] *ALA2004* 2.

[…]
τὸν ἐπ[ι]φα[νέστα]-
τον Καίσα[ρα]
vacat
ἡ λαμπροτάτη Ἀ-
φροδεισιέων πό-
5 *scroll* λις *scroll*

[…] the most renowned Caesar; the most splendid city of the Aphrodisians (put up his statue).[70]

Due to the known dates of Gallienus' reign and the death of his son, Saloninus, these inscriptions are dated between AD 253-260. Although only the first inscription, dedicated to Cornelia Salonina, was found at the theater, the two statues and their accompanying bases likely stood together at the theater upon their initial erection. The base dedicated to a Caesar was found in the city wall near other spoliated material from the theater. While the first base has a clear honoree, the second base alludes to one of Gallienus' sons – either Valerian II or Saloninus – but the intended honoree cannot be certain.[71] These statues and their inscriptions represent the continued importance of positive relations between Aphrodisias and the Empire well into the third century, especially at such an important time of governmental changes (via increased imperial control in the city and the reorganization of the provinces). They thus continue the propagandistic dialogue of the Archive Wall, with its last recorded document being a letter from Gordion III, whose rule ended a decade prior. Clearly, the theater remained a central meeting-place in this period for visitors to view statues of this sort, even at a time when the necessary funds for larger dedications were unavailable.

[70] *ALA2004* 3.
[71] C. Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity: The Late Roman and Byzantine Inscriptions including Texts from the Excavations at Aphrodisias Conducted by Kenan T. Erim*, (London: *Journal of Roman Studies* Monograph 5, 1989), 9-10.

Fig. 8. Inscription for Cornelia Salonina. *ALA2004* 2.

Fig. 9. Inscription for a son of Gallienus. *ALA2004* 3.

Mid-Fourth Century to Mid-Sixth Century

Following this period of relatively little activity, the mid-fourth to mid-sixth centuries were relatively stable in terms of territorial defense and saw renewed building activity, most notably the construction of the city walls, the modifications to the stadium, and the conversion of the Temple of Aphrodite. The city walls contained large amounts of *spolia*, including pieces from the theater, with fragments from the Archive Wall (Fig. 10). Prior to the construction of this wall, the city was unfortified. It is likely that the invasions of the previous century, in addition to a possible earthquake which would have dislodged blocks and broken off fragments, persuaded the Aphrodisians into building a wall to better protect the city.

Dating to the 350s and 360s AD, the city walls were funded – at least in part – by two governors, Eros Monachius and Flavius Constantius.[72] This attests to the increasing imperial attention paid to the city and the profound shift from local patronage to Roman donors, especially as "all of the other epigraphically-documented building efforts of the mid- and latter fourth century are also gubernatorial projects".[73] This was a marked departure from the previous way of things that centered around the local elite and the symbiotic relationship of civic euergetism. One of these new gubernatorial projects was the restoration of the Tetrastoon, a colonnaded square located directly in front of the theater, by a governor of Caria named Antonius Tatianus in the 360s. While Tatianus appears to have renewed the colonnades and pavement of the Tetrastoon, the structure

[72] *ALA2004* 19 and *ALA2004* 22. Epigraphic evidence makes clear Monachius' reconstruction of the West Gate. While it is likely that Monachius also funded the city wall construction – due to similarities in the gate and wall materials and style – this connection is unclear.
[73] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 126.

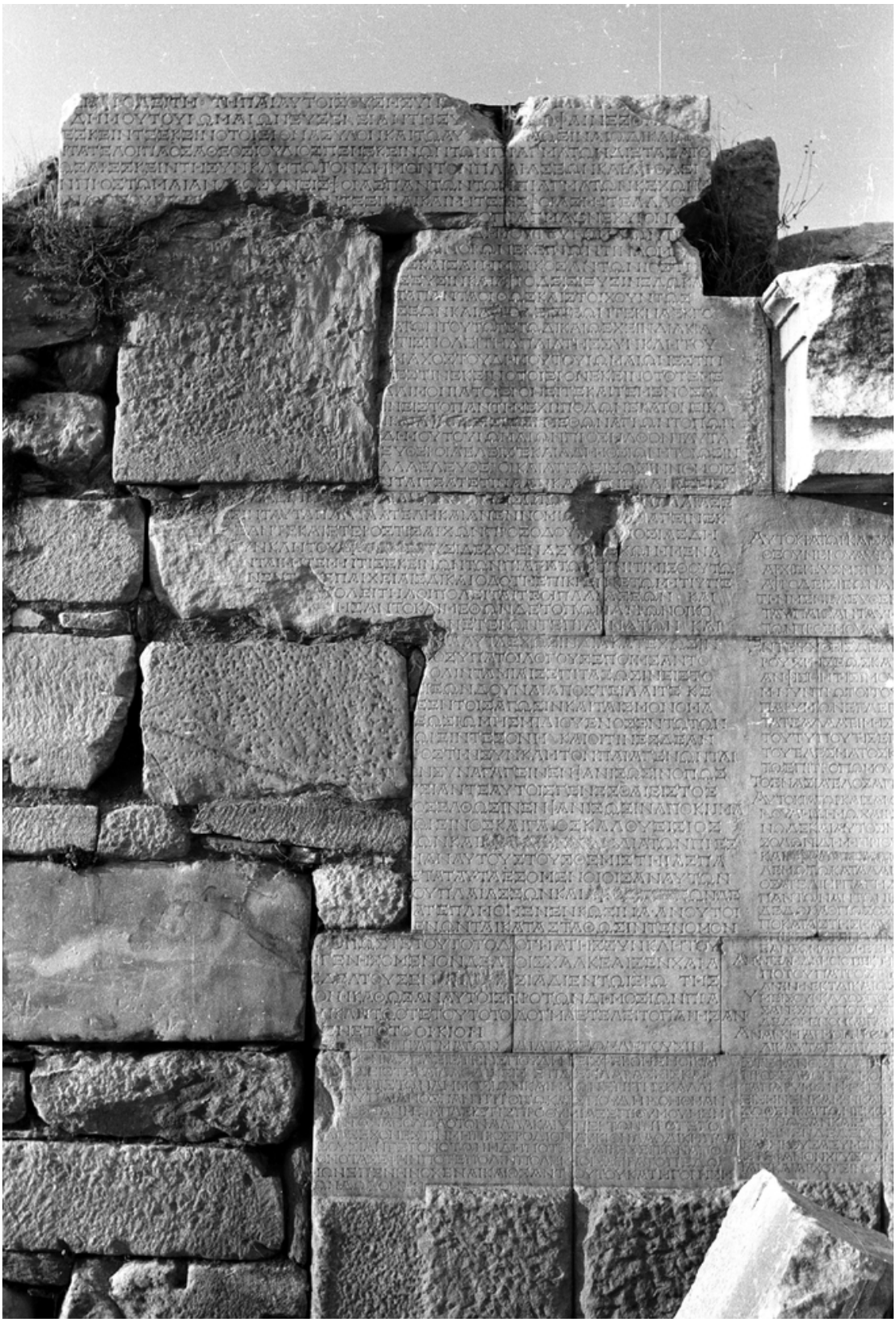

Fig. 10. City wall with Archive Wall fragments. *IAph2007* 8.26.

likely "replaced an earlier public square of some kind on the same spot".[74] The Tetrastoon was a public area for gathering and its close proximity to the stage-building likely meant that visitors to the theater would walk through it, viewing the several portrait statues erected throughout the square; what this meant for its purpose as a social space will be further discussed below.

As has been noted, there was a shift in power from civic elites to imperial governors that took place throughout Asia Minor from the third to the fifth centuries. Increasingly, the imperial government took over what had previously been civic jurisdictions, including monetary contributions to building projects and festivals or other performances.[75] For example, when acting as festival-giver, governors took on the role of *agonothetes*. Originally, an *agonothetes* was responsible for organizing contests and supplementing funds related to their display. A prime example of this is in an honorific inscription from the theater dedicated to Ti. Claudius Diogenes.[76] From the mid- to late-first century, the inscription describes Diogenes as a high-priest of Asia, sebastophant, *agonothetes*, and euergetist, in addition to other epithets and titles. Over time, this role took on more financial responsibility, with *agonothetes* of the fourth century – who were still local citizens – being required to fund the entirety of a contest or festival.

As Roueché discusses, this role eventually was given to governors and is exemplified at Aphrodisias in two inscriptions.[77] The first inscription, that of a man named Dulcitius, is dated to the mid- to late-fifth century:

[74] Ibid.
[75] Roueché, "Inscriptions and the Later History of the Theatre", 101.
[76] *IAph2007* 8.23.
[77] Roueché, "Inscriptions and the Later History of the Theatre", 101.

τὸν καὶ ἀγωνοθέτην καὶ κτίστην καὶ φιλότιμον καὶ Μαιουμάρχην |
Δουλκίτιον, ξεῖνε, μέλπε τὸν ἡγεμόνα |
ὅστις κἀμὲ καμοῦξαν ἀμετρήτοις ἐνιαυτοῖς |
ἤγειρεν κρατερὴν χεῖρ' ἐπορεξάμενος.

Stranger, sing of Dulcitius, the governor, giver of games and founder and lover of honour and Maioumarch, who, stretching out his strong hand, raised me too, who had suffered for unnumbered years.[78]

The second inscription refers to a Vitianus and was found in the theater (Fig. 11):

[? *cross*] ἡ λαμπρὰ καὶ
περιφανὴς Ἀφροδι -
σιέων μητρόπολις
Βιτιανὸν τὸν λαμπρ(ότατον)
σχο(λαστικὸν) καὶ ὑπα(τικὸν) τὸν οἰκῖον
εὐεργέτην καὶ
ἀγωνοθέτην Α
ἀνέθηκεν
vacat
leaf Α

The splendid and well-known metropolis of the Aphrodisians set up (this statue of) Vitianus, *clarissimus scholasticus* and consular, their own benefactor and agonothete.[79]

Dating to the sixth century, Vitianus' use of the title represents, on the one hand, the longstanding traditions held at Aphrodisias, and on the other, the growing involvement of the imperial government in the city's civic life.[80] However, although this term continued to be applied to contest-presiders into at least the sixth century, the way in which the role was carried out does seem to have changed over time. While Diogenes, as *agonothetes*, would have likely been encouraged to provide most, if not all, of the costs associated with a contest, later governors who shared the same title may have used "their own money, imperial resources, or money from the city's own funds".[81] Nevertheless, these

[78] *ALA2004* 40.
[79] *IAph2007* 8.273.
[80] Roueché, "Inscriptions and the Later History of the Theatre", 102.
[81] Ibid.

gubernatorial *agonothetae* represent the increasing intersections between elite citizens and governors, and their role in public spectacles.

Fig. 11. Inscription for Vitianus. *ALA2004* 65.

Additionally, the role of an *agonothetes* in the fifth and sixth centuries appears to have differed from previous centuries in regard to the types of festivities that were being put on. Although Late Antique *agonothetae* were typically associated with circus races,

the stadium at Aphrodisias was converted into an arena c. 400 AD.[82] Thus the function of this civic responsibility was likely related to other events taking place in the city. Dulcitius, for example, is described as both an *agonothetes* and a Maiumarch. The Maiuma, some sort of "water-festival involving pre-Christian fertility rites that fifth-century bishops repeatedly condemned," was apparently still active in Caria in Late Antiquity.[83] Therefore it seems possible that *agonothetae* in this period were concerned with directing other games and religious festivals – which persisted in some form even with contemporary "imperial denunciation and ecclesiastical lament" taking place.[84] However, this does not explain Vitianus' descriptor as an *agonothetes*, as the cross incised on his inscription was clearly cut away at some point after its original construction. Therefore, it seems that these theatrical festivals might not have held the same religious connotations they once did. As Roueché notes, for example, the Maiuma was likely religious in origin, but, by the fourth century, "its appeal was as a festivity without serious religious implications".[85] Therefore, at Aphrodisias, as opposed to at other sites – where the epithet is much less common in Late Antiquity – *agonothetae* persisted and, whether Christian or pagan, they continued to fund games and festivals for the city and province. The importance of these semi-religious games was enough that "Christian governors of the mid-fifth century were not above sponsoring" them and maintaining a positive relationship with the pagan local elites of the city.[86] Even with the erection of imperial laws regarding the abolition of sacrifices, banquets endured, as did

[82] C. Ratté and R.R.R. Smith, "Research at Aphrodisias in Caria, 2002-2005", 732.
[83] F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c.370-529 Volume 2* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1993), 55.
[84] F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c.370-529 Volume 1* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1993), 73.
[85] *ALA2004* IV.25.
[86] Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization Vol. 2*, 55.

festivals. It appears that sacrifices and euergetistic entertainments were not considered mutually exclusive.[87]

Clearly – through funding variations, sculptural and textual propaganda, and governmental influence – the political nature of the theater was always a central component of its purpose. Although in Late Antiquity the formal assembly of the public was more unusual, the insertion of the loggia for governmental use implies continued political importance of the theater building as a place for meetings and addresses. Rather than being a locale for separate functions (i.e. political or spectacle), the theater thrived as a space for the amalgamation of the two. There was hardly a clear distinction between politics and entertainment. Additionally, even as these formal assemblies diminished, we see a rise in public acclamations as political instruments.

While so far we have seen how entertainment played a role in the political sphere of the theater through the benefaction of games and festivities, the entertainment nature of the space also led to the formation of factions, and subsequently the rise of acclamations as a political tool. Although they would later be used to spread political messages in a variety of contexts, acclamations have their origins in theater and other spectacle spaces where the factions were present. The factions, more specifically the Blues and the Greens, appear often in the epigraphic evidence from Aphrodisias, which alludes to their "organiz[ing] and underwrit[ing] the presentation of performances" and also to their function as fanbases for stage entertainments.[88] Interestingly, this included

[87] See F. Graf, *Roman Festivals in the Greek East: From the Early Empire to the Middle Byzantine Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 320-1 for more information regarding the persistence of festivals post-Constantine and the contemporary idea that bans on sacrifices did not equate to bans on festivals or even banquets.
[88] Roueché, "Inscriptions and the Later History of the Theatre", 105-6.

not only athletic entertainments, but – especially at Aphrodisias – dramatic performances. As Roueché discusses, there is evidence for the aforementioned continuity present at Aphrodisias through the continued use of a theater space for mime performers. While pantomimes (which developed from the mime) were solo performers who silently danced to music, mimes performed in groups and "used words and music to present scenes which were often comic, but also encompassed tragic subjects".[89] The relevant inscription – dating to the fifth or sixth century and stating "Victory to the Greens and to the mimes of the Greens" – covered over an earlier third century inscription indicating the use of the room for a mime.[90] Over centuries, the same space was used for the same performance purposes, something that would have been apparent to observers. This is especially interesting as, as Ine Jacobs points out, mime and pantomime shows – which largely replaced other kinds of theatrical shows in Late Antiquity – were "still strongly reminiscent of paganism" due to the often mythological elements of their performances.[91]

The factions are also widely attested at the theater through seat inscriptions and indicate activity until at least the mid-sixth century (Fig. 12).[92] Inscribed and re-inscribed over the centuries, the seat inscriptions offer a glimpse at who was attending theater performances and, often, who those attendees were supporting. The factions, which seem to have grown out of earlier organizations, at the same time acted as supporters to the entertainers and political liaisons of the people. Groupings at the theater were originally divided by features like trade or district. Over time, as these groupings wished to "ensure

[89] Roueché*, Performers and Partisans,* 15.
[90] Roueché, "Inscriptions and the Later History of the Theatre", 105.
[91] I. Jacobs, "The Sixth-Century City in the Roman East: Survival or Demise of the Traditional Urban Context?," in *Learning Cities in Late Antiquity: The Local Dimension of Education*, ed. J. R. Stenger (Routledge, 2019), 113.
[92] Idem 118.

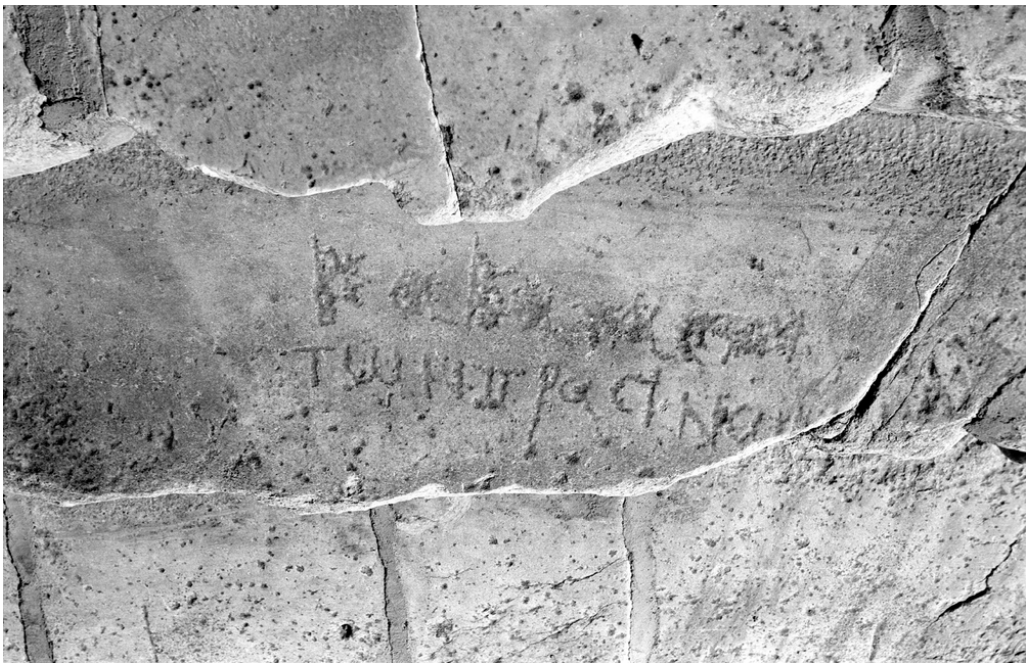

Fig. 12a. Seat inscription from theater. *IAph2007* 8.55.

Fig. 12b. Seat inscription from theater. *IAph2007* 8.57.

Fig. 12c. Seat inscription from theater. *IAph2007* 8.60.

the proper performance of public acclamations", they entwined and formed into the later Blue and Green factions.[93] As the distinction between entertainment space and political meeting-place lessened and the two ideas converged, those who attended those spaces as faction-members also took on more political roles. Benefactors had long been funding festivals and other spectacles for the purpose of garnering favor among the people. In the fourth century, the idea of spectacle as an avenue for illuminating support (or lack thereof) for leaders – frequently governors – was emphasized when public acclamations started being sent to the new capital, Constantinople.[94] Due to the increasing importance of acclamations for political purposes, factions and those providing the acclamations also increased their political influence (Fig. 13).

The role of acclamations in the Later Roman Empire has been discussed extensively by Roueché, thus this thesis will focus on the way in which these types of inscriptions were used at Aphrodisias. As she explains, acclamations largely began in religious, and sometimes legislative, contexts; they were initially used to show assent for a deity or council and therefore lent themselves to a wider honoring of individuals, especially those with power. Therefore, by the first century AD, the role of acclamations in the honoring of Roman emperors was "well and widely established".[95] The primary locations for honoring the emperors in this way were the theater and the circus, two public performance spaces that could hold large crowds and that were already accustomed to exclamatory support towards performers and contestants. This form of

[93] Roueché, "Inscriptions and the Later History of the Theatre", 106.
[94] Ibid.
[95] C. Roueché, "Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: New Evidence from Aphrodisias," in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984): 182.

Fig. 13. Column with acclamations for governors from the theater area. *ALA2004* 75.

assent eventually sanctioned the establishment of acclamatory requests, which further allowed individuals to "make wishes and grievances known to the emperor" in a public context.[96]

Over time, acclamations were recorded as legitimate forms of assent or expression. In 331, Constantine even began a system of public provincial gatherings for the purpose of expressing assent or dissent towards the governors, which would then be relayed to the emperor himself. Thus, acclamations became a vehicle for conveying and recording approval or disapproval of both secular and religious assemblies.[97] By the Late Antique period, we also see acclamations following a specific order, where "those to be acclaimed are honored in descending order of importance".[98] At Aphrodisias, many acclamations have been found "published" all over the city, especially in the area of the theater. These acclamations are often painted on columns and seem to record acclamations from specific events. Therefore, even after regular meetings ceased to be held after the fourth century in the city, "*ad hoc* public meetings continued to be held, often in the theater".[99] The recorded acclamations would have been indicative of the activity taking place there and would have recorded that which was meant to be conveyed to imperial powers.

As the acclamations at Aphrodisias indicate, local benefactors in the later Empire may have used benefaction – through the use of acclamations to convey assent to

[96] Idem 183.
[97] Idem 186.
[98] Idem 189. As Roueché explains, the order was typically 1) assertion of belief in God; 2) honors paid to the emperor(s); 3) sometimes honors paid to church dignitaries; 4) honors to imperial officials, whether by name or office; 5) honors to local dignitaries; and finally, 6) to specific acclamations, whether praises of an individual, or requests.
[99] Idem 197.

imperial powers – as a "route to preferment beyond the hierarchy of the city itself".[100] Even as large-scale local benefaction increased again, it did so now in relation to the imperial government. Now, glory or power through euergetism involved not only the patrons and their community, but the imperial authorities. Acclamations – and the contexts in which they were exclaimed or recorded – had an additional layer of political expression; gatherings of a non-political nature developed political agendas. As Alan Cameron explains, due to the theater's use as a place for "official receptions, proclamations, debates, trials, and so forth", acclamations had long been used there to "bring pressure on local authorities".[101] Due to the factions being the continuations of earlier groups of people, as well as the continuation of entertainments in the same space, there was a rich sense of constancy and a connection to the past that existed alongside the political transformations.

At Aphrodisias, we have a great example of acclamations at the theater through their record as seat inscriptions. These seat inscriptions give us a better idea of the types of groups and individuals who sat together at the theater and, at times, where they laid their loyalties. While some seat inscriptions contain names and associations, others cheer for their faction or offer a prayer to a god, be it pagan or Christian:

1. Εὐχὴ Στεφανᾶ

   Prayer of Stephanas[102]

2. Νικᾷ ἡ τύχη τῶν *vac*.

   The fortune triumphs of the […[103]

[100] Idem 198.
[101] A. Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 238.
[102] *IAph2007* 8.57 Row 2.i.a.
[103] Idem 8.57 Row 2.i.b.

3. Νικᾷ ἡ τύχη τῶν Πρασίνων

   The fortune of the Greens triumphs![104]

4. Κακὰ ⸢τὰ⸣ ἔ⸢τη τῶν Πρασίνων

   Bad years for the Greens![105]

5. τό(πος) Βενυσιν(ου)

   Place of Benusinos[106]

6. Φροντίνου *cross*
   Νικᾷ ἡ τύχη τοῦ

   (Place of) Phrontinos.
   The fortune of the cross triumphs![107]

7. τό⸢πο τῶν μακελλίτων(*sic*)
   Νικᾷ ἡ τύχη τῶν Βενέτων

   Place of the butchers.
   The fortune of the Blues triumphs![108]

It is worth noting, however, that the increase in acclamations in public inscriptions during the later Empire does not reflect a previous lack of existence, rather that they were not "thought appropriate for inscriptions" until then. Additionally, their increasing political power is also reflected in the eventual transfer of the organization of shows to the circus factions.[109]

Well into Late Antiquity, games and entertainments were still very important to the social and civic life of the city. However, there was a shift from Greek-style games

[104] Idem 8.57 Row 9.i.
[105] Idem 8.55.18.
[106] Idem 8.55.26.
[107] Idem 8.59.4.
[108] Idem 8.61.13.
[109] Cameron, *Circus Factions*, 218 and J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 122.

and athletics (e.g. foot races, long-jumping, wrestling, javelin throwing, and discus) to Roman-style entertainments of the amphitheater and arena.[110] Around the turn of the fifth century, the stadium on the north end of the city was modified for use as an arena and could hold around 30,000 people (Fig. 14).[111] Evidently spectacles in some capacity were not decreasing at this time, nor was the attendance of gubernatorial officials at such events. At the stadium, two areas of special seating have been found.[112] Seat inscriptions, like those at the theater, also indicate similar reservations for groups and individuals; these inscriptions record the "social and political affiliations" of the spectators.[113]

Following this period, the mid-fifth to early sixth century saw a "resurgence of local euergetism alongside continued gubernatorial patronage".[114] And, although the backing of the Church is not well-attested in the epigraphic record at Aphrodisias – especially in connection with the theater – it became a third source of patronage during this period. The Temple of Aphrodite was one of the primary locations in the city for building activity during this period (in addition to the North Agora and the theater) and was converted into the Cathedral of St. Michael around the turn of the sixth century. This conversion was monumental and marked the profound growth of Christianity in the city. This growth is also noted by the appearance of active erasure on monuments and inscriptions sometime after the erection of the city walls.

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[110] "Stadium," Aphrodisias Excavations, University of Oxford, 2019, http://aphrodisias.classics.ox.ac.uk/stadium.html.
[111] C. Ratté and R.R.R. Smith, "Research at Aphrodisias in Caria, 2002-2005", 732.
[112] Roueché, "Inscriptions and the Later History of the Theatre", 99.
[113] "Stadium," Aphrodisias Excavations, University of Oxford, 2019, http://aphrodisias.classics.ox.ac.uk/stadium.html.
[114] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 130. For further observation and discussion of this idea, see Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, 86-87.

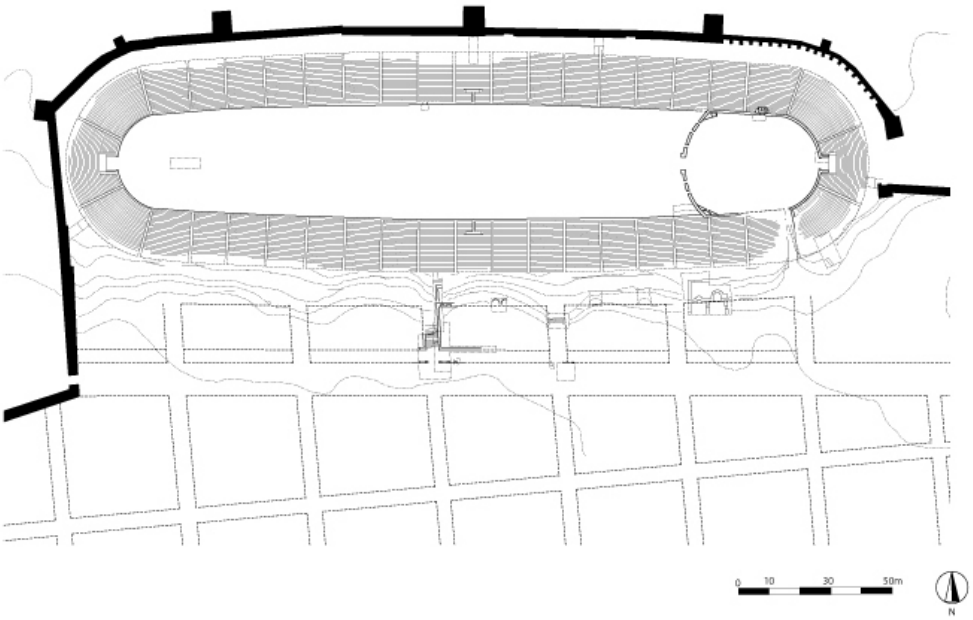

Fig. 14. Plan of the stadium. http://aphrodisias.classics.ox.ac.uk/stadium.html.

Throughout the Late Antique city, there is evidence of extensive defacement of pagan monuments, often through the erasure of images of Aphrodite, deities, and pagan sacrifices and of references to Aphrodite and the Aphrodisians (Fig. 15).[115] Although the statuary of the city is overall well-preserved, we see selective alterations to the statuary at the theater; specifically, to the image of Aphrodite at the theater, which was chipped away (although other depictions of gods, the Muses, and Nikes remained untouched).[116] Elsewhere in the city the goddess was similarly altered and erased, as were her name, the city's name, and the ethnic that went along with it. Due to the strong and historic relationship between Aphrodisias the city and the goddess Aphrodite, the later Christians must have felt it necessary to entirely remove her physically from the city.

[115] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 133.
[116] Jacobs, "The Sixth-Century City in the Roman East", 118.

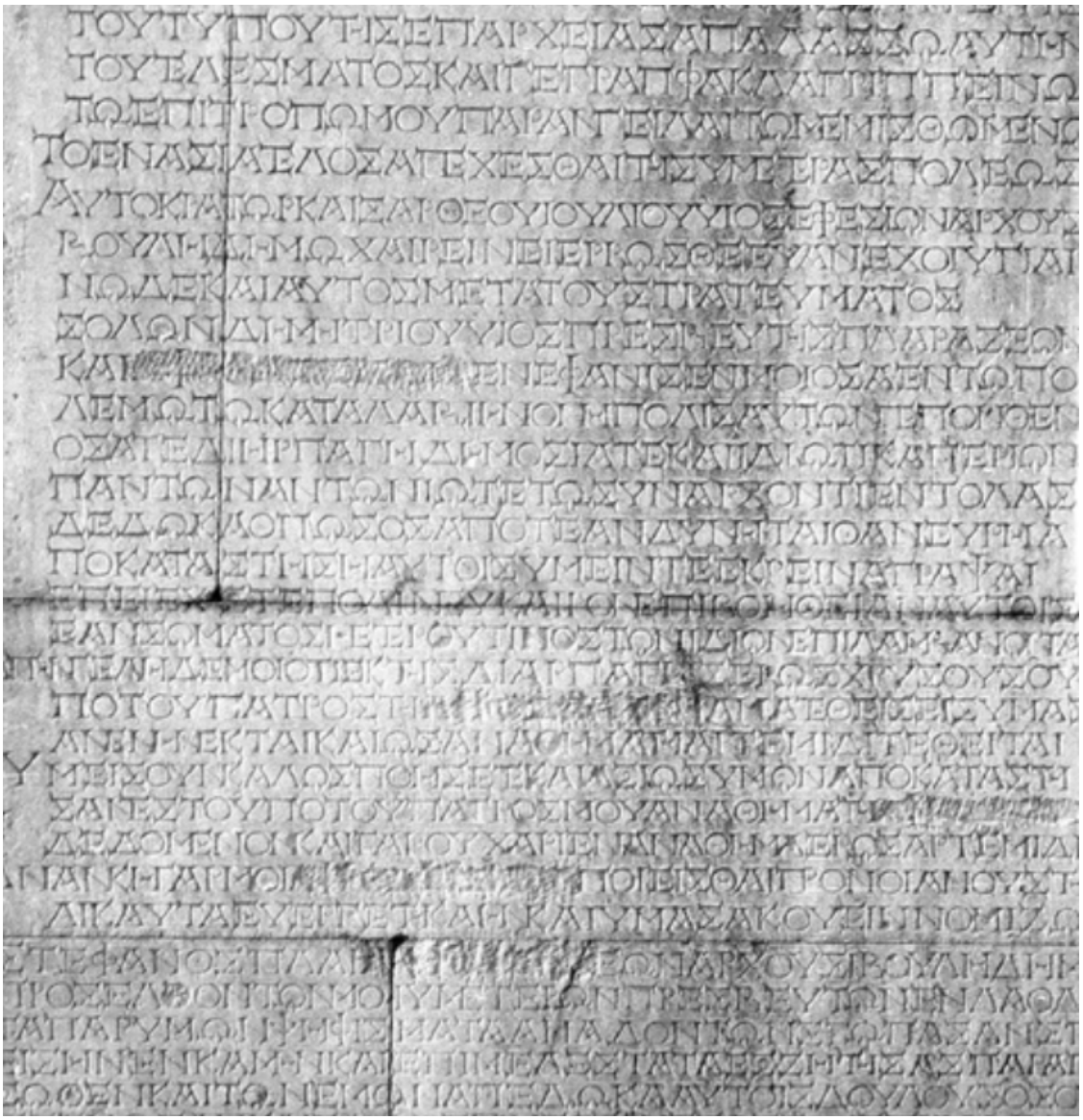

Fig. 15. Defaced letter of Octavian to Ephesus from Archive Wall. *IAph2007* 8.31.

Interestingly, the city walls contained fragments from the Archive Wall of the theater and these fragments do not have signs of erasure, whereas the Archive Wall blocks left *in-situ* do shows signs of defacement. As Reynolds explains, this public removal of pagan imagery and references was due to the increasing Christian presence and perhaps began under Justinian, who made a concerted effort to eliminate paganism in

western Asia Minor.[117] Therefore the erasure likely occurred by "the mid-sixth century and the mid-seventh century, by which time the city was known as Stauropolis".[118] The name Stauropolis, or "City of the Cross", is first attested in 680.[119] This date, in conjunction with the defacement on the *in-situ* Archive Wall blocks, likely points to continued use and importance of the Wall. If it was still visible to visitors, it seems that the theater remained a prominent public meeting-place into the seventh century, even if to a lesser degree than in previous centuries. Therefore, although changes were clearly being made throughout the city (e.g., the temple conversion), the epigraphic record at the theater continued to relay Aphrodisias' long-standing importance.

The erasures are not the only mark Christianity made on the theater. In addition to prayers carved onto the stage-building and seats, a wall painting of St. Michael was found in a room off of the stage-building neighboring the Archive Wall (Fig. 16). This religious fresco depicts two figures, the archangel and what has been assumed to possibly be Gabriel.[120] The architecture of the room does not point to a liturgical use of the space, however it is unknown whether the paintings were meant to be public or private icons. If private, they may have been "set up in thanks for the past or in expectations of the future".[121] Similarly, we do not know what year the fresco was painted. The theater was apparently still in use in the sixth century, but seemed to fall out of use in the early seventh century following the collapse of the stage structure; this gives a *terminus post quem* for the painting of St. Michael.[122] Therefore, these paintings were likely

[117] Erim, *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite*, 34.
[118] Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome*, xvii.
[119] Roueché, "Inscriptions and the Later History of the Theatre", 107.
[120] Idem 112.
[121] Idem 115.
[122] Idem 120.

contemporary with continued public entertainments at the theater and illuminate the increasing Christian influence at Aphrodisias that occurred alongside pre-existing theater use; there is thus a clear overlap between a "secular use of the theatre and a sacred Christian function".[123] As the centuries continued on, the pagan nature of Aphrodisias – which persisted longer than in other cities of Asia Minor due to its strong associations with the goddess Aphrodite – eventually diminished as Christianity swelled.

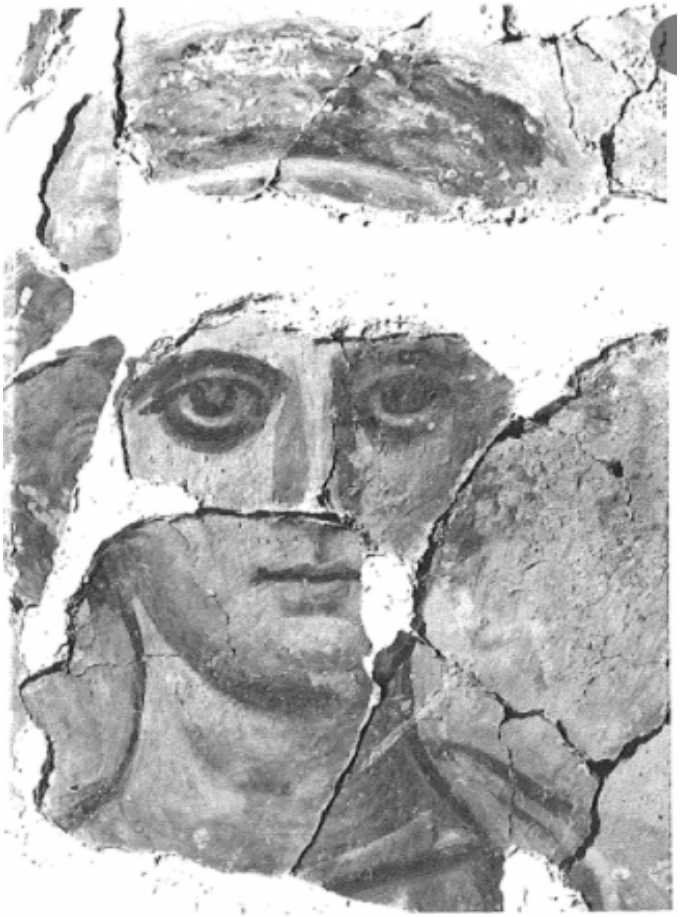

Fig. 16. St. Michael fresco. Cormack 1991.

[123] Jacobs, "The Sixth-Century City in the Roman East", 120.

At other sites in Asia Minor during this period, patronage began shifting to focus on Church-related building projects. For example, at Pisidian Antioch, donor inscriptions show that local elites were increasingly investing in churches rather than spectacle (whether that be providing gladiators or funding theater repairs). Here, temple maintenance too diminishes as church construction and upkeep becomes progressively important to the values of the city.[124] Apart from church construction, the only other large-scale construction the late antique city sees is in fortification repairs.

At Aphrodisias, we see a similar interest in the construction and upkeep of city walls, as well as the increasing importance of the Church to the city (e.g. the Temple of Aphrodite conversion). However, Aphrodisias' notables also continued to provide funding towards public spaces without blatant religious affiliation, such as the theater. The city did not switch from pagan worshippers of Aphrodite to Christian converts overnight, and the citizens that made up its class of benefactors was not wholly pagan or Christian either. Rather, there is evidence that both pagans and Christians made "generous benefactions to the city".[125]

As mentioned previously, the persistence of the Maiuma festival into this period is notable. As Trombley makes clear, the emergence of anti-pagan legislation by the late-fourth century emperors (as later represented in the Theodosian Code) did not equate to complete and utter suppression of pagan practices and beliefs. If these practices were not still taking place in the fourth through sixth centuries, there would have been no need for laws and edicts to have been produced; evidently, "sacrifice, divination, and sorcery"

[124] J. Pickett, "Antioch in Pisidia" (PowerPoint, University of Georgia, 4 March 2021).
[125] Erim, *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite*, 34.

were still practiced with enough vigor to warrant prosecution.[126] Of course, the extent to which paganism was still practiced throughout the Empire differed from region to region and city to city. At Aphrodisias, a city renowned for centuries for its cult of Aphrodite, paganism persisted well into Late Antiquity and the "complete Christianization of the decurion class" seems not to have taken place until sometime between 450-529.[127]

The governors and other imperial officials present at Aphrodisias were more likely to maintain positive relationships with the local pagan elites they were interacting with if they prescribed to the "Hellenic faith". However, toleration was often extended anyway, as long as the cult practices were conducted privately.[128] As noted, there are several marks of Christian practice at Aphrodisias in the fourth through sixth centuries, as Christianity increased among the lower classes and slowly made its way through the decurion class. Still, the longevity of paganism at Aphrodisias is significant. Trombley argues that due to Aphrodisias' cultural connection to Aphrodite, as well as the city's great wealth, "the ordinary incentives of imperial titles and career advancement had little appeal and no effects as vehicles of Christianization".[129] Instead, it was largely the "return of certain native Aphrodisians in the 490's after being educated in Alexandria and converted to Christianity" that eventually led to Christianity outweighing the traditional belief system in regard to the upper classes; the lower classes likely already had prior acceptance of the new religion (although predominantly only after c. 400).[130] It appears that for those who still held on to their pagan beliefs, Justinian's code of 529 – which

[126] Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization Volume 1*, 94-5.
[127] Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization Volume 2*, 52.
[128] Idem 53.
[129] Idem 58.
[130] Ibid.

made anyone not baptized into the Christian faith a non-citizen – was the ultimate converter.[131] Christianity eventually dominated in Caria – as it did throughout the Empire, displacing the Roman state religion – but it did have pushback. Although Aphrodisias seems to have held out longer than other cities, pagan cults were not easily dissolved in the Eastern Empire and the re-issuing of laws "restricting non-Christian ritual behavior" are a testament to this rejection taking place outside of Caria.[132]

One of the primary locations for construction from the mid-fifth to early sixth centuries was at the theater, especially at the Theater Baths. There is epigraphic evidence for construction work at the baths in this period undertaken by two men: Ampelius and Pytheas, the latter of which will be discussed in more detail in the following section. The inscription referring to Ampelius is fragmentary, but appears to indicate that he undertook restoration work at the Theater Baths.[133] The fragments are dated to the mid-fifth century based on other epigraphic evidence referencing the same man. Based on these inscriptions, Ampelius also funded construction and restoration work at the Agora Gate in the South Agora, the north-east gate in the city wall, and the bouleuterion; these dedications describe him as a *scholasticus* and a *pater*.[134] These titles are quite interesting as they became popular in the fifth century and illustrate the changes in notables' titles around this time.

As a *scholasticus*, Ampelius would have had to attend school in order to be certified to practice law. This is notable, as it "records a professional qualification, rather

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[131] Idem 62.
[132] M. Mulryan, "'Paganism' in Late Antiquity: Regional Studies and Material Culture," in *The Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism',* eds. L. Lavan and M. Mulryan (Leiden and Boston: Brill, Late Antique Archaeology Volume 7, 2011), 53.
[133] *ALA2004* 44.
[134] *ALA2004* 38, *ALA2004* 42, and *ALA2004* 43.

than an officially awarded honour or office" and exemplifies the shift in Late Antiquity to more accessible success: no longer did you need a specific family history or wealth, you could now obtain authority through education (although, of course, education was still largely available to those with the funds to afford it).[135] This title was not exclusive to non-governors, though. For example, the Carian governor Vitianus, as mentioned previously, is described as such in an inscription from the theater. Additionally, Ampelius is described as a *pater*; a "father of the city". The *pater* was in charge of funding building projects using the city's own funds.[136] During this period, the previous civic magistrates of cities in Asia Minor were replaced by imperially-appointed (yet locally-born and locally-chosen) functionaries, the *pater* being one of these.[137] Clearly, governors were not the only leading members of society to be participating in large-scale euergetism, but the rise in locally-appointed benefactors was still working in conjunction with the imperial government. In this way, Aphrodisias in the fifth century is able to accommodate imperial governance while, at the same time, incorporating a sense of continuity with the past, an experience addressed at the city in other ways as well.

The Tetrastoon – and the adjacent Theater Baths – continued to function into Late Antiquity, with more and more commemorative statues of notables, often emperors and governors, continuing to populate these spaces.[138] The Tetrastoon, specifically, was a "favorite locale for late antique statue display".[139] By the beginning of Late Antiquity, statues and other decoration were "present in every thinkable building and space",

[135] *ALA2004* IV.22.
[136] *ALA2004* IV.23.
[137] Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City*,110.
[138] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 137.
[139] R.R.R. Smith, S. Dillon, C. H. Hallett, J. Lenaghan, and J. Van Voorhis, *Aphrodisias II: Roman Portrait Sculpture from Aphrodisias* (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 2006), 16.

especially at Aphrodisias, a site known for its marble and skilled sculptors.[140] While other cities in this period saw a decline in new honorific statues, Aphrodisias continued to produce new sculptures into the sixth-century, although with increasing irregularity (we have 220 surviving public honorific statuary and 305 inscribed bases from the first through third centuries, but only 60 statues and 40 bases from Late Antiquity).[141] It is important to realize, then, that ancient viewers of these spaces of public honor would have regarded the statuary altogether, not by year. This may have been in part due to the number of statues already present and therefore already taking up space, but it is worth noting that statues with pagan subjects also decreased in Late Antiquity.

Therefore, although the initial shift to gubernatorial leadership would have been a marked departure from the previous system, ideas of continuity would have persisted through the statues.[142] One such portrait of an official is that of a governor of Asiana named Flavius Palmatus. Found in an area of the Tetrastoon bordering the theater, the inscription and accompanying statue date to the late fifth/early sixth centuries (Fig. 17):

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[140] Jacobs, "The Sixth-Century City in the Roman East", 123.

[141] R.R.R. Smith, "The Long Lives of Roman Statues: Public Monuments in Late Antique Aphrodisias," in *Sculpture in Roman Asia Minor: Proceedings of the International Conference at Selçuk 2013*, ed. M. Aurenhammer (Verlag Holzhausen, 2018), 334.

[142] R.R.R. Smith has written extensively on the subject of Late Antique portrait statuary in public locations at Aphrodisias and Asia Minor. See R.R.R. Smith, "Late Roman Philosophers" and "A New Portrait of Pythagoras," in *Aphrodisias Papers 2: The Theatre, A Sculptor's Workshop, Philosophers, and Coin-Types*, eds. R.R.R. Smith and K.T. Erim (Ann Arbor, MI: *Journal of Roman Archaeology* Supplement 2, 1991); R.R.R. Smith, "Cultural Choice and Political Identity in Honorific Portrait Statues in the Greek East in the Second Century A.D.," *Journal of Roman Studies* 88 (1998): 56-93; R.R.R. Smith, "Late Antique Portraits in a Public Context: Honorific Statuary at Aphrodisias in Caria, AD 300-600," *Journal of Roman Studies* 99 (1999): 155-189; R.R.R. Smith, "A Late Roman Portrait and a Himation Statue from Aphrodisias," in *100 Jahre österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos: Akten des Symposions Wien 1995*, eds. H. Friesinger et al. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), 713-719; R.R.R. Smith, "The Statue Monument of Oecumenius: A New Portrait of a Late Antique Governor from Aphrodisias," *Journal of Roman Studies* 92 (2002): 134-156; R.R.R. Smith, "Statue Life in the Hadrianic Baths at Aphrodisias, AD 100-600: Local Context and Historical Meaning," in *Statuen in der Spätantike*, eds. F.A. Bauer and C. Witschel (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2007), 203-235; etc.

[*cross*] Ἀγαθῆι *cross* Τύχηι *cross*
Τὸν ἀνανεωτὴν
καὶ κτίστην τῆς μητροπό(λεως)
καὶ εὐεργέτην πάσης
Καρίας Φλ(άβιον) Παλμᾶτον
τὸν περίβλ(επτον) ὑπα(τικὸν) κ(αὶ) ἐπαίχο(ντα)
τὸν τόπον τοῦ μεγαλοπρ(επεστάτου)
βικαρίου, Φλ(άβιος) Ἀθήνεος
ὁ λαμπρ(ότατος) πατὴρ τῆς
λαμπρ(οτάτης) Ἀφροδ(εισιέων) μητροπό(λεως)
εὐχαριστῶν ἀνέθη -
vac.κεν *leaf*

To Good Fortune. The renewer and founder of the metropolis and benefactor of all Caria, Flavius Palmatus, *spectabilis* consular, also holding the position of the *magnificentissimus* vicar; Flavius Atheneus, the *clarissimus* pater of the most splendid (*clarissima*) metropolis of the Aphrodisians, set up (this statue of Palmatus) in gratitude.[143]

This statue and its inscribed base were set up in front of the west colonnade of the Tetrastoon by a man named Flavius Atheneus, a *pater* of Aphrodisias. Like the governor Vitianus – discussed earlier in regard to his role as an agonothete – Palmatus has the title *ὑπατικός* (*consularis*). This title replaced the title of *praeses* in the mid- to late-fifth century. He also held the title Vicar of Asiana, an office that was abolished in 536.[144] Given these dates and the findspot of the statue in its original display at the Tetrastoon, we can gain a better sense of how visitors would have viewed and interacted with this statue and others like it. It held a prominent place in the public sphere of the city and remained *in-situ* long after Palmatus was gone. However, the portrayal of his titles and authority would have been a continuous reminder of the activities of the previous decades.

[143] *ALA2004* 62.
[144] Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, 102.

Fig. 17. Inscription for Palmatus. *ALA2004* 62.

The Theater Baths were located in the same area as the theater and the Tetrastoon, which included market and shopping areas. The close proximity of these structures indicates a general area for gathering and communication between Aphrodisians and outside visitors to the city. The Baths, too, would have housed a number of honorific statues for the observance of city-goers. One such dedication is from a statue base honoring a fifth century Carian governor named Dulcitius (Fig. 18):

| ἤθελεν, εἰ θέμις ἦν, | καὶ χρυσίην τάχα | μορφὴν *vac*.
σῆς | ἀρετῆς τεύχειν | (5) ναί, μά σε, Δουλκίτιε, *scroll*
| ὃς πρῶτος στρατίης | τῆς σῆς πέλε, Βαλεριανός,
| οὕνεκεν εὐνομίης | πύργος ἄρηκτος ἔφυς. *scroll*
5 | (10) νῦν δέ σε μαρμάρεον | στῆσεν προπάροιθε λοετροῦ
| μάρτυς σῶν καμάτων | ἡ λίθος ὄφρα μένοι.

> If it was permitted, Valerianus, who was the leader of your troop, would have wished to make even a golden image of your virtue - indeed (I swear) by yourself. Dulcitius, because you were an unbroken tower of lawfulness. But now he has set you in marble in front of the baths, so that the stone may remain as a witness of your labours.[145]

As mentioned previously, Dulcitius was also described as an *agonothete*, a term which implied – at this point in time – the primary person involved with funding and presiding over games or other public spectacles, whether this be from their own funds or (more likely) from gubernatorial funds.[146] This inscription clearly states the purpose of its erection: to "remain as a witness of [Dulcitius'] labours".[147] Therefore, when in the following centuries there was a marked decrease in the epigraphic record related to civic doings, these statues acted as reminders of the leading men who had played important roles in the functioning of the city, especially in regard to their generosity towards the theater and its related activities.

[145] *ALA2004* 41.
[146] *ALA2004* IV.24.
[147] Ibid.

Fig. 18. Inscription for Dulcitius. *ALA2004* 41.

Based on the epigraphic evidence above, although gubernatorial leadership continued to exist in the provinces of Asia Minor during this period, there was a marked return to local benefaction, as well. Although the titles and roles may have differed from previous centuries, the names of local notables became more common in the epigraphic

record. This indicates a return to funding by local elites and thus exemplifies the awareness of and appreciation for continuity that existed in the city – even as there were political, religious, and social changes taking place. Of note is the lack of evidence for this same phenomenon at other comparable sites, however this could merely be the result of the unusually sizable epigraphic record at Aphrodisias.[148]

Mid-Sixth Century and Beyond

This large epigraphic record did, however, decrease in the mid-sixth and seventh centuries, a time when we have very few inscriptions at all. There are no new building inscriptions from this period and the only large-scale construction attested is the fortification of the theater hill in the early- to mid-seventh centuries. Prior to this fortification, it does appear that spectacle remained an important aspect of life for this increasingly Christian city, with performances continuing to be entwined with the social life of the city throughout the sixth century. This is notable as games and performances were costly and required patronage. Coins dating to the rule of Heraclius have been found throughout the city, including at the theater, and indicate the likely continued use of this space until at least the early seventh century. However, by this point in time, it is likely that many aspects of the theater had already ceased to exist; the space might have only been used on special occasions and for meetings, rather than for entertainments – especially those of the bloody nature the Christians were so averse to.

They also provide a *terminus post quem* for the construction of this new fortification wall, which incorporated the stage-building of the theater into a "fortification wall that encircled the Theater hill".[149] The city might have been affected by an

[148] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 145.
[149] Idem 140.

earthquake around this time, thus leading to a decrease in population and the reduction of the city to this fortified theater-hill settlement. Whether or not an earthquake is one of the primary causes, this project was the "last attested public building project undertaken at Aphrodisias until the Middle Byzantine period" and coincided with widespread changes in urban structures and civic developments throughout Asia Minor.[150]

By the time the theater collapsed, Aphrodisias was known by a new name, Stauropolis, and the city's famous sanctuary was no longer pagan, but Christian. This Christian society was no longer interested in the entertainments of pagan culture and therefore saw no reason to spend the necessary funds to restore the theater. As Robin Cormack explains, Aphrodisians of the seventh century "lived in a period of realignment in urban priorities".[151] And this realignment was not specific to Aphrodisias. Rather, there appear to have been similar shifts at Ephesus and other western Asia Minor cities due to changes in the Byzantine imperial system, possible seismic activity, Persian invasions, and the spread of Christianity.[152]

Pytheas: A Case Study

As Christianity spread and the Church grew in political importance, Aphrodisias maintained groups of both influential pagans and Christians. One such pagan who maintained notoriety and influence as a benefactor in Late Antiquity was a man named Pytheas. As Roueché notes, Pytheas was not an uncommon name in the region and has been evidenced at Aphrodisias in earlier periods; however, it does seem that a collection

[150] Idem 145.
[151] R. Cormack, "The Wall-Painting of St. Michael in the Theatre," in *Aphrodisias Papers 2: The Theatre, A Sculptor's Workshop, Philosophers, and Coin-Types*, eds. R.R.R. Smith and K.T. Erim (Ann Arbor, MI: *Journal of Roman Archaeology* Supplement 2, 1991), 120.
[152] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 140.

of five inscriptions from the mid-fifth to mid-sixth centuries all reference the same man.[153] Referred to as both μεγαλοπρεπέστατος (*magnificentissimus*) and ἰλλούστριος (*illustris*), Pytheas would have been a member of the highest rank of senators, the *viri illustres*. Nevertheless, he appears to have undertaken works as a citizen of Aphrodisias rather than as an agent of the Empire. An epigram from the Bouleuterion/Odeon upholds Pytheas' relationship to the city and its patron goddess, thus promoting his identity as a pagan in a time of ever-increasing religious consideration:

> ἄστ[υ] θεῆς | Παφίης καὶ | Πυθέου, ἡ μὲν | ὀρ[θῶσ]α *stop*
> τὴν | (5) [...]ΟΙΑΘΕΗ | [... π]όλιν | [...]ΟΝ *stop* |
> ΧΟΡΣ[...]ΝΝΗΟΝ | γὰρ ἐπασ[σ]υτέροι |(10)σιν ἐπ' ἔργοις *stop* |
> ὅλβου ἀφειδείων | κτίσσεν ἀπαρ |χόμενος *leaf*
>
> City of the Paphian goddess and of Pytheas: she, for her part, having exalted [?has given blessings] appropriate to a goddess [to] the city [...?while he] in addition to constant works, unsparing of his wealth, has built [...] as an offering.[154]

Nevertheless, even as a pagan local citizen, Pytheas' benefaction would not have been a mere religious offering. Rather, his euergetism would have promoted him politically and he clearly played a political role in the life of the city. His name and image were present throughout the city, at all of the major locations of social and political gathering. The Theater Baths, which were restored in the mid-fifth century by the aforementioned Ampelius and Dulcitius, were further refurbished in the late-fifth century by Pytheas, as attested in an inscription found at the site:

> [... Π]υθέας τρισόλ[βιος ...]
>
> […] Pytheas thrice-blessed […][155]

[153] *ALA2004* V.19.
[154] Idem 56.
[155] Idem 57.

Pytheas appears to have been active all around the city, with an additional dedicatory inscription to the senator found at the Hadrianic Baths. The fragmentary inscription from the Hadrianic Baths was originally carved on a white marble architrave and references the work he did on a colonnade:

> [...] παστάδα κίον' ἐκ ΙΙ[...]
> [...]Τ Πυθέας ΟΡΣΙΙΙΥ[...]
>
> […?built the] colonnade (with) column from […]Pytheas […][156]

Evidently, Pytheas' building projects were not limited to the theater area. His extensive investment in city works demonstrates the resurgence of local euergetism taking place at this time. And – as Roueché notes – among these benefactors were men with no "curial obligation" to do so.[157] Apart from civic loyalty, the primary rationale for this giving is political competition.

Pytheas would have been a wealthy Carian significant in the political sphere of the region, and as such, would have garnered both supporters and detractors. Two surviving acclamations allude to his support, one from a marble base shaft (*ALA2004* 55) and the other etched around a marble gameboard (*ALA2004* 59):

> [αὔ]ξι Πυθέας
> [ὁ] μ]εγαλοπρ(επέστατος)
> [καὶ] ἰλλ]ούστριος
> [...]
>
> Up with Pytheas, magnificentissimus and illustris [...][158]

This acclamation, referring to Pytheas' senatorial titles, openly lauds and supports the local aristocrat. The marble was not found at the theater but as a stray fragment in the

[156] Idem 58a.
[157] Idem V.6.
[158] Idem 55.

south-east area of the village. Although it was found elsewhere, it is possible that it was inscribed to record approval of Pytheas previously voiced at the theater; or, at the very least, served a similar role to the spoken acclamations of the theater in general.

Pytheas was further acclaimed by his supporters on a gameboard dated to the late fifth century:[159]

a *cross* νικᾷ ἡ τύχη τοῦ Μαρδαητου *cross*
b [νικᾷ ἡ τύ]χη τῶν Πυθεανιτῶν .

a. The fortune of Mardaetus wins!
b. The fortune of the Pytheanitae wins![160]

The gameboard was found at the theater and exemplifies the types of activities taking place there. The first inscription (a) refers to an individual named Mardaetus and is accompanied by two crosses. The second inscription (b) refers to a group, the Pytheanitae. Although the relationship between the two inscriptions is unknown, it is interesting the similarity in dates between the gameboard and the local benefactor Pytheas. It thus seems likely that this group supported Pytheas and possibly opposed Mardaetus, who was ostensibly a Christian. While there was likely to be some rivalry between pagan and Christian notables, the extent of this animosity is unknown and the gameboard acclamations are better served as representations of the general competition among local benefactors at this time who were "vying for preeminence".[161]

In addition to the theater, there were other locations of civic importance in the city that continued to be used and maintained in this period. One indicator of this at the Bouleuterion/Odeon is a statue of Pytheas that was present there. Due to the works he

[159] For more information on gameboards at Aphrodisias, see Roueché*, Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias*, Appendix V.
[160] *ALA2004* 59.
[161] *ALA2004* VI.10.

undertook at this location and others throughout Aphrodisias, Pytheas was honored with a portrait and accompanying base (mentioned above) which is easily compared to a statue of the governor Palmatus erected at the Tetrastoon in front of the theater (Fig. 19). Both Pytheas and Palmatus wear a distinctive toga and senatorial shoes, and carried a *mappa*.[162] Both statues would have also been set up in a similar manner: although smaller than statues of previous eras, these portraits and their imposing, *spoliated* bases, would have likely been placed "in front of the old monuments rather than being set into programmed architectural frames…where they would seem withdrawn from the viewer".[163] Their erection in prominent areas of gathering represents the "survival of traditional values among the local aristocracy" through their incorporation alongside various "statues of leading citizens and councilors of bygone days".[164] Furthermore, their measured placement would have garnered similar consideration from viewers as the larger statues of the men that came before.

As evidenced by the survival of several inscriptions relating to the life of Pytheas, he was undoubtedly a wealthy local of significance. The final record we have of his life is from a funerary verse published in the *Greek Anthology* that was most likely inscribed for Pytheas at Aphrodisias:

> Οὐδὲ θανὼν κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἀπώλεσας ἐς χθόνα πᾶσαν,
> ἀλλ' ἔτι σῆς ψυχῆς ἀγλαὰ πᾶντα μένει,
> ὅσσ' ἔλαχές τε φύσει, μῆτιν πανάριστε·
> τῷ ῥα καὶ ἐς μακάρων νῆσον ἔβης, Πυθέα.
>
> Not even after death have you lost your fine reputation in the whole earth, but still all the splendid (achievements) of your soul remain - both those which you inherited, and those which you learnt, according to your nature,

[162] Smith, "Late Antique Portraits in a Public Context", 169.
[163] Idem 171.
[164] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 134.

> most excellent in intellect. So now, Pytheas, you have also gone to the Island of the Blest.[165]

Once again, Pytheas' pagan associations are referenced, as are his splendid achievements. However, interestingly, it seems that this funerary verse is more interested in the achievements of his soul and mind. This is in contrast to his other mentions in the epigraphic record of Aphrodisias, which suggest his strong ties to Aphrodite, his wealth, and his political power, both imperially and civically. Pytheas' inscriptions depict a man who, although living in a period with religious and political changes, nevertheless reflected the continuation of local benefaction that was so important to the city.

[165] *ALA2004* 250.

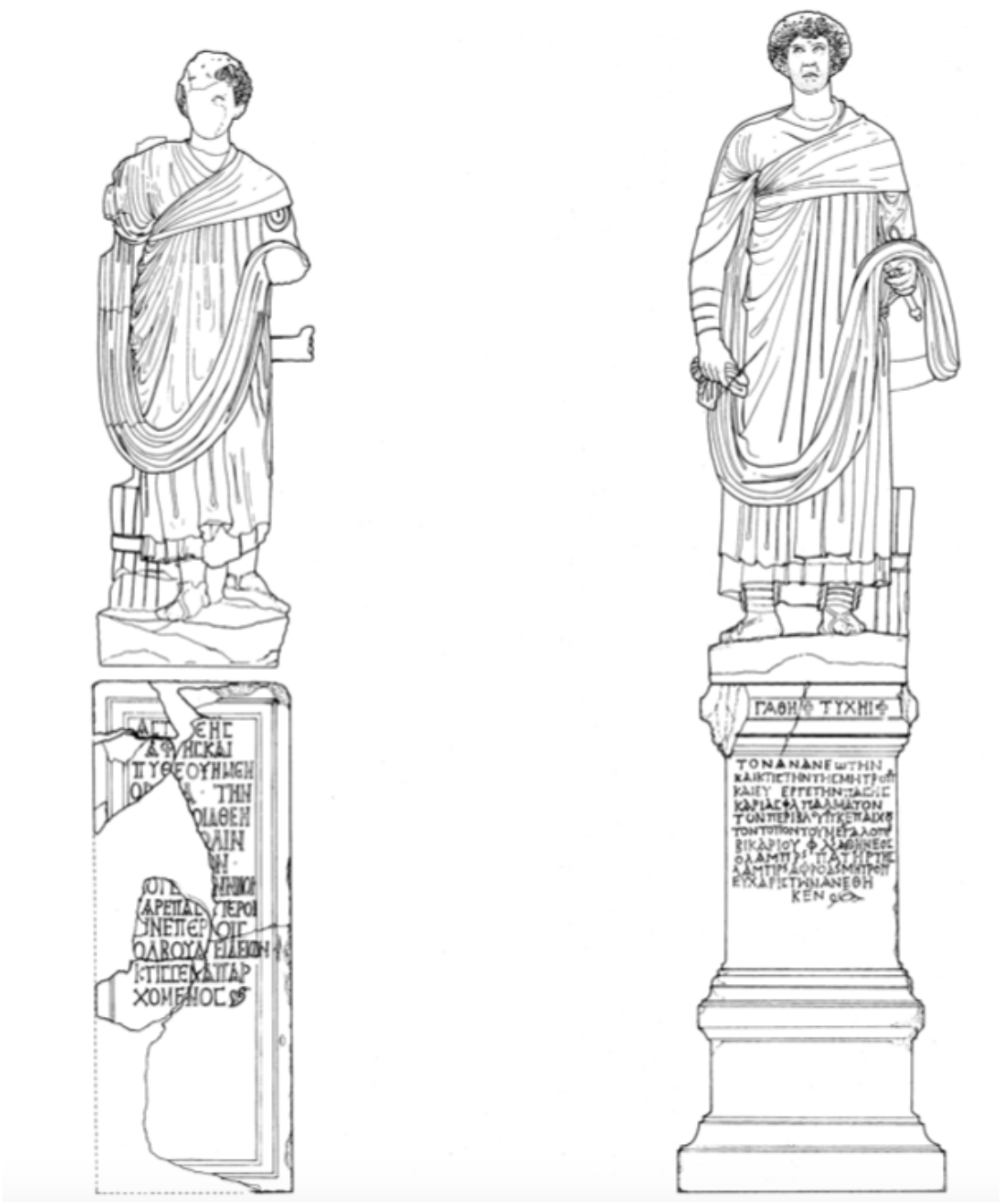

Fig. 19. Statue and base for Pytheas and Palmatus. Smith 1999.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS

The social life of the Theater at Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity was affected by societal and religious changes largely related to funding and patronage. Aphrodisias' civic identity was important to its citizens and was promoted by a sense of continuity with the past. From the early Empire, the relationship between Rome and Aphrodisias was celebrated in order to demonstrate the city's political significance. Through the first few centuries AD, we see a continuation of earlier benefaction via local elites, who funded large-scale building projects, monuments, and a wide variety of public gifts, including festivals, competitions, and shows that took place at the theater. Civic leaders – such as Zoilos and Molossos – were in charge of most public building projects in the city, with much work being done at the theater. The theater was further politicized as a space for the demonstration of imperial victory, an idea present to all who frequented the theater complex – whether a local citizen or someone attending (or partaking in) a performance, athletic competition, festival, or civic assembly.

Although various honorifics had already alluded to this imperial connection, the construction of the Archive Wall in the third century was a key player in transmitting this identity to visitors of the theater. As one of the primary locations for social and civic gatherings in the city, the theater would have acted as a propagandistic setting for the demonstration of the wealth and status of the city and of those who took part in euergetism. The Archive Wall was a distinguished presentation of important texts and

clearly displayed the city's special status through the various letters, decrees, and treaties published there.

From the early third century to the mid-fourth century, the theater's political role increased as it became a site accommodating to the provincial governors, men with increasing importance in the region. In the fourth century, there began a definite shift to increased imperial attention paid to the city, as well as the notable transference of patronage from local elites to gubernatorial donors. Additionally, we have evidence for political competition between cities vying for imperial regard, thus furthering the use of the theater as a political instrument.

In Late Antiquity, we see a return to local euergetism by leading civic fathers; a return that was, at least in part, fueled by political competition. Nevertheless, this return did not mean an end to gubernatorial patronage, and the two functioned alongside each other. Through shifts in funding, the sculptural and textual propaganda, and its governmental influence, the political nature of the theater was clearly a central component of its purpose. This feature was further promoted in the later Empire by the recording of acclamations in the theater complex. The relevance of the theater to the factions and other social groups is evidenced in the acclamations for Pytheas found in the area.

The defacement of public monuments, including those at the theater, took place sometime in the mid-sixth to seventh centuries. Evidently, religious changes were taking place and the pagan nature of the city – that had for so long been central to the city's identity – was not something to be ignored and destroyed. Public references to pagan sacrifices and deities, most notable Aphrodite and her city, were erased. However,

through the sixth century, we still have evidence for theater benefaction by both pagans and Christians, with both acting as influential civic leaders. Continued late construction at the Tetrastoon and Theater Baths also suggests sustained use and centrality of the theater complex to the city and its role as a public meeting place through the centuries. Aphrodisias continued to maintain its theater until the seventh century when it was used in the fortification of the theater hill.

Even with these shifts in benefaction and fluctuation in building activity, there is a significant amount of continuity present at the Theater at Aphrodisias from the early Roman to late Roman/early Byzantine periods. The theater complex maintained its role as a central area for building projects and public life. Moreover, the importance of "a small number of civic fathers" to the construction of the majority of public works is visible from the first century BC to the early third century AD, and once again in Late Antiquity with men such as Pytheas.[166]

[166] Ratté, "New Research on the Urban Development of Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity", 145.

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