

# The Basilica of Aphrodisias

## Introduction

The main results of the Basilica's early and new excavations are published in this volume, including architectural and structural remains, ceramics (contributed by Ulrike Outschar), and inscriptions and sculptures that illuminate archaeological questions of building history and function. The primary aim of this project is to study the Basilica as a whole.<sup>1</sup> The Basilica is important from this perspective for a number of reasons—for example, the unusual urban setting and striking ambitiousness of scale, the 'monumental narrative' powered by spatial sequencing and sculpted images, and the regional style of planning and architecture.<sup>2</sup> The Basilica also figures prominently as one of the better-preserved public monuments to have survived from the Flavian period in the eastern Roman provinces. The extended plan and that of several other similar public buildings in Asia Minor ('Asiatic basilicas') contrasts with more centralized plans of Roman basilicas (recommended by Vitruvius, *De arch.* 5.1.4–6), in the western provinces.

Erected in the late first century AD in the southwest quadrant of the city center (Figs. 1–2; Pls. 1, 3–4), the Basilica was the largest fully covered public space at Aphrodisias, which must have been a point of pride for the community. A special feature of the building was its interior display of sculpted 'parapet reliefs,' showing scenes of the city's legendary founders, the Founders' Reliefs.<sup>3</sup> The Basilica enjoyed a long life from approximately AD 100–500. The beginning and end of this period are well documented—the middle not nearly as much. The building probably served high-end business and local governmental and civic functions of various kinds. It is less likely that it served a new specialized function. In the early fourth

century, the Basilica's North Facade was inscribed with imperial edicts in Latin (Fig. 4),<sup>4</sup> and later in that century its interior décor was updated with prestigious reinstalled statues and geometric floor pavings.<sup>5</sup> The building experienced phases of disuse during the following centuries. The Basilica was rediscovered in the 1960s. Soon after, it underwent campaigns of excavation, simplified to 'early' and 'new' in this study: early, 1962, 1969–77, and 1988; new, 1993–8 and 2005–10.

## A. HISTORY, NAME, FUNCTION

The sanctuary of Aphrodite, access to marble quarries, and favored status from Rome constitute major factors in the blossoming of an urban way of life at Aphrodisias in Caria. The Temple of Aphrodite, the Theater, and the North Agora were all started in a wave of new construction in the 30s BC, financed by C. Julius Zoilos, a wealthy former Roman slave of Octavian, the future emperor Augustus.<sup>6</sup> In the early first century AD construction began on a large temple complex east of the city center, identified as the Sebasteion of the city, which was dedicated to Aphrodite, the Roman emperors, and the city.<sup>7</sup> In addition, at some point in the early first century the northern third of the Theater hill (a prehistoric mound) was cut back to expand the city center.<sup>8</sup> This space, today called the South Agora, may have completed a 'masterplan' begun by Zoilos (Fig.

<sup>1</sup> For preliminary results, see Stinson in *AphPapers* 4, *Basiliques*, and *Neue Zitten*.

<sup>2</sup> Recent collections and studies treating the cities of Roman Asia Minor: D. Parrish, *Urbanism in Western Asia Minor* (JRA Suppl. 45; 2001); P. Barresi, *Province dell'Asia Minore Coste dei Marmi Architettura Pubblica e Committenza* (Rome 2003); S. Mitchell, 'Recent Archaeology and the Development of Cities in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor,' in *Stadt und Stadtentwicklung in Kleinasien* (Bonn 2003), 21–34. W. Radt, (ed.), *Stadtgrubungen und Stadtforschung im westlichen Kleinasien. Geplantes und Erreichtes. Byzas 3* (2006). A classic treatment remains G.M.A. Hanfmann, *From Croesus to Constantine* (Cambridge, MA 1975).

<sup>3</sup> B. Yildirim, *The Reliefs from the Roman Civil Basilica at Aphrodisias in Caria* (PhD diss., New York University 2001); id., 'Identities'; id., *AphPapers* 4; Reynolds, *AphPapers* 4, 137–40.

<sup>4</sup> Progress reports: *AJA* 2004, 166–7, with fig. 20; M. Crawford, 'Discovery, Autopsy and Progress: Diocletian's Jigsaw Puzzles,' in T. P. Wiseman (ed.), *Classics in Progress. Essays on Ancient Greece and Rome* (Oxford 2002), 145–63, with fig. 6.5; Stinson, *AphPapers* 4, 91–6, with figs. 16–17, 21–3. For the edicts, see J. M. Reynolds, 'Regulations of Diocletian,' in *ALA*, 252–318.

<sup>5</sup> The late antique statuary ensemble from the north end of the Basilica and featuring the Blue Horse monument is the subject of separate study by R.R.R. Smith and C.H. Hallett. See Chapter 4.

<sup>6</sup> Zoilos and his works: J. M. Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome* (London 1982), 156–63; R.R.R. Smith, *The Monument of C. Julius Zoilos* (Mainz 1993); Ratté, 'Early Imperial,' 5–10.

<sup>7</sup> Sebasteion: R.R.R. Smith, *Aphrodisias VI. The Marble Reliefs from the Julio-Claudian Sebasteion* (Mainz 2013), 6–23.

<sup>8</sup> Topographical development of the South Agora: R.R.R. Smith, 'Archaeological Research at Aphrodisias, 1989–92,' *AphPapers* 3, 45–9; N. de Chaisemartin and A. Lemaire, 'Le Portique de Tibère: recherches sur son architecture et sa fonction,' *AphPapers* 3, 149–72; Ratté, 'Early Imperial,' 15–17 and 22–3; A. Wilson, 'Water, Nymphs, and a Palm Grove,' in R.R.R. Smith et al. (eds.), *Aphrodisias Papers 5* (*Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Suppl. Series, forthcoming).

2). The following associated construction projects seem to have been approximately contemporary with one another: the north retaining wall of the Theater, the south double-aisled stoa of the North Agora, and a single-aisled stoa built along the north side of the South Agora, called today the Portico of Tiberius (Pl. 2).<sup>9</sup>

### Construction date

Three forms of evidence provided by analyses of ceramics, inscriptions, and architectural decoration indicate a major period of construction for the Basilica during the last quarter of the first century AD (for more detailed discussion, see below).<sup>10</sup> Comprehensive study of the building's physical remains has identified no convincing evidence either for a prolonged or interrupted initial construction phase, or for substantial ad hoc later additions. This is a revision to previous thinking.<sup>11</sup> Other building activities that occurred around the city center at roughly the same time as the construction of the Basilica included the rebuilding of a bath complex (location unknown<sup>12</sup>), the completion of the Theater cavea in stone,<sup>13</sup> the monumentalization of the Stadium in stone,<sup>14</sup> and water works throughout the city.<sup>15</sup> After the Basilica, the Hadrianic Baths (including renovations to the west end of the South Agora), the columnar facade known today as the Agora Gate, and a large reflecting pool (date, unclear) 'completed' the South Agora.<sup>16</sup> True renovations to the Basilica were modest but costly, such as mosaic floor pavings and reconfigured statues. The inscribing of imperial documents in Latin onto the North Facade in the early fourth century AD constituted a special addition (Fig. 4).

<sup>9</sup> Both stoas share a back wall and a benefactor: *AJA* 2008, 720, 723.

<sup>10</sup> Early references to possible Flavian date: K. T. Erim, *Aphrodisias. City of Venus Aphrodite* (London 1986), 100; J. M. Reynolds, 'The Inscriptions,' in *AphCarie*, 83; M. Waelkens, 'Notes d'architecture sur l'agora et le portique de Tibère à Aphrodisias de Carie,' in *AphCarie*, 124. Recent discussions of date: Stinson, *AphPapers* 4, 83; Reynolds, *AphPapers* 4, 133–140, doc 1.

<sup>11</sup> Theory for major renovation involving parapet reliefs: K. T. Erim, in M. Mellink, 'Archaeology in Asia Minor,' *AJA* 82 (1978), 324–25; id., *City*, 26–7; id., *AphPapers* 1, 27; *ALA*, 2–3. For revision, see Yıldırım, *AphPapers* 4, 107–30. Theory for prolonged initial construction: N. de Chaisemartin, *Recherches sur l'architecture et le décor des monuments publics d'Aphrodisias de Carie* (PhD diss., University of Paris-IV Sorbonne 2002), vol. 3, 733–49.

<sup>12</sup> Bath: J. M. Reynolds, 'The Dedication of a Bath Building at Carian Aphrodisias,' in *Studia in honorem Georgii Mihailov* (Sofia 1995), 397–402; Chaniotis, *AphPapers* 4, 62, 68–9.

<sup>13</sup> Theater: J. M. Reynolds, 'Epigraphical Evidence for the Construction of the Theatre,' *AphPapers* 2, 16–18.

<sup>14</sup> Stadium: see K. Welch, 'The Stadium at Aphrodisias,' *AJA* 102 (1998), 547–69; *AJA* 2004, 147; *AJA* 2008, 733.

<sup>15</sup> Water works: Chaniotis, *AphPapers* 4, 74–6, doc. 10.

<sup>16</sup> For an overview of the city's urban development in the high imperial period, see Ratté, 'Early Imperial,' 15–24. For new work on the pool, see Wilson, 'Water, Nymphs,' *Aphrodisias Papers* 5, forthcoming.

### The site

The main orthogonal city grid of Aphrodisias was discovered through geophysical surveys conducted between 1995 and 1998 (Fig. 1).<sup>17</sup> The immense footprint of the Basilica, 28.84 x 146.5 m, occupies three city blocks at the western edge of the Theater hill, and adjoins the south-west corner of the South Agora (Figs. 1–2; Pl. 1). Excavation below the building encountered no evidence for earlier structures. Major streets bordered the building on its west and south sides, and possibly on the east side. For most of the Basilica's life, its North Facade faced directly onto the South Agora. In late antiquity the south side of the South Agora received a stoa, which passed in front of the Basilica (Fig. 2).

The Basilica's perpendicular orientation to the South Agora was a creative adaptation to its site. A lengthwise placement with respect to the oblong public square would have been more typical for a colonnaded structure or covered hall, but the Theater hill prevented this orientation. The Basilica also lay at the intersection of two important streets, an east-west street that crossed the city, and a north-south street that provided the primary means of access to the city center from the south (Figs. 1–2).<sup>18</sup> This orientation led to a bi-directional planning concept, whereby main entrances were located at both of the building's short ends, an unusual characteristic for a public building of this kind (Fig. 3).

### The building

The Basilica's main components, arranged along a spine-like axis, are as follows: the North Facade and Vestibule, Long Hall, South Hall, and South Facade (Fig. 3). There are two main spaces: the Long Hall, 29 x 108 m, an elongated covered hall with a basilical cross-section (double-height nave and two lower side aisles), and the South Hall, 31.65 x 17.25 m, a broad, rectangular space with a special elevated chamber and two circulation corridors. As mentioned above, the main points of egress are located at the narrow ends of the lengthy building.

The Basilica was entered from the South Agora through the North Facade, whose stunning embellishment was designed for its purpose as the main entrance to the building. The North Facade held three doorways visually framed by four Corinthian double half-columns and two complex ensembles of pilasters at the corners (Fig. 4). The architectural composition consisted of a propylon-like central zone with flanks arranged in an B–A–B scale configuration. This design is striking for its thin screen

<sup>17</sup> City grid: Ratté, 'Early Imperial,' 7–11; id., 'Founding of Aphrodisias,' in *AphPapers* 4, 7–36.

<sup>18</sup> Siting is comparable to basilicas at Pompeii and Corinth (Lechaion Road). Each building was built along a major street entering a public square: Gros, *L'architecture*, fig. 247 (Pompeii), fig. 291 (Corinth).

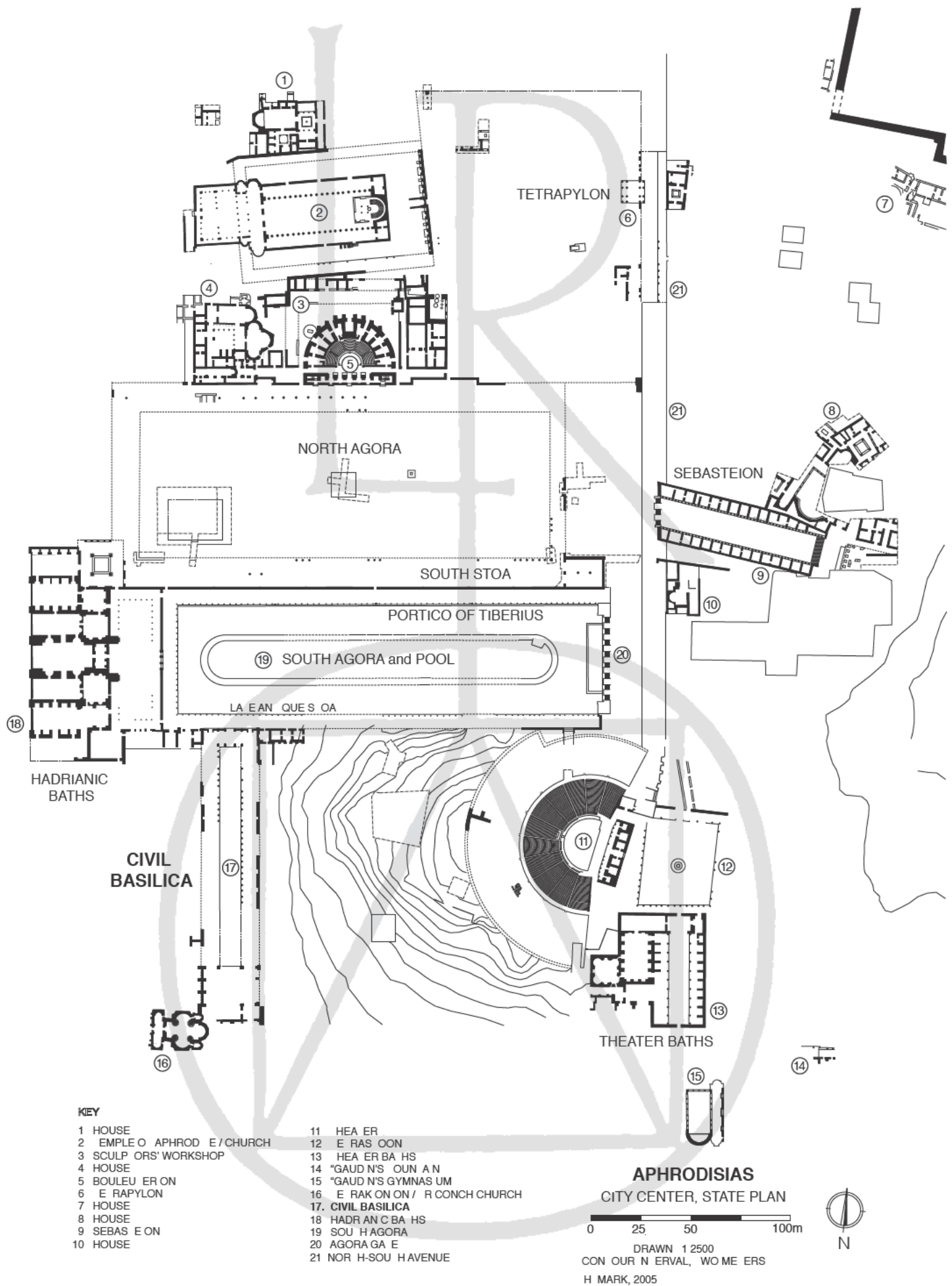


Fig. 2. Aphrodisias city center. State plan.

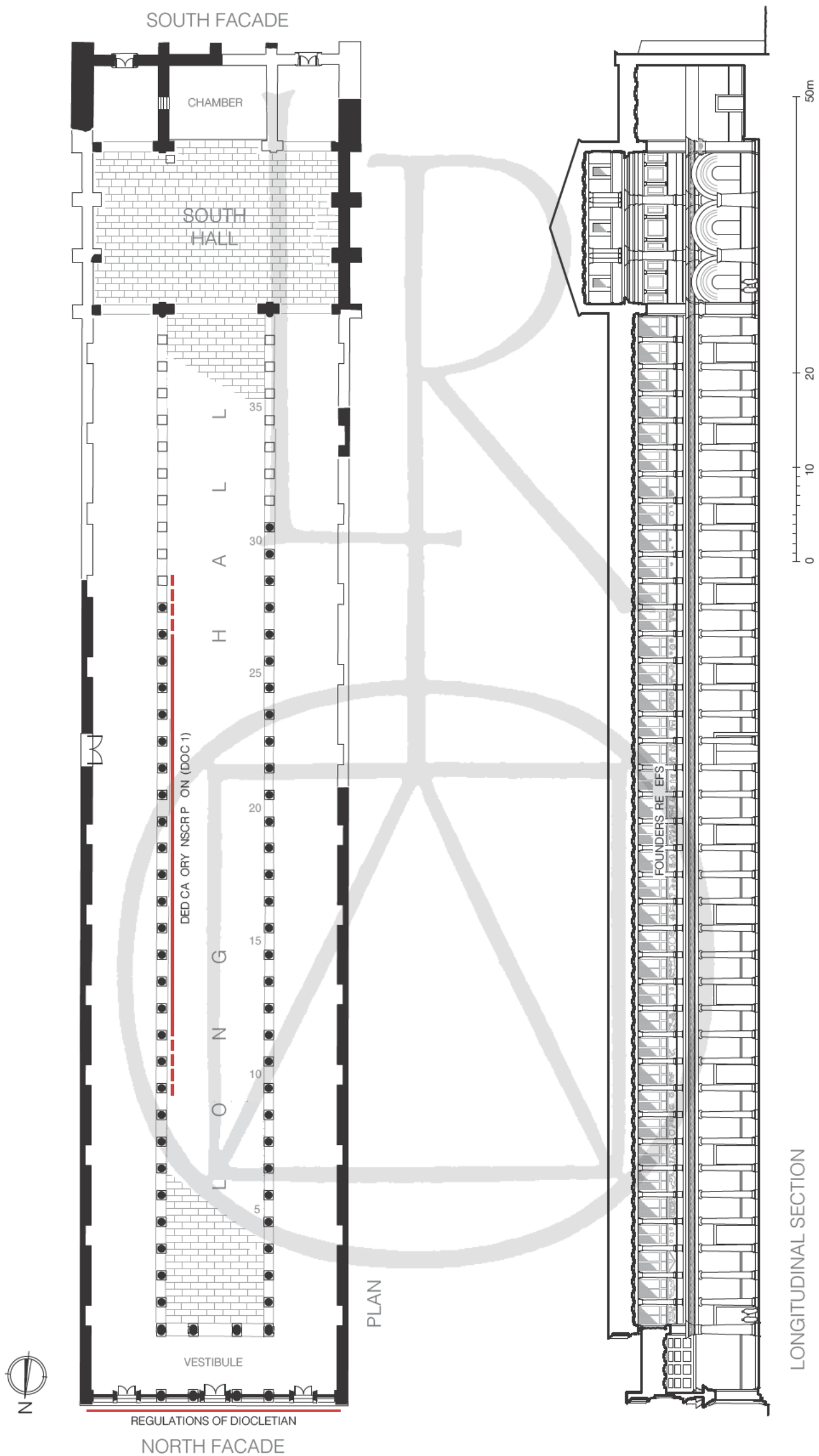
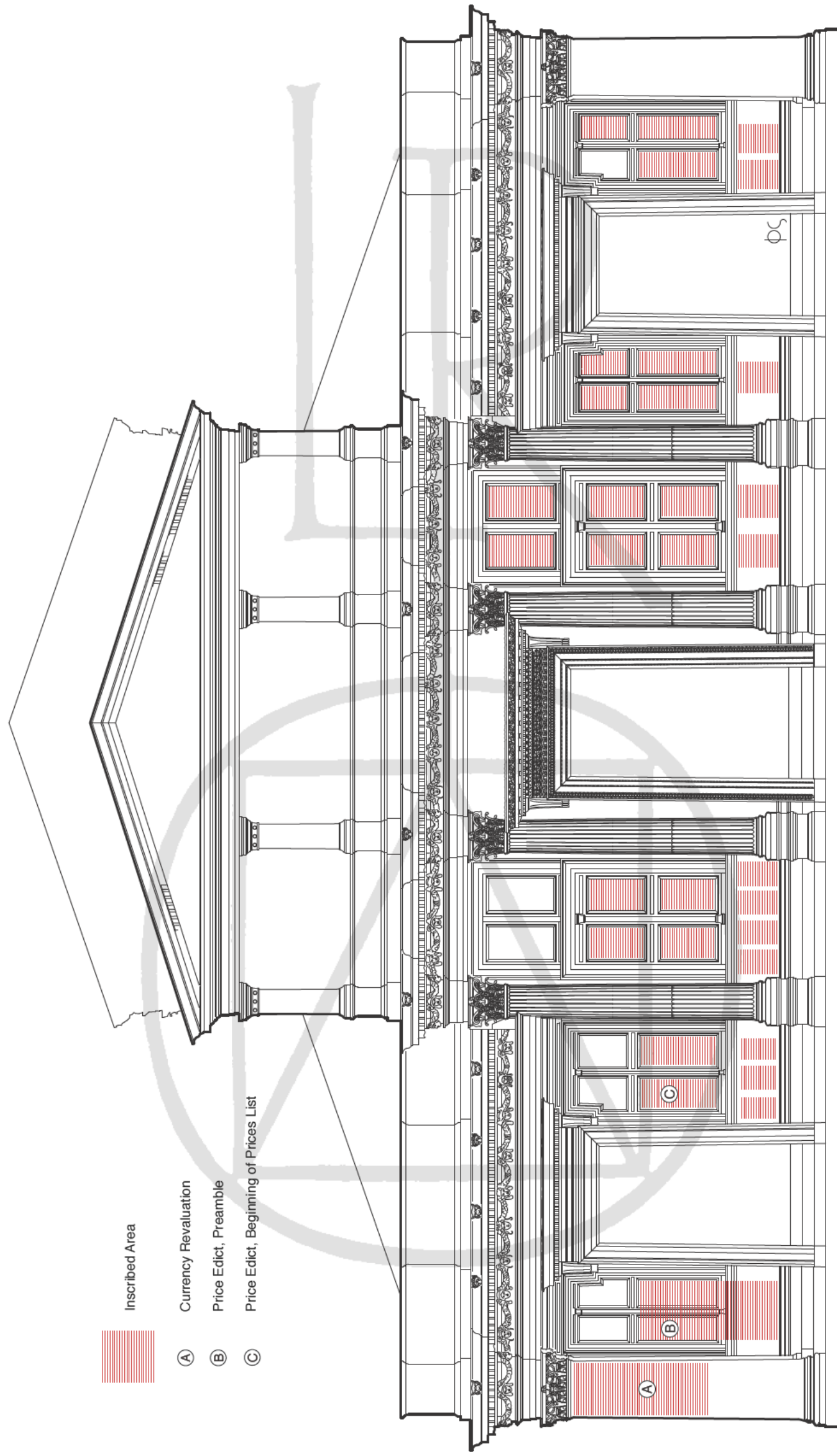


Fig. 3. Basilica. Plan and section looking east.



BASILICA, NORTH FACADE

Fig. 4. Reconstructed North Facade showing inscribed areas.

wall, whose elaborate moldings imitated operable shutters. Diocletian's Price Edict (over 4,000 lines in length) was carved into almost the full expanse of the North Facade's screen wall (Fig. 4). A second, contemporary imperial document, which concerned the revaluation of currency, was inscribed onto the elevation's east corner pier. See Chapters 2 and 4.

Once inside the building, visitors entered the Vestibule before moving into the Long Hall (Fig. 3). The Vestibule's architecture had a number of distinguishing features, such as an arch-and-pediment motif ('Syrian-Gable'), and several different styles and configurations of column capitals. The Long Hall was the main space of the building. This elongated, colonnaded hall had a basilical cross-section with a nave and two lower side aisles. The colonnades' primary Ionic order was modelled upon the earlier Portico of Tiberius, complete with a mask-and-garland frieze—an unusual application of this motif inside a completely enclosed public building. An upper-story order consisted of piers engaged with half-columns and crowned by flute-and-acanthus capitals. A sculpted parapet was mounted between each of the upper-story columns (Figs. 3, 5–6). Fragments of 46 of an original 78 parapets (each, on average: H: .96, W: 2.34, D: .28 m) have been recovered through excavation: 28 with at least half of the panel preserved. In general, the reliefs' subject matter celebrated the city's patron goddess Aphrodite as well as Dionysus and other deities. Legendary founders of Aphrodisias—Ninos and Semiramis of ancient Assyria, Gordios of Phrygia, and the Greek hero Bellerophon, identifiable by names inscribed above them<sup>19</sup>—appeared in a special series of reliefs in the middle of the east colonnade (Pl. 59). Niches in the walls of the side aisles were presumably designed for statuary. The nave's floor was paved in white marble tiles. The side aisles' original flooring is unknown; in late antiquity they were paved in c. 1,500 m<sup>2</sup> of geometric floor mosaics.

The South Hall was entered through a triple-archway (Figs. 3, 6). The room was broad and spacious—its ceiling rose approximately 19 m in height, significantly more than that of the Long Hall's nave.<sup>20</sup> A prestigious elevated chamber, 10 x 8 m, at the back of South Hall aligned with the building's longitudinal axis. Reconstructions of the South Hall's ornamental wall elevations show an architectural language of arches, arcades, and engaged elements (Figs. 7–8). Special features included figured composite capitals and polychromatic inlaid opus sectile. Two corridors with archways and doors connected the South Hall to the South Facade and to a major east-west street.

<sup>19</sup> Inscribed names: Reynolds, *AphPapers* 4, 137–40, doc. 2.

<sup>20</sup> For comparison, the Theater skene-building stood c. 17 m; the north and south buildings of the Sebasteion, c. 12 m; the Temple of Aphrodite, c. 16 m. In a global perspective, the entire South Hall would have easily fit *inside* the rotunda of the Pantheon in Rome.

## Patrons

Fragmentary names of two private financiers of the Basilica are known from a dedicatory inscription in Greek, which was likely displayed on the east colonnade of the Long Hall (Figs. 3, 5) (**Doc 1**): a man, C. Laikanios, and a woman, Paulleina. These local individuals may have been siblings or more likely husband and wife. C. Laikanios probably received the Roman citizenship under the patronage of a proconsul of Asia by the name of C. Laecanius Bassus (c. AD 81/2), but this is uncertain. The families who were involved in the Basilica's erection were among those of note in the community that by the end of the first century AD had received the Roman citizenship. The Basilica reflects a desire to assert this new status in public space. See below and Appendix 3.

## The ancient name of the building?

Dedicatory inscriptions for public monuments at Aphrodisias usually included terms referring directly to the monument and sometimes even to its parts: the Portico of Tiberius is referred to as a *stoa*, the parts of the Theater's stage platform and facade as *logeion* and *proskenion*, just to provide a few examples.<sup>21</sup> In cases such as the Sebasteion, Bouleuterion, or the Basilica, where secure identification is not offered by a name preserved in a dedicatory inscription belonging to the monument in question, often other kinds of inscriptions provide clues.

Two inscriptions from Aphrodisias mention that the city had a *basilikē*.<sup>22</sup> The *basilikē* mentioned in each case was probably one and the same, and it was an important monument in the city. Identification with the Basilica is a strong possibility (**Doc 1**). The terms *basilikē*, or *basilikē stoa*, could have flexible meaning. J. J. Coulton in his study on the architectural history of the Greek stoa warned against interpreting them in public inscriptions as particular building types, citing evidence that *basilikē* or variations on 'royal' or 'kingly' as well as *stoa* could be loosely employed in Greek usage, even after the Roman development of a building type called *basilica* in Latin.<sup>23</sup> Strabo (5.3.8) calls the basilicas of Rome *stoai basilikai*.

A third inscription from Aphrodisias mentions a structure whose name is restored variously as *embasilikos* or *oikobasilikos* in the context of renovations by M. Ulpius

<sup>21</sup> *I Aph* 4.4 (*stoa*, Portico of Tib.); 8.1 (*logeion* and *proskenion*, Theater).

<sup>22</sup> Chaniotis, *AphPapers* 4, 70, docs. 5a and 5b; Reynolds, *AphPapers* 4, 131; see also *I Aph* 12.526.

<sup>23</sup> Coulton, *Stoa*, 180. See also G. Downey, 'The Architectural Significance of the Use of the Words Stoa and Basilike in Classical Literature,' *AJA* 41 (1937), 194–211; J. Balty, *Curia Ordinis. Recherches d'architecture et d'urbanisme antiques sur les curies provinciales du monde romain* (Brussels 1983), 281–93; Ginouvès, *Dictionnaire*, vol. 3, 88–91.

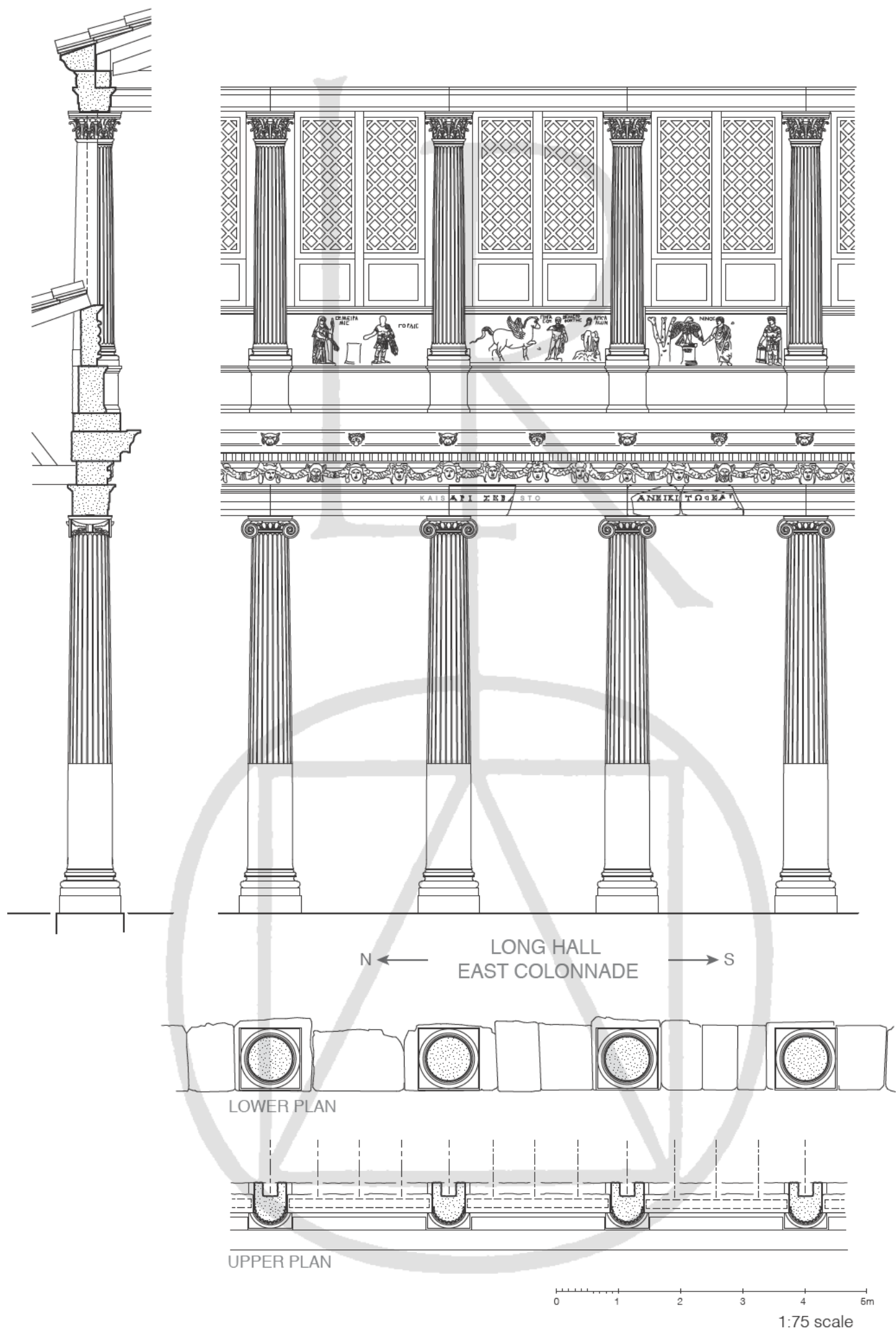


Fig. 5. Long Hall. Reconstruction of east colonnade showing Founders' Reliefs, fragments of a dedicatory inscription (*exempli gratia*), and mask-and-garland frieze.

Carminius Claudianus to a gymnasium of Diogenes.<sup>24</sup> This structure is probably not the building of the present study.<sup>25</sup>

### Function, a proposal

The building boom that began at Aphrodisias in the second half of the first century BC created a new town center, complete with the large, fully equipped North Agora, the Theater, and the Temple of Aphrodite. However, as discussed earlier, it is clear there were plans as early as the Tiberian period to expand the North Agora with a second large public square, the South Agora. The political ambitions of the Basilica's patrons and those of the town council must have played roles in its construction, but it was probably not designed to meet any particularly pressing need, such as a new civic function for the city.

*Business.* There is little hard evidence for the activities that occurred inside the building. Some activities that had previously gone on under the partially covered stoas of the agora probably moved into the more protected interior spaces of the Long Hall and South Hall. If function played a role at all in the Basilica's *raison d'être*, this consideration would have been paramount. Its location at the intersection of two important streets, one of which directly accessed the city center, also suggests varied business functions (Figs. 1–2). There was no shortage of room; the interior held over 4,200 m<sup>2</sup> (45,200 ft<sup>2</sup>) of covered space. Activities may have included banking, money changing, writing (the work of scribes and secretaries), letting of contracts, and legal counseling and proceedings. These are activities that are associated of course with Roman basilicas,<sup>26</sup> but Greek stoas and peristyle courts were also traditionally the sites for them.<sup>27</sup> The South Hall's raised chamber is also the kind of space one might expect was used for small semi-private assemblies and meetings such as trials.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the aisles of the Long Hall could have been cordoned off for similar purposes.

A place-inscription for a man by the name of Teimokles (**Doc 3**) was inscribed onto the marble floor paving of the

<sup>24</sup> As *embasilikos* in *I Aph* 12.1111, after Deering; as *oikobasilikos* by Chanotis (*Aph Papers* 4, 72–3, doc. 8).

<sup>25</sup> De Chaisemartin and Lemaire, 'Portique de Tibère,' *Aph Papers* 3, 161–72. Criticism: Smith, *Aph Papers* 3, 13, 45 and 49; Ratté, 'Early Imperial,' 15–16. The Theater Baths provides another possibility for the general location of this gymnasium (Fig. 2).

<sup>26</sup> Functions, Roman basilicas: K. Ohr, *Die Basilika in Pompeji* (Berlin 1991), 81–6; A. Corso and E. Romano, *Vitruvio: De Architectura* (Turin 1997), 619–25, 654–5; K. Welch, 'A New View of the Origins of the Basilica: the Atrium Regium, Graecostasis, and Roman diplomacy,' *JRA* 16 (2003), 5–33, esp. 9; essays by F. de Angelis and L. Bablitz in F. de Angelis (ed.), *Spaces of Justice in the Roman World* (Leiden and Boston 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Functions, Greek stoas: R. Martin, *Recherches sur l'agora grecque. Etudes d'histoire et d'architecture urbaines* (Paris 1951), 495–502; Coulton, *Stoa*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Courts at Aphrodisias continued until at least the reign of Gordian III (AD 238–44): Reynolds, *Aphrodisias*, 107, 136–9, doc. 22.

South Hall sometime in the third century AD. Teimokles conducted business of some kind at this very spot. Income through the rental of space or stalls within the Basilica would have been needed to pay for the building's upkeep and general maintenance. For instance, as the city's largest fully enclosed space, the Basilica had the largest roof, which would have required monitoring and occasional repair.<sup>29</sup> Income from the rental of public property, or the rental of lands belonging to temple precincts, provided an important source of revenue for cities along with taxation. For example, an inscription about a local benefactor Adrastos, of mid-late first century AD date, incidentally mentions this source of civic funds.<sup>30</sup> Many place-inscriptions, mostly later in date, are found on columns and doorjambs around the urban center of Aphrodisias.<sup>31</sup>

Very different activities are attested by the recent discovery of several incised 1:1 scale architectural drawings and measurement markings on the marble floor of the South Hall. The floor of the majestic space surprisingly seems to have served as a veritable drawing board for architects and builders—obviously not a major function for the building.<sup>32</sup>

For the period of late antiquity, it is reasonable to imagine that the planners of the imperial documents in Latin that were inscribed on the Basilica's North Facade in the early fourth century found compatible symbols of business and government in the context of the monument. Once Aphrodisias became a regional imperial capital, the Basilica may have served as the governors' headquarters, but it is important to bear in mind the lack of other forms of evidence for validation of this idea. Chapter 4 includes further discussion of this particular problem.

*Movement.* The Basilica's bidirectional plan allowed visitors to enter either end, to walk through, and to leave through the opposite end (Fig. 3). The presence of townspeople passing through the Basilica would have added another layer of activity to what must have been a busy complex. A useful comparison can be made with the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias, which like the Basilica had a linear organization and pedestrian accessibility from both ends leading to and from the North Agora (Fig. 2). However, the Sebasteion was an actual exterior space and would have functioned more like a street.<sup>33</sup> The novelty

<sup>29</sup> For roof repairs, see the example of the *basilikē stoa* at Thera: E. Thomas, *Monumentality and the Roman Empire. Architecture in the Antonine Age* (Oxford 2007), 135–39, with Appendix 3.

<sup>30</sup> Adrastos: J. M. Reynolds, 'Honouring benefactors at Aphrodisias: a new inscription,' in *Aph Papers* 3, 123–6. See also: ead., 'Cities,' in D. C. Braund (ed.), *The Administration of the Roman Empire 241 BC–AD 193* (Exeter 1988), 42; A.H.M. Jones, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian* (Oxford 1940), 245, 349–50, with n. 10, and 388, with n. 64.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, *ALA*, 231, doc. 189, with discussion, 229–30.

<sup>32</sup> P. Stinson, 'New Incised Architectural Drawings from Aphrodisias,' in R.R.R. Smith et al. (eds.), *Aphrodisias Papers 5 (Journal of Roman Archaeology, Suppl. Series, forthcoming)*.

<sup>33</sup> Smith (*Reliefs*, 24) notes 'exterior-interior space' of Sebasteion; Outschar ('Sebasteion,' 111) describes a 'Kultstrasse.'

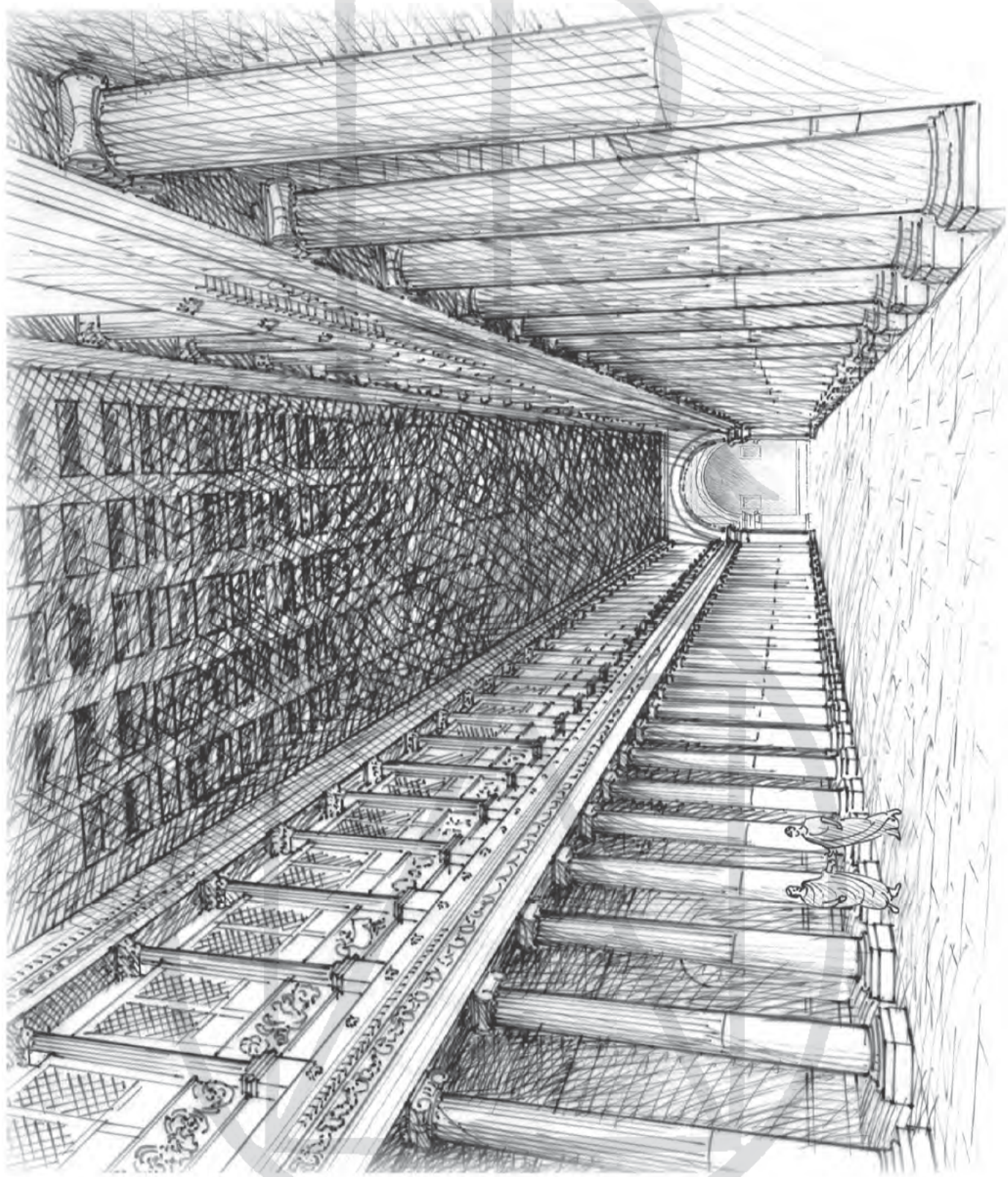


Fig. 6. Reconstruction of Long Hall, view looking south.

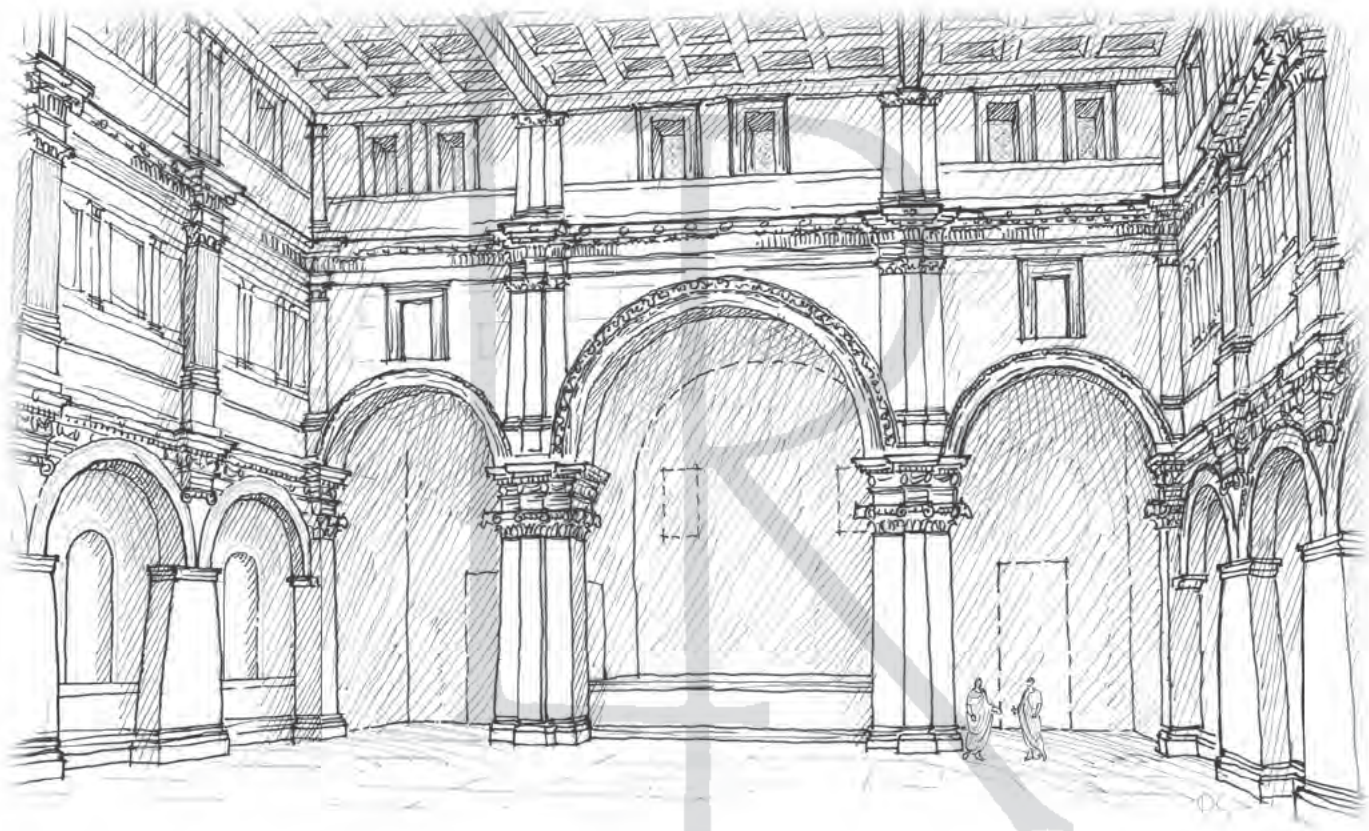


Fig. 7. South Hall. Reconstructed view looking south.

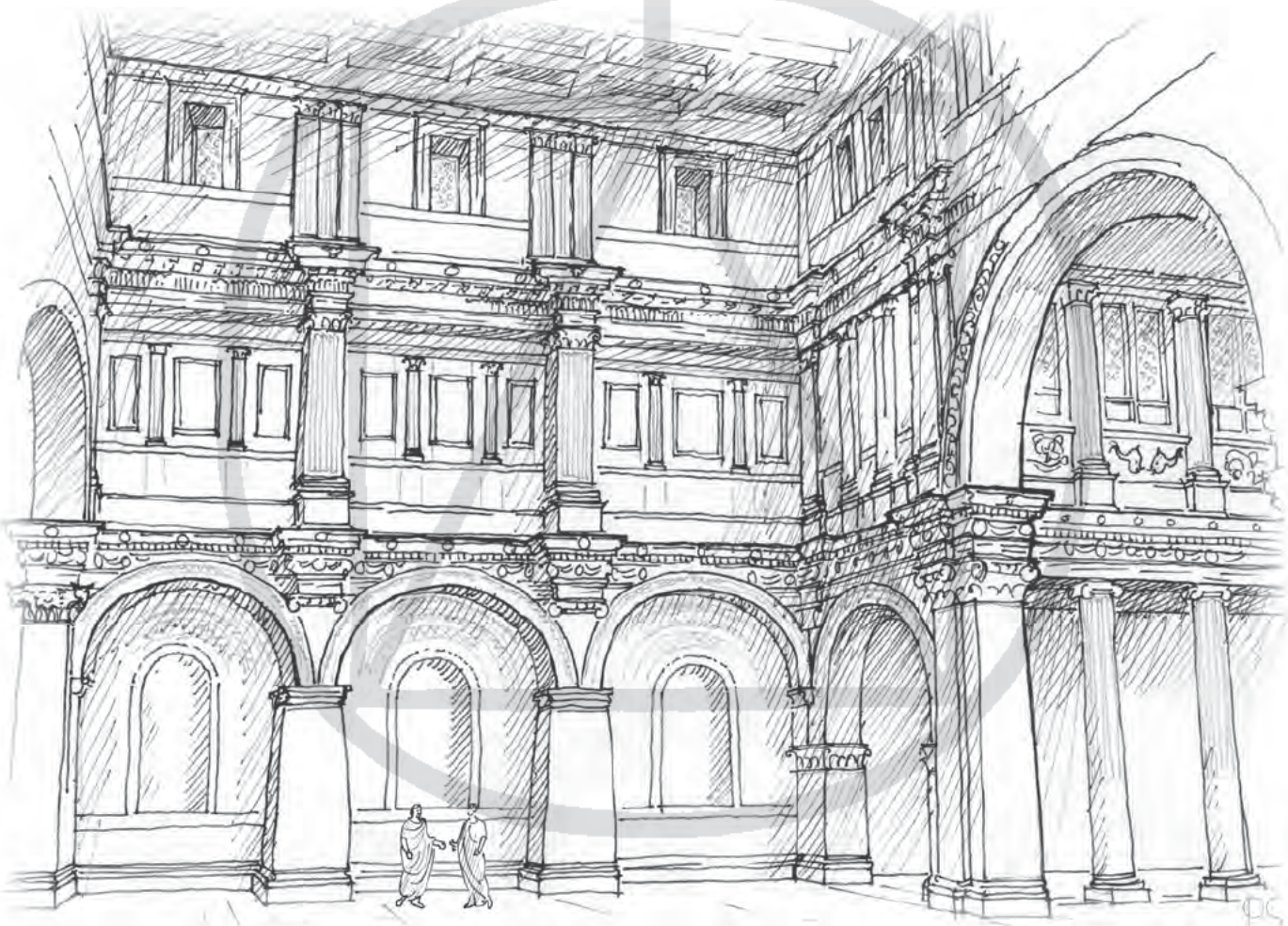


Fig. 8. South Hall. Reconstructed view looking west.

of the Basilica was its interiorization of public space. Patterns of foot-traffic wear on the front steps of the Basilica supply clues regarding how people moved in and out of the building on a regular basis.<sup>34</sup> All three of the North Facade's door thresholds show wear from foot traffic, although the abrasion at the west door is the heaviest (Pl. 6E). Therefore, time-saving visitors used the west door more than the larger, main door. An asymmetrical pattern of movement in relation to the bilateral symmetry of the building's plan can be explained, since many going to the Basilica from the northwest city center, or vice versa, had to skirt around the South Agora's pool (Figs. 2, 9).<sup>35</sup> Whereas foot-traffic wear speaks to busy movement activity, game boards etched on the front steps to the Basilica illuminate (someone's) leisure time (see Appendix 3).

*Symbolic functions.* Another rôle of the Basilica involved communication of symbolic messages regarding the city's self-identity.<sup>36</sup> From the parapet reliefs' findspots, B. Yildirim has established that when visitors entered the Basilica, from either north or south end, they would have first encountered imagery generally associated with Aphrodite and her milieu intermixed with festive floral motifs (Pls. 59A, 60A). As visitors approached the middle of the Long Hall, they would have come into the presence of legendary founders and heroes depicted making sacrifices in association with a local cult of Zeus Nineudios and participating in other scenes (Pl. 59B).<sup>37</sup> They made claims of a legendary history for Aphrodisias; older, larger cities had made such claims for centuries. Evidence is lacking for imperial cult in the Long Hall or South Hall, but this remains a possibility.<sup>38</sup> The grand scale of the new Basilica lent a complementary message to the Founders Reliefs. The building would have been a source of awe for its immense physical size and for its fully enclosed, roofed interior. Until this juncture in the history of Aphrodisias, interior spaces on this scale had not been attempted (Fig. 9). The Basilica expressed this provincial city's civic pride and metropolitan pretensions.

### Late antiquity and eventual decline

The Basilica followed a path observable in other civic structures at Aphrodisias of maintenance and renovation into late antiquity.<sup>39</sup> During this period, Roman governors took responsibility for the upkeep of civic buildings.

One such governor, Flavius Constantius, participated in financing the city's new fortification walls and also renovated the Basilica (see Chapter 4).<sup>40</sup> He paid for new mosaic pavings in the two side aisles of the Long Hall, the largest of such paving projects known in the city (Pl. 47). Installations of reused sculptures at the north end of the building, the Blue Horse monument and a colossal female statue, perhaps also donated by the same governor, testify to the continued life of classical images at Aphrodisias in late antiquity (Pls. 26–31).

Renovations to the South Hall in late antiquity may have been more substantial than those to other parts of the building, but our evidence cannot fully address this hypothesis. What is most striking is the mindful removal and covering-up of existing architectural carving with new painted schemes, while other parts remained unaltered (Pl. 120A–B). Architectural blocks were reused to make an architectural feature that the South Hall did not originally have, such as some kind of platform or dais. These clues suggest that the Basilica's civic function changed during late antiquity, but the precise nature of this change and when it occurred remain unclear.

New excavation results and analyses of ceramics and small finds suggest that the Basilica fell out of use as a civic monument during the fifth or sixth centuries AD, [or] earlier than previously thought (see Chapter 4).<sup>41</sup> Graves at the south end of the site testify to a Christian presence during the Byzantine period in association with the nearby Triconch Church (Fig. 2).

## B. DISCOVERY, EXCAVATION, STRATIGRAPHY

The Basilica was rediscovered in the early 1960s but not identified as such until a decade later. Excavations directed by Kenan Erim began at the Basilica's south end in 1962 (Fig. 10). Factors including the presence of ancient landmarks on the modern landscape, such as the Triconch Church and a standing portion of the Basilica's southeast corner (known locally as the Kuş Kalesi or 'bird castle'), as well as groups of large architectural blocks visible on the surface led to exploration in this part of the site. See Appendix 1 for excavation histories.

### Early excavations: 1962, 1969–77, and 1988–9

In 1962, excavator Malcolm Bell III reported on the presence of a large Roman building to the east of the Triconch Church, but further excavation was abandoned, and the Basilica was left unidentified. The ceramics excavated by

<sup>34</sup> On movement in Roman cities: R. Laurence and D. J. Newsome (eds.), *Rome, Ostia, Pompeii. Movement and Space* (Oxford 2011).

<sup>35</sup> Mark Twain observed at Pompeii (*The Innocents Abroad* [New York 2003], 239) that based on foot traffic wear, 'it was a shorter cut to go between the columns of a temple ... than to go around, and behold that pathway had been worn deep into the heavy flagstone floor by generations of time-saving feet!'

<sup>36</sup> Previous discussion: Stinson, *Basiliques*.

<sup>37</sup> For analysis, see Yildirim, 'Identities.'

<sup>38</sup> Reynolds, *AphPapers* 4, 132.

<sup>39</sup> Ratté, 'Late Antiquity,' 124–40.

<sup>40</sup> *ALA*, 42–5, doc. 22, with pl. 6; Ratté, 'Late Antiquity,' 125–6. City wall: P.D. De Staebler, 'The City Wall and the Making of a Late-Antique Provincial Capital,' in *AphPapers* 4, 285–318.

<sup>41</sup> Stinson, *AphPapers* 4, 102.