

# APHRODISIAS 2020

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SEASON



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Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a reduced research campaign was pursued at Aphrodisias in 2020, but much useful work was done. A research team worked from 14 June to 16 July, and focused on study in the depots, research for publication projects, and site maintenance. The team included nine archaeologists, three numismatists, one epigraphist, and one photographer, and included senior staff and students, all from Turkey. Twenty-six local workers were employed for site cleaning and maintenance work (Figs. 1-3). The government representative was Mustafa Metin from the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara.

### **1. COVID-19 PREVENTION MEASURES (Fig. 4)**

A first task was to take the necessary measures against the Covid-19 virus. The excavation house was thoroughly cleaned, and disinfection stations were set up in all spaces used in common. Posters explaining preventive hygiene measures were put up, and all team interactions were carried out with social distancing. All door handles and light switches were disinfected twice a day, and the temperature of all workers and team members was also taken twice a day. A complete disinfection of the excavation house was carried out by the local Karacasu government every week.

### **2. SITE AND DEPOT MAINTANENCE (Figs. 5-9)**

All monuments on the site were carefully checked: no damage requiring immediate action was found. All grass, weeds, and other plants that had grown in and around the ancient buildings in the spring were cut and cleared. The structures that form part of the tourist route around the site – such as the Temple of Aphrodite and the Theatre – were cleaned in particular detail (Figs. 3 and 5). The areas in which major projects are currently focused – Tetrapylon Street, Basilica, South Agora (Place of Palms), and House of Kybele – were also thoroughly cleaned. Complexes that had been covered with geotextile in 2019 were controlled, and the geotextile renewed where necessary. Two new information panels were set up, one at the second Frieze Wall and the other at the Sebasteion Temple (Figs. 6-7). Site maintenance and cleaning were carried out under the supervision of Yaşar İsmet Demiröz.

Maintenance work was carried out on the excavation house and its roof, and the excavation depots were cleaned, re-organized, and protected against pests (Fig. 8). Old wooden boxes from the period of Prof. Kenan Erim's excavations (1961-1990) were decommissioned in favour of modern blue crates, and the bags and labels for the objects in the crates were renewed (Fig. 9). Finds required for current publication work on the Tetrapylon Street and House of Kybele were

located and identified. The depot work was carried out by Yağmur Başaran and Alis Altinel with the help of Selcen Köroğlu.

### **3. PUBLICATION, DOCUMENTATION, RESEARCH** (Figs. 10-21)

The main aim of depot work was to study and document material for current publication projects on the Tetrapylon Street, South Agora, and House of Kybele (Fig. 10). This work was carried out by Alis Altinel, Yağmur Başaran, Selcen Köroğlu and Ayça Sarıönder. Photographic work was undertaken by Gücügür Görkay.

***Tetrapylon Street.*** The Tetrapylon Street runs north-south from the Tetrapylon to the Theatre, and its excavation, begun in 2008, is designed to investigate a key urban artery and to bring new information about late antique, Byzantine, Seljuk, and Ottoman Aphrodisias. The completion of the excavation in 2020 was delayed due to the pandemic. Important publication work however was carried out on the finds. All objects to be included in a monograph on the Street were drawn, photographed and documented in detail (Figs. 11-13). They present a remarkable historical profile from Roman to Ottoman times. The street project is funded by Aygaz, the Headley Trust, the Friends of Aphrodisias Trust in London, the Malcolm Hewitt Wiener Foundation, and the British Institute at Ankara.

***South Agora / Place of Palms.*** The South Agora was the city's second public square (215 x 70 m) (Fig. 1). Recent excavation in 2012-2017 funded by Mica and Ahmet Ertegun has shown that it was an urban park with a long water-basin (170 x 30 m) surrounded by palm trees. The complex was 'the place of palms' mentioned in a sixth-century poem inscribed on its East Gate. Current work is focused on the restoration of the marble perimeter of the pool and on publishing a collaborative monograph describing its excavation and history. In 2020, the study of finds for publication was completed (Fig. 20), and the whole complex was cleared of vegetation and plants (Fig. 14). The restoration work, generously sponsored by Mr. Ömer Koç and the Geyre Vakfi, will resume in 2021.

***East Gate.*** The East Gate (or 'Agora Gate') of the urban park was a colossal two-storeyed columnar façade. In 2020, new research on its inscribed dedication by Angelos Chaniotis suggested the monument belonged not in the mid-second century AD as previously thought, but in the late first century AD. The carved ornament was photographed and studied (Fig. 15): its character is consistent with this new chronology.

***Civil Basilica.*** A new project was begun at the Basilica in 2018 to restore parts of its façade and display Diocletian's Edict of Maximum Prices which was inscribed on the façade's marble panelling in AD 301. In 2019, the marble and mosaic floors inside the building were conserved and recorded, and significant

progress was made with the repair and anastylosis of the colossal columns from the front of the building. In 2020, the Basilica was cleared of plant growth and the earlier conservation work controlled (Fig. 16). The geotextile was renewed where necessary, and its earth covering was sprayed with biocide. The anastylosis will resume in 2021. The Civil Basilica Project is funded by Mr. Murat Ülker and pladis.

***House of Kybele.*** An impressive late antique mansion was excavated by Kenan Erim between the 1960s and 1980s at the north-east city wall in conjunction with a modern village water channel from which the main parts of the Zoilos Frieze had come in the 1950s. Formerly called the Water Channel House, the complex has been renamed the House of Kybele, after a striking late antique cult figure of the goddess found in it. A new project aims to study, conserve, and publish the house and its finds. The area was cleared, and the standing remains mapped in a new state plan in 2019. In 2020 the locations of all the finds excavated in the house were determined, and the House itself was cleared of plant growth. Objects to be included in the publication were identified and documented (Fig. 17a-b).

***Coins.*** Three numismatists worked on the coins from the excavation: Ahmet Tolga Tek, Betül Teoman, and Gültekin Teoman (Fig. 18). Coin finds from 2019 were studied, and the main catalogue of excavation coins, from 1997 to 2019, is now complete. Coins stored in the museum depots were also inspected; their envelopes and labels were renewed; and all museum coins inventoried after 1990 were added to our catalogues. Particular attention was paid to the Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic coins from the Tetrapylon Street for its planned collaborative publication. Betül Teoman will include much of the Islamic material in her PhD thesis on the circulation of Beylik coinage in western Anatolia.

***Pottery.*** Study of excavated pottery was focused on Byzantine and Islamic material and was carried out by Muradiye Öztaşkın and Emre Şahinoğlu with Selcen Köroğlu (Fig. 19). The finds from 2019 were sorted, and arranged in groups of medieval pottery from the Tetrapylon Street, Basilica, and South Agora (Fig. 20). A particular focus was the material found in the Tetrapylon Street from 2008 to 2019, in preparation for the Street publication. Emre Şahinoğlu also started work on the Byzantine pottery from the Street for his MA thesis. Documentation was made with a view to constructing a reliable stratigraphic chronology of the Street's main occupation phases.

Study of the Street's pottery reveals an interesting new historical narrative of post-antique Aphrodisias. It is striking above all that there are significant finds belonging to the period of the Byzantine 'Dark Age'. Ceramics of this period are not always present at Anatolian sites and their assessment can be difficult. A

repertoire of kitchen and storage shapes could be identified, most suitable for daily use and fired in a strong dark-red colour.

After the seventh century, four broad pottery periods can be defined for Byzantine Aphrodisias. (1) The ‘Dark Age’ from the eighth century to the end of the ninth century. (2) The tenth and eleventh centuries when the population increased and some urban development took place. (3) The twelfth century when pottery of this period is found in several areas at the site. And (4) a period that begins with the Seljuk attack on Aphrodisias at the end of the twelfth century and continues into the early thirteenth century. In this last period, the Greek Orthodox population lived under Seljuk domination and preserved its commercial relationship with the Aegean coast. After c.1225, these relationships ceased to exist.

Much Beylik and Ottoman glazed ware was found in the Tetrapylon Street (Fig. 21). This material was recorded and a typology was created. The Beylik period in the province of Aydın began with the foundation of the Aydınogulları Beylik in 1308 and continued for over a century, until 1425-26, when Ottoman armies campaigned against the Beyliks in western Anatolia. During the Classical Ottoman period, the settlement as seen in its ceramics seems to have had a substantial population. Ottoman pottery is found in some quantity from the early fifteenth to the late sixteenth century. After the diversion of commercial routes towards Izmir, pottery declines in quantity in the seventeenth century. The low number of common table wares in this period is noteworthy. Most common are jug-shaped pots used for storing and carrying liquids, which indicates that after the Classical Ottoman period, the area of the Tetrapylon Street was used mainly for agricultural activities.

**Epigraphy.** Work on inscriptions in 2020 was carried out by Özge Acar, principally in support of a planned corpus of the inscriptions of Aphrodisias being prepared by Angelos Chaniotis. Of the c.900 inscriptions found at the site between 1961 and 1994, c.600 have already been published by J.M. Reynolds and C. Roueché. Their locations in the excavation house depots, in the museum depots, and on the site were checked. About 150 inscriptions in the museum depots were identified and photographed; their transcriptions were also checked, and missing information or measurements was completed. Two new inscriptions from the surrounding area were brought in to the museum and briefly recorded: (1) a late Hellenistic funerary stele from Ataköy for a woman named Artemis daughter of Eupolemos, and (2) the lower part of a base of the Roman period, also with a funerary text, from Antioch-on-the-Meander.

**Seminars.** Research results were presented and discussed at weekly team seminars on the following topics (Fig. 22): the history of epigraphic research at Aphrodisias (Özge Acar), Byzantine and Turkish-Islamic pottery (Muradiye

Öztaşkın), coins of Aphrodisias (Ahmet Tolga Tek), technical drawing of small finds (Ayça Sarıönder), the Larisa survey (Ozan Yıldırım), and nature sanctuaries in Western Anatolia (Serra Somersan).

**Publications.** Work on the next site monograph is well advanced: A. Wilson, B. Russell (eds.), *The Place of Palms: An Urban Park at Aphrodisias (Aphrodisias XII)*. The manuscript for a new monograph by M. Crawford, *Diocletian's Edict of Maximum Prices (Aphrodisias XIII)* was completed, and work was carried out to assemble photographs and reconstructions of the Edict inscribed on the Basilica façade.

#### 4. MUSEUM PROJECTS

A new project to make covered interior museum spaces inside the existing courtyard of the Aphrodisias Museum, sponsored by Lucien Arkas, was begun in 2019, and in 2020 detailed planning continued in conjunction with the project architects, ARTI-3 of Izmir. A delicately decorated Roman fountain basin, brought from Karacasu, was restored by the project's marble conservators in 2018-19, and a modern base carved for it. This year the basin was set up on the new base in the garden of the Aphrodisias Museum (Fig. 23). A relief from the Aphrodisias Sebasteion, *Claudius with Land and Sea Figures*, was requested on loan for an exhibition in Istanbul. The relief was dismantled from its fixings in the Sevgi Gönül Hall and boxed for transport by the project's marble conservator Hikmet Apaydın. A large photograph was mounted in its place in the sequence of reliefs in the Sevgi Gönül Hall (Figs. 24a-b).

#### 5. JOHN JAMES COULTON (Fig. 25)

The Aphrodisias team lost a most valued member, Jim Coulton, who died in Edinburgh on 1 August 2020. Jim was an inspiring archaeologist and architectural historian who wrote seminal and widely-read books such as *The Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa* (1976) and *Ancient Greek Architects at Work* (1977). He worked at Oinoanda and Balbura, where he led a six-year survey that was published in two pioneering volumes, *The Balbura Survey and Settlement in highland Southwest Anatolia* (2012). At Aphrodisias Jim was working on the Temple of Aphrodite and its conversion into a Christian church. He had found out the precise original position of every block that was redeployed from the temple to make the church (Fig. 26). He left a complete manuscript for a monograph on the subject. Jim was a person of unflinching generosity and unusual modesty. He will be much missed at Aphrodisias.

#### STAFF 2020 (Fig. 27)

*Archaeologists and art historians:* Alis Altınel, Yağmur Başaran, Yaşar Demiröz, Selcen Köroğlu, Muradiye Öztaşkın, Emre Şahinoğlu, Ayça Sarıönder, Serra Somersan, and Ozan Yıldırım. *Epigraphist:* Özge Acar.

*Numismatists:* Ahmet Tolga Tek, Betül Teoman, and Gültekin Teoman.  
*Photographer:* Gücügür Görkay.

### **SPONSORS 2020**

The Aphrodisias Excavations are carried out under the aegis of New York University and its Institute of Fine Arts in collaboration with Oxford University and its Classics Faculty, with further invaluable support from foundations, individuals, and the following groups of friends: the Geyre Vakfı in Istanbul (President, Ömer M. Koç), the Friends of Aphrodisias Trust in London (President, Patricia Daunt); and the Aphrodisias Sevenler Derneği in Izmir (President, Çiğdem Alas). The Malcolm H. Wiener Foundation, the Headley Trust, and the British Institute at Ankara supported work on the archaeology of the Tetrapylon Street. Lucien Arkas sponsored the preliminary work for the new museum courtyard project. Murat Ülker and pladis support the multi-year Basilica project. Ömer Koç sponsors the multi-year programme of conservation in the South Agora pool. And the Leon Levy Foundation, the Augustus Foundation, the Faculty of Arts and Science of New York University, the Craven Fund of Oxford University support the participation of students and specialist colleagues. It is a pleasure to record profound gratitude to all our supporters.

R.R.R. Smith, Director  
Serra Somersan, Assistant Director  
15.09.2020

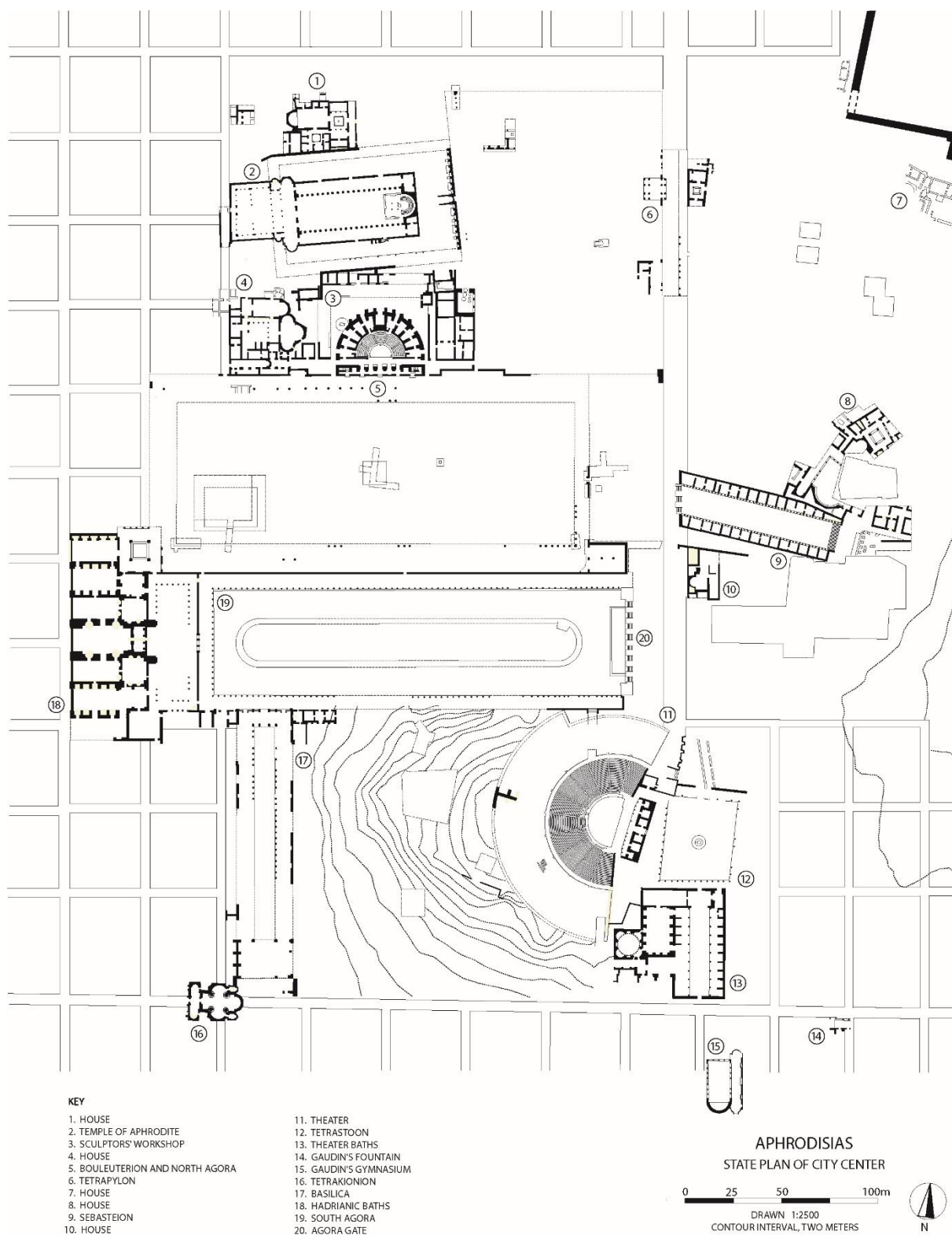
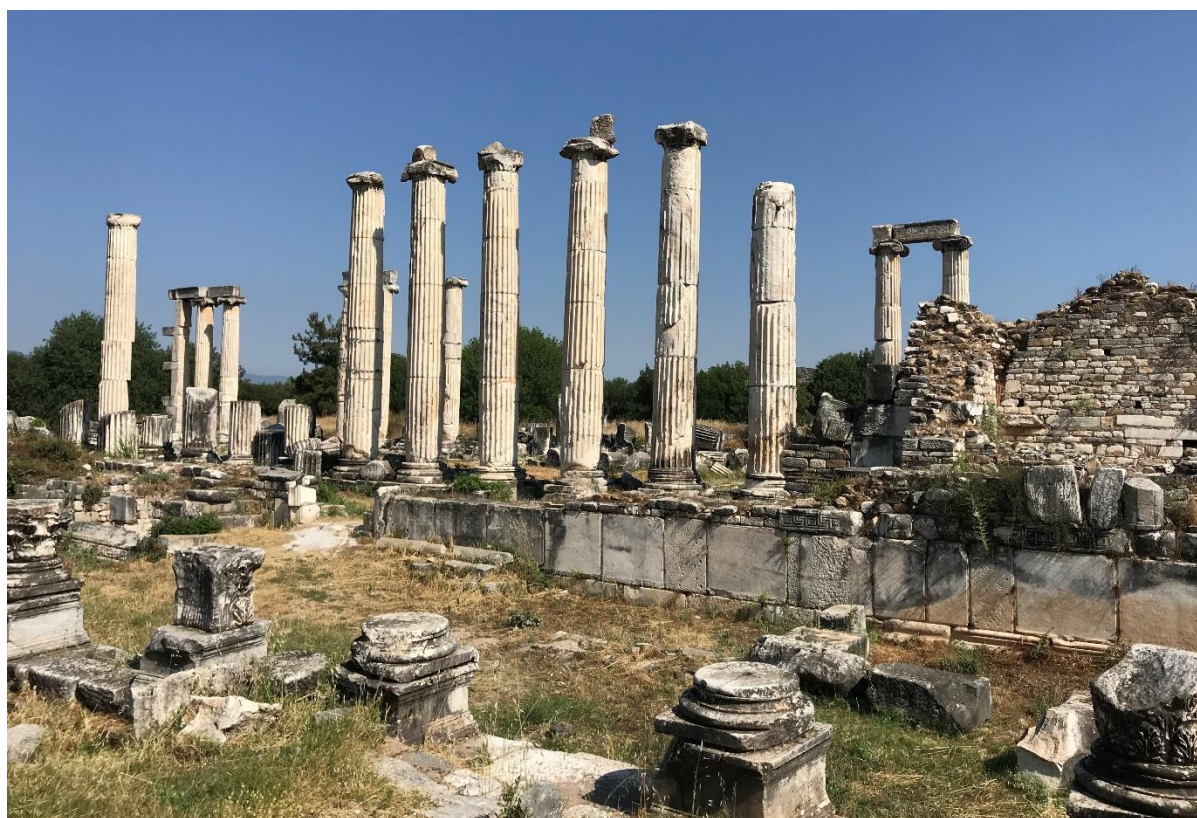


Fig. 1: Aphrodisias, city centre, state plan.





*Fig. 2. North Agora, clearing of vegetation (2020).*



*Fig. 3. Temple of Aphrodite, after clearing of vegetation (2020).*



*Fig. 4. Covid-19 preventive measures (2020).*



*Fig. 5. Theatre, clearing of vegetation (2020).*



Fig. 6. Second Frieze Wall and information panel (2020).



Fig. 7. New information panels, for second Frieze Wall (left) and Sebasteion Temple (right) (2020).



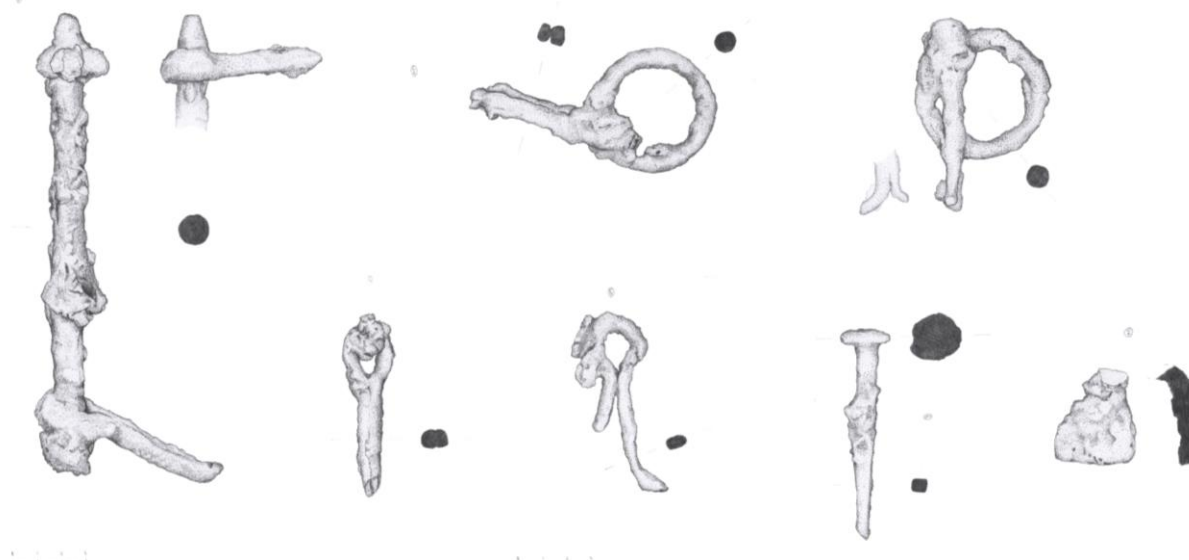
*Fig. 8. Depots: cleaning and pest-control (2020).*



*Fig. 9. Depot crates: transfer of materials held in old wooden boxes into new blue crates (2020).*



*Fig. 10. Documentation: drawing and photography for publications (2020).*



*Fig. 11. Bronze closing mechanism of window, from Tetrapylon Street (inv. 19-028), drawn in 2020.*



*Fig. 12. Copper alloy door knob, from Tetrapylon Street (inv. 10-50), drawn in 2020.*



*Fig. 13. Silver Ottoman amulet, from Tetrapylon Street (inv. 08-16), drawn in 2020.*



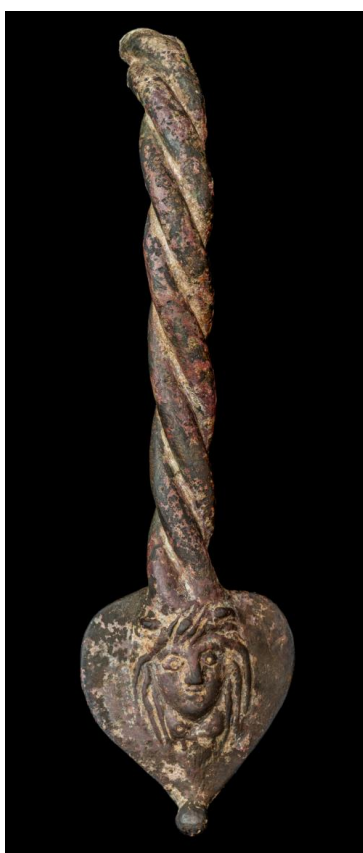
*Fig. 14. South Agora / Place of Palms: cleaning of pool floor (2020).*



*Fig. 15. Architrave-frieze block from East Gate of South Agora / Place of Palms, late first century AD (2020).*



*Fig. 16. Civil Basilica, after clearing of vegetation and control of restored floors and columns (2020).*



*Fig. 17 a-b. Two objects from House of Kybele: (a) Bronze handle of pitcher with Medusa head (inv. 68-200), and (b) revetment fragment with low relief of ciborium framing head of saint (inv. 64-312), (recorded 2020).*





*Fig. 18. Study of excavation coins: Ahmet Tolga Tek (2020).*



*Fig. 19. Study of ceramics: Emre Şahinoğlu and Muradiye Öztaşkın (2020).*

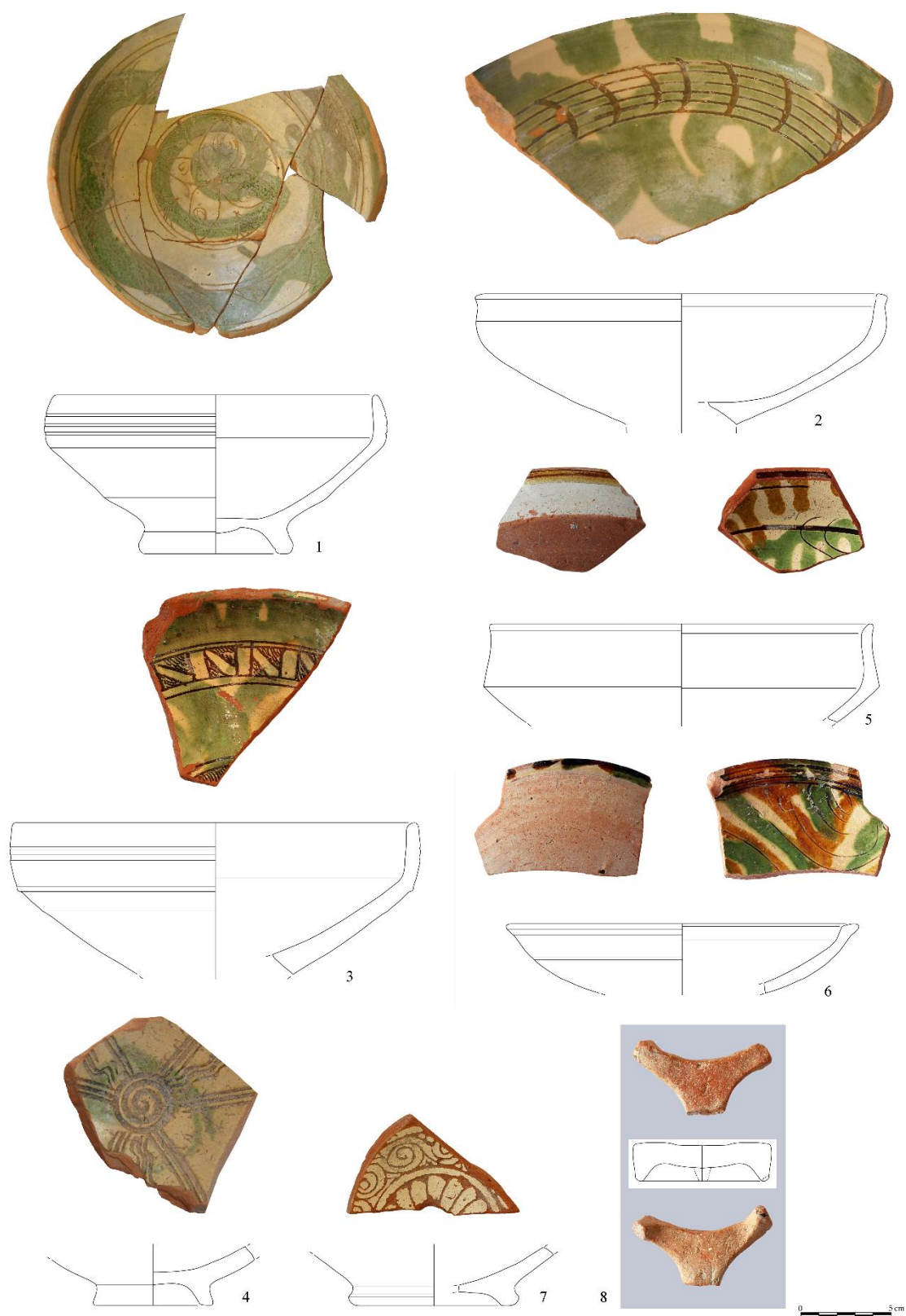


Fig. 20: Beylik ceramics of late thirteenth and fourteenth century, from pool in South Agora / Place of Palms (recorded 2019-20).



*Fig. 21. Ottoman pottery fragment from southern part of Tetracylon Street, found 2018 (recorded 2019-20).*



*Fig. 22: Team seminar given by Ahmet Tolga Tek (2020).*



Fig. 23. Marble fountain basin of Roman period, restored 2018-19, set up on new base in 2020.

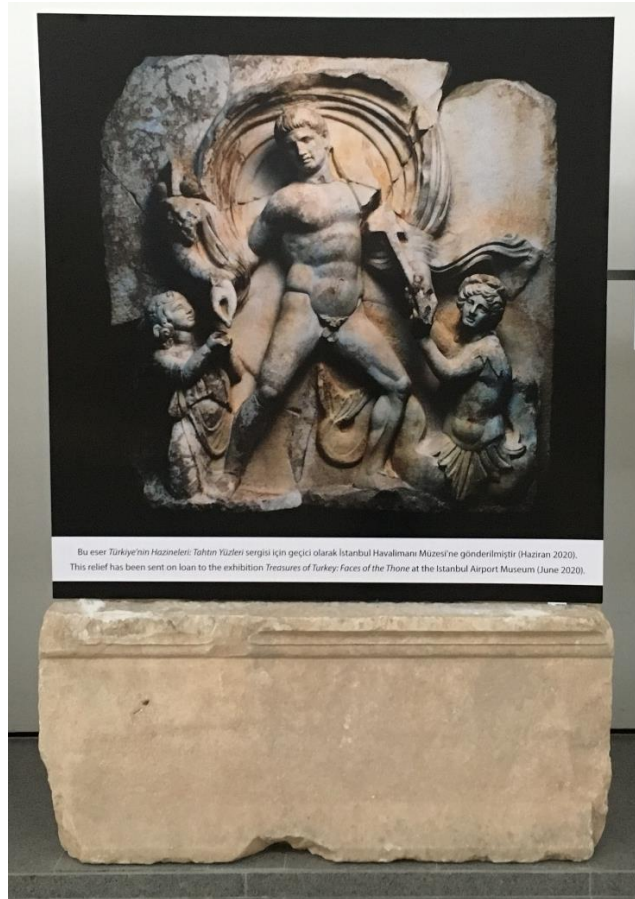


Fig. 24a-b: Relief of Claudius with Land and Sea figures from Sebasteion: (a) dismantling for transport to Istanbul, and (b) relief replaced by photograph in Sevgi Gönül Hall of Aphrodisias Museum (2020).



*Fig. 25. Jim Coulton in South Agora / Place of Palms at Aphrodisias in 2015.*

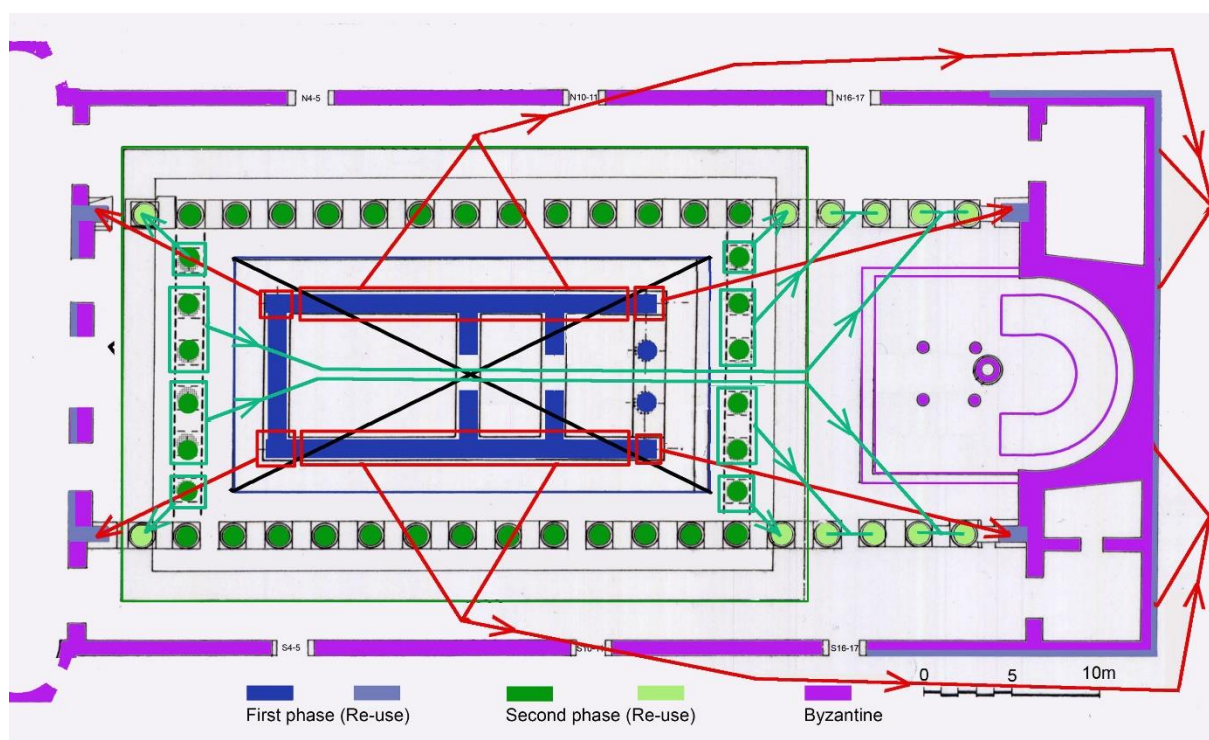


Fig. 26: Temple to Church: diagram by Jim Coulton showing movement of blocks from Temple of Aphrodite in early imperial period to current positions in fifth-century Christian cathedral (2015).



Fig. 27. Aphrodisias team in front of second Frieze Wall, 2020.