

## CULTURAL HERITAGE, SOCIETY & ECONOMY

The promotion, management and regulation of cultural heritage is a complex process involving many different agents and stakeholders on local, national and international levels. It is a critical element of public policy involving a diverse range of actors such as international organisations, governmental ministries and agencies, political parties, private organisations, museums and local communities. How cultural heritage is produced and consumed, interpreted and understood can have profound impacts on structuring social and economic interaction and decision-making. Likewise, it influences the formation of social values and ideas as well as notions of common identity and history. It also affects economic and infrastructural development across a range of different levels. Cultural heritage management has become an important issue only recently in Turkey, and is now rapidly developing. As a result, a whole range of new issues and problems for which solutions have to be found within Turkey, but also on a much wider scale, have arisen. It is these inter-relationships contained within the field of cultural heritage that this Strategic Research Initiative sets out to examine in the Turkish context.

### Monumental architecture, cultural heritage management and local perceptions of Aspendos

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doi:10.18866/biaa2016.035

As in previous years, we joined the team working at Aspendos under the direction of Veli Köse (Hacettepe University) to work on the monumental architecture (Vandeput) as well as on cultural heritage management and public archaeology (Gürsu).

#### *Monumental architecture*

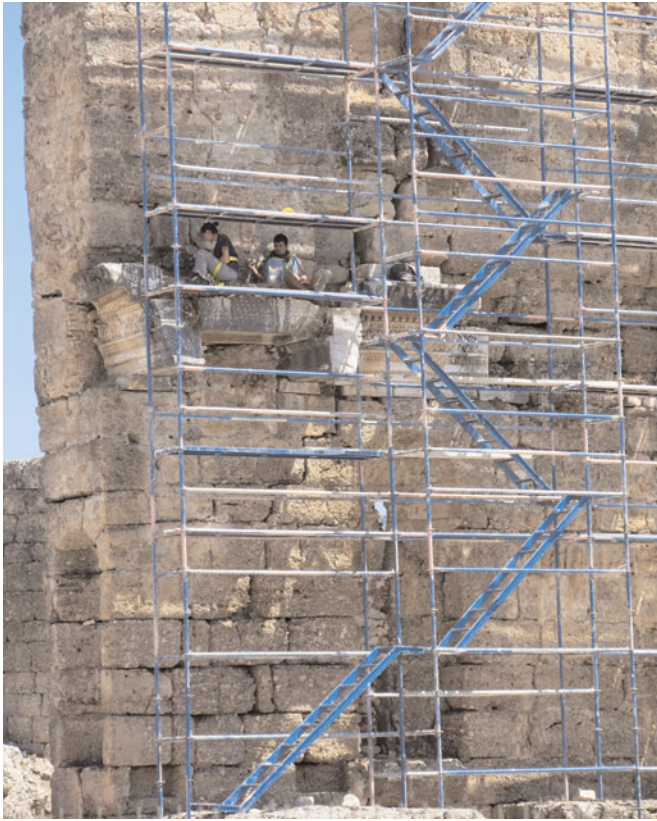
The plan for the 2016 campaign at Aspendos was to carry out detailed studies on the *scaenae frons* of the theatre and on the nymphaeum along the northern side of the agora; these are two important 'eye-catchers' situated along the newly developed visitor routes at the site. However, 2016 has hardly been a 'normal' year for Turkey, and, as a result, the number of tourists dropped drastically. This in turn resulted in limited budgets for Turkish excavation teams and forced the Aspendos team to carry out a more limited programme than originally planned. Scaffolding did go up in front of the western half of the nymphaeum façade, but the project could not afford to fund scaffolding in the theatre. By way of an alternative approach to study of the *scaenae frons*, a series of systematic and detailed photographs was shot by drone; it remains to be seen, however, whether the necessary detail needed to produce detailed architectural drawings was obtained.

The erection of scaffolding in front of the façade of the monumental fountain was a necessity in order to conduct research on the stability of the back wall of the fountain. This stands two storeys high, but reveals many cracks in its masonry, especially along its western edge. Like the theatre,

the supporting back wall of the aediculated façade of the nymphaeum still stands approximately to its full original height. It has survived so well since it is one of the monuments of ancient Aspendos that were reused by the Seljuks. The studies carried out by the team's architects during the 2016 field season have laid the foundations for the major project to consolidate the monument.

The presence of the scaffolding also allowed detailed study of the remaining in situ architectural decoration. The nymphaeum is normally dated to the Antonine period on the basis of this architectural decoration (Richard 2012: 258–80), which strongly resembles that of the theatre façade, as well as on the date of the construction of the aqueduct (Grainger 2009: 174). However, the building's story turned out to be rather more complicated than it seemed at first glance ...

Research has revealed that the entablature seen today was not the original one. Preliminary studies had previously revealed that the proportions of in situ building elements from the aediculated façade were actually too small for the back wall of the building. This can best be observed at the side-wings where most of the building elements of the entablature are preserved. Whereas the lower edge of the projecting frieze blocks of the architrave should normally be aligned with the back wall, here they sit at ca 0.5m in from the edge of this back wall. Furthermore, the top mouldings of the cornice of the entablature barely jut out sideways from the back wall of the building. Detailed study of the remains has revealed that the back wall was cut back in areas in order to anchor the blocks of the currently preserved entablature. The socles for the projecting aediculae below, however, testify that the back wall supported an aediculated façade from its inception. The cut-back spaces in the back wall could relate to the original façade or they could have



Architects working on the scaffolding erected in front of the western half of the nymphaeum. The poorly inserted entablature as well as the large cracks in the wall show clearly

been created to position the building elements of the currently preserved decorated entablature. To allow these large blocks to be manoeuvred and slotted into place, the wall was cut back in areas of the back wall that would be invisible after the building blocks were positioned. The need for space in order to manoeuvre the blocks may also explain the presence of a row of undecorated limestone slabs below the frieze blocks of the architrave. With a corresponding row of blocks above the cornices, they wedged the decorated entablature securely against the back wall. Mortar and heavily mortared rubble were used to fill in gaps at all levels. An alternative explanation is that the presently preserved entablature was simply too small for the pre-existing slots in the back wall and the additional rows of limestone were needed to secure the smaller blocks of the current entablature.

Hardly anything is preserved of the second storey of the aediculated façade, but a set-back in the back wall creates a ledge above the top row of niches in the back wall. This seems to indicate that at one phase in the history of this monument, a double-storeyed aediculated façade existed in front of the back wall. What happened to the blocks of the original façade or when the original building was erected, remain unclear. Equally unclear is where the present-day entablature originated from or at what point in time it was inserted into the monumental back wall alongside the agora.



The entablature of the central niche, revealing the row of undecorated limestone blocks wedged in underneath the entablature and the conglomerate ashlars of the back wall partially cut back to receive the entablature

It is certain, however, that the building must have looked magnificent, with its projecting decorated façade and water cascading down into basins, via a waterfall emerging from below the central niche, and reflecting off the multi-coloured polished marble revetment with which the back wall was fully clad. Some of this revetment is still preserved in the niches of the upper storey. Even now, the monument remains impressive and awes its visitors.



A decorated architrave frieze block, revealing the limestone block on top of the cornice as well as the row of limestone blocks below the architrave (forefront of photo). The mortared rubble connecting the decorated building elements and the conglomerate back wall is also clearly visible

### *Cultural heritage management*

Running in parallel to these detailed architectural studies of the monuments lining the visitor routes, the cultural heritage management project at Aspendos has continued; it focused on four different activities in 2016. The first relates to the people-centred approach adopted by the project since its inception. This year, Hakan Tarhan (postgraduate student, Boğaziçi University) and Işıl Gürsu (BIAA fellow) carried out face-to-face interviews with the inhabitants of the nearby market town of Serik, one of the largest centres in the Antalya region. Sixty-five randomly selected people were invited to take part in this survey. The focus was mainly on furthering an understanding of the attitudes of the local community toward archaeological heritage, and, in particular, assessing their interest in the site of Aspendos. These interviews built on work conducted in previous years in the small villages near Aspendos – Camili and Belkıs – as part of an effort to understand better the role of Aspendos in the economic, social and cultural dynamics of these communities.



Işıl Gürsu interviewing a young shopkeeper in Serik

The second activity was another Children’s Day, which was organised at the explicit request of the children who attended the same event last year. We provided an excavation ‘pool’ in which some modern broken pottery had been hidden by the team, and the children were encouraged to excavate and then restore the ceramics. They also had the opportunity to colour sketches of the Aspendos nymphaeum. An important aim of this event was to create ‘memories’ related to the site in the minds of these children and to teach them about the importance of the site in an indirect way.

The third activity relates to both the first and the second stages of the Aspendos Landscaping Project. The first stage entails the construction of a new visitor centre, the creation of new visitor routes within the site and the placement of new information boards; and this is soon to be implemented

by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. During the 2016 campaign, the locations of the orientation signs that will be placed across the site were finalised and some minor updates were noted. The second phase of the Aspendos Landscaping Project focuses on the development and implementation of archaeological trekking and cycling trails connecting the site to its surroundings, especially to the Eurymedon river. This should result in socio-economic benefits for the local communities living around the ruins of the site. Preparatory work for this second stage is ongoing and will be completed within the next two months. This work is undertaken in consultation with Emrah Köşkeroglu, the architect responsible for drawing up the plans, including walking paths along the river and through the villages.

A final activity concerns work on the presentation of the site through new technologies. A specialist in 3D reconstructions, Simon Young, joined the team in Aspendos this year and conducted preliminary work on virtual reconstructions of specific monuments by means of Oculus Rift technology. He focused on the basilica in which excavations are currently taking place. Both the archaeologists and the workmen were the first users of the Oculus Rift glasses, which allow the wearer to experience a full virtual 3D reconstruction of the remains surrounding them – a very exciting way to experience the site! Ways to make this technology and these reconstructions available to the public are being considered for the forthcoming seasons.

### *References*

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Richard, J. 2012: *Water for the City, Fountains for the People. Monumental Fountains in the Roman East*. Turnhout, Brepols



Children’s Day at Aspendos