

KAI APHRODISIAS QNA

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Fig. 1: Anastylosis of Sebasteion at end of 2007 season.

We had an exciting and action-packed season last year. Highlights include the discovery of a Hellenistic funerary altar with a moving epigram for a youth, a whole series of new joins made to the Sebasteion reliefs by our sharp-eyed students, and the mounting of the second storey of the Sebasteion anastylosis – it looks impressive (fig. 1).

We also excavated in the Atrium House and the North Agora, and continued our big program of mosaic and site conservation, as well as reaching the end of the conservation of the seventy Sebasteion reliefs which will be displayed in a new museum hall in 2008. There were also important new finds of sarcophagi and a lot of heavy-duty documentation and research on buildings, monuments, and marble sculpture.

The funerary altar was found in the eastern stretch of the City Wall which we had cleaned vigorously for study and drawing. This was the final campaign of

field documentation for Peter de Staebler's major study of the walls. The altar is round and inscribed with an elevated eight-line grave epigram for a youth called Epikrates. It was deciphered by our senior epigraphist Angelos Chaniotis (fig. 2):

*The stone sings of Epikrates' son,
Epikrates, who lies under this mound
still a youth. Now the dust (of the gymnasium) is
left behind,
4 as well as the lyre he strummed and the Homeric
(songs)
and the spears and the round (shield) of willow
with the fine grip
and the horse bridles now covered with cobwebs
and the bows and the javelins. Outstanding in all
these things,
8 to Hades the fair-famed youth has gone.*

So, the deceased young man was athletic, musical, a fighter, and a horse-lover – the key activities of a

well-bred Hellenic youth. The monument is early, one of a handful of second-century inscriptions that show Aphrodisias participating in the mainstream of late Hellenistic city culture.



Fig. 2: Angelos Chaniotis studies the new Hellenistic grave altar of Epikrates.

At the opposite end of the urban culture-spectrum, again in the east city wall, some interesting new phallos graffiti or ancient porno-doodles were revealed during the cleaning (fig. 3).

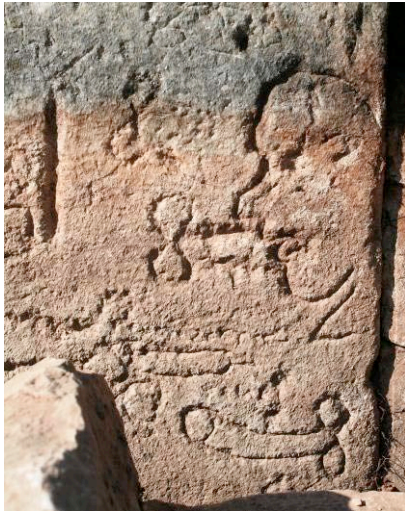


Fig. 3: Porno-graffiti in the east City Wall.

The Sebasteion was an important focus of research and conservation activity. A new museum hall for the Sebasteion reliefs was constructed in 2007 and will be opened in 2008. During the 2007 season Trevor Proudfoot and his team of local marble conservators made a final push on the conservation of the last twenty reliefs, making them ready to be moved from our depot to the museum this spring. Some seventy reliefs will be displayed. At the same time, a team of students (Maryl Gensheimer, Ava Vitali, Leslie Wallick) made a new database of unattached fragments from the excavation of the Sebasteion (1979-81) that had never been properly recorded. They were then able to make a spectacular series of major new joins, including part of the Cyclops's beard in the Polyphemos relief, the right hand of Claudius delivering the death blow to Britannia (fig.



Fig. 4: Leslie Wallick and Maryl Gensheimer join the hand of Claudius to a Sebasteion relief.

4), and the superb head of the dancing nymph in the Drunken Dionysos relief (fig. 5).

The stone-for-stone reconstruction or anastylosis of the east end of the Sebasteion's South Building also made great progress in 2007, under the direction of Thomas Kaefer and Gerhard Paul, with students and former students Emre Işık, Samantha Norton, Onur Öztürk, and Özgür Öztürk. They made casts of five



Fig. 5: Relief of Drunken Dionysos with newly added head of dancing nymph, from Sebasteion.

mythological reliefs from the second storey and mounted them with their framing Ionic architecture on the building. The powerful effect of this highly elaborated relief display is already apparent – and there is a third storey to come as well. The reliefs mounted in the facade feature the story of Trojan

Aeneas – his conception from Aphrodite, his flight from Troy, and his peaceful arrival in Italy (fig. 6).

New strategic excavation clarified the chronology of the Atrium House, a large townhouse next to the Sebasteion. This was supervised by Ian Lockey who is studying this major domestic complex for his PhD dissertation. In conjunction with this work, Kent Severson assisted by students Berna Çağlar and Anna Serotta (fig. 7), continued major conservation work on the mosaic and opus sectile floors of the house. There was a surprise in a deep trench dug inside a chamber at the south-east corner of the North Agora: 3m down there appeared significant quantities of prehistoric pottery (late chalcolithic and early bronze age), previously found at Aphrodisias only on the Pekmez and Theatre hills.



Fig. 7: Conservation student Anna Serotta works on a mosaic in the Atrium House, and close-up of the mosaic.

Harry Mark, our senior architect, along with Eric Ellingsen supervised a team of architecture students (Michael Borter, Heiki Kumf, Megan Lawler, Nick Quiring) making detailed plans and drawings of two city gates, parts of the Stadium, and four tombs in the cemeteries, as well as the east City Wall and the Atrium House.



Fig. 6: Sebasteion second storey reliefs, seen from below. From left to right: Anchises and Aphrodite, Aeneas' flight from Troy, Aeneas' arrival in Italy.

Julia Lenaghan, our senior sculpture researcher, supervised a team of students who worked on the documentation of the sculpture of the site (Heather Awan, Christopher Knutson, Sarah Madole, Esen Ögüç, as well as the three other students mentioned above). Our sarcophagus database now contains some 730 items. Three students worked on particular sarcophagus projects for PhDs or publication: Heather Awan on the cemetery contexts of the sarcophagi, Esen Ögüç on the columnar sarcophagi, and Sarah Madole on a group of three unusual frieze sarcophagi (they combine figures of gods and contemporary citizen couples).

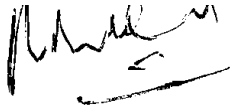
Four new sarcophagi, all of the third century AD, were found in the southeast necropolis. They are of a popular garland design. One has an unusual inscription, telling that the sarcophagus was made by a man (his name is not preserved), for himself and his wife, Meltine, as well as for another wife Aurelia Auxesis and their son Philetos (S-715). In other words, the owner seems to have had two wives. Another garland sarcophagus with Dionysian masks stands a little outside normal Aphrodisian production (fig. 8). It belonged to a woman called Aurelia Apphia, and she had it made, as she says, for her use alone (S-730). Her sarcophagus was found some kilometres to the southeast of Aphrodisias, near the village of Ataeymir.



Fig. 8: Sarcophagus of a woman called Aurelia Apphia, made for her use only.

Publication remains one of our fundamental goals. Publication projects were pursued on the reliefs from the Basilica (Bahadır Yılıdırım), the statues from the Bouleuterion (Christopher Hallett), and the statues from the Sebasteion Propylon (Julia Lenaghan). A female statue from the Propylon was tested on a base for Aemilia Lepida and found to fit perfectly. A manuscript concerning on the mythological relief from the Agora Gate (by Pascale Linant de Bellefonds) was prepared for publication and checked against the pieces, with ten fragments added and several important new joins made. Finally, a new volume in the Aphrodisias series came out last year: *Aphrodisias III: The cult statue of Aphrodite of Aphrodisias* (Mainz 2007) by Lisa Brody (fig. 9).

Archaeology is close collaborative work, and last year, beside our skilled local work crews, we had an excellent team of more than 45 students, senior staff, and visiting specialists. The core team is seen standing on the scaffolding of the Sebasteion in Fig. 10. We had a very successful season in 2007 and it is a pleasure to end by thanking warmly all the Friends of Aphrodisias for their very generous support of our project.



R.R.R. Smith
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Fig. 9: Cover of new volume in Aphrodisias monograph series.

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Fig. 10: The 2007 team at the Sebasteion.