

The Bouleuterion and its environs in Early Imperial Aphrodisias

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Research on the remains of the monumental city center of Aphrodisias has been ongoing for over a century. After an Italian mission began here in 1937,¹ work was intensified from 1961 under the direction of K. T. Erim of New York University and has continued since 1990 under R. R. R. Smith.² While many of the projects have yielded results for the High Imperial, late-antique and Byzantine periods, our knowledge of the Late Hellenistic and Early Imperial monuments outside the temple area remains scant. The layout of urban spaces such as the Agora or the “South Pool Complex” is owed to the Early Imperial period and mostly saw only minor changes.³ But while the general urban plan persisted, the Late Hellenistic and Early Imperial buildings were often replaced or remodelled as the urban space was transformed. This is particularly true for the area north of the Agora and south of the Temple of Aphrodite (fig. 1). This paper intends to re-assess our evidence for the function of this space in the Early Imperial period.

The Bouleuterion is centred on the N side of the Agora.⁴ In its present form it consists of an auditorium resting on semicircular substructures with a shallow stage-building on the S side (figs. 2-3). Based on inscriptions and prosopographic considerations, the extant remains can be dated to the late Antonine or early Severan period (c.A.D. 200).⁵ The building was commissioned by one Attalos in his own name and that of his brother Diogenes.⁶ Its identification as the council house is based on both its being a roofed theater suitable for the meetings of a Boule, and its prominent location in the centre. An inscription of the 1st c. A.D. mentions the existence of an earlier Bouleuterion.⁷ Since the capacity of Attalos’ building considerably exceeded the number of city councillors, we may assume that

* *Frequently cited:*

Bier 2008 = L. Bier, “The Bouleuterion,” in C. Ratté and R. R. R. Smith (edd.), *Aphrodisias papers 4* (JRA Suppl. 70) 144-68.

1 G. Jacopi, *Gli scavi della Missione Archeologica Italiana ad Afrodisiade nel 1937 (XV-XVI)* (MonAnt 38, 1939) 73-311.

2 From 1961 onward, K. T. Erim published excavation reports in *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi* on a more or less annual basis. For an overview of the most recent research and an updated bibliography, see R. R. R. Smith, “An overview of recent archaeological work (2006-12),” in id. *et al.* (edd.), *Aphrodisias papers 5* (JRA Suppl. 103, 2016) 10-35.

3 For a summary, see C. Ratté, “The urban development of Aphrodisias in the Late Hellenistic and Early Imperial periods,” in C. Berns *et al.* (edd.), *Patris und imperium. Kulturelle und politische Identität in den Städten der römischen Provinzen Kleinasien in der frühen Kaiserzeit* (BABesch Suppl. 8, 2002) 5-32 and, on the Agora, especially 12 f. On the South Pool Complex (formerly referred to as the “South Agora”), see A. Wilson, “Water, nymphs, and a palm grove: monumental water display at Aphrodisias,” in *Aphrodisias papers 5* (JRA Suppl. 103, 2016) 106-35.

4 On the building, see Bier 2008; C. H. Hallett and U. Quatember, “Three Bouleuteria from Roman and late antique Aphrodisias,” in M. Aurenhammer (ed.), *Sculpture in Roman Asia* (Sonderschriften des ÖAI 55, 2018) 353-64.

5 Bier 2008, especially 156 f.; J. M. Reynolds, “Inscriptions from the Bouleuterion/Odeion,” in *Aphrodisias papers 4* (JRA Suppl. 70, 2008) 169-71.

6 See the inscriptions on pedestals at the end of the analemma walls: <http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/iaph2007> (viewed on Jan. 8, 2017). = I Aph2007, 2.16a (Attalos) and 2.16b (Diogenes).

7 I Aph2007 11.16. See also below.