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# New letters from Hadrian to Aphrodisias: trials, taxes, gladiators and an aqueduct

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with assistance from G. Souris and others

The stone discussed here is a moulded panel of local marble, broken into two pieces and lacking the upper left-hand corner and an area broken away at the bottom (width 0.815 m x max. surviving height 0.89 m, moulding width 0.035 m), inscribed on one face (letter heights ave. 0.014 m; some red paint in the trenches). The pieces were found together in 1994 at Aphrodisias, apparently in the road-surface of a street near the SW corner of the Portico of Tiberius close to the basilica and the SW corner of the Hadrianic Baths,<sup>1</sup> with the inscribed surface facing upwards. It is likely that the panel was originally fixed to a wall (there are nail-holes for the purpose in its top and sides); but there is no very appropriate wall nearby from which it might have fallen accidentally and no sign of the missing pieces in the vicinity. It had probably been taken from such a position for re-use; but if the pieces that we have were re-used as a late repair to the road-surface, it is remarkable that they show no signs of traffic.<sup>2</sup> There is damage along their edges, of a kind that could be attributed to a rough removal from a wall, and it seems possible that they were left behind by chance when material was being collected for new building or for a lime-kiln, after the street had ceased to be in regular use.

The panel had contained at least four letters from Hadrian to the city, of which two are complete and two defective, the last appreciably so. Inscribed collections of documents are known from a number of ancient cities, and Aphrodisias had already produced one, cut in the 3rd c. A.D., in its theatre.<sup>3</sup> For that one there was an obvious theme since the documents all illustrated the privileged position conferred on the city by Rome. We should expect a theme in this new collection but it is harder to detect. That might be because we do not have the whole collection, for there could have been other panels fixed on either side of ours or above it. There should, indeed, have been something placed above it carrying at least a heading (even if no more than Ἀγαθῆ Τύχη.<sup>4</sup> Given the type of panel, however, it must remain dubious whether there were more inscribed documents. If we assume not, Hadrian himself may have been the unifying feature and this would be a collection of all the letters which he had sent to the city at the time of this inscription. It is not difficult to imagine an occasion when it might be thought appropriate to inscribe such a collection: an imperial visit to the city, perhaps, for although we have at present no unequivocal evidence that he was ever there, he was certainly in Caria in A.D. 129;<sup>5</sup> or the completion of some project in which he was interested, such as the aqueduct which figures in letters 3 and 4 here. Alternatively, there is [text continues on page 8]

1 For a plan of the city see R. R. R. Smith and C. Ratté in *AJA* 99 (1995) following p. 44.

2 A comparable case is the incomplete stone carrying part of a letter of Valerian and Gallienus to the city, reported as found fallen from the W façade of the Sebasteion (Reynolds in C. M. Roueché, *Aphrodisias in late antiquity* [London 1989] 4-8). In that case there is no doubt of the original location but no certainty about whether the panel fell from it into the road or was torn from it for re-use or reduction to lime, some pieces being carried off accordingly but the surviving fragment left behind. K. Erim thought that the missing piece or pieces might have been swept some distance by flood-water, but this remains an unverified conjecture.

3 See Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome* (London 1982) [hereafter *AR*].

4 G. Souris has wondered about the possibility of a heading along the lines of κεφάλαια ἐπιστολῶν τοῦ Κυρίου Ἀδριανοῦ, cf. Oliver (infra n.5) no. 123, since that would explain some otherwise surprising omissions from our texts (see comment on letters 1 and 2); but I find no example of this (quite rare) usage in which the imperial titles and greeting are retained below it.

5 For Hadrian's journeys see H. Halfmann, *Itinera principum* (Heidelberg 1986) 188-210. The visit to Caria in A.D. 129 is explicitly documented in J. H. Oliver, *Greek constitutions of early Roman emperors from inscriptions and papyri* (Philadelphia 1989) no. 68, l.12 [hereafter Oliver].