



## Summary :

A city renowned during Antiquity for the cult of Aphrodite, Aphrodisias was incorporated into the Byzantine empire as the metropolis of the province of Caria. In the 7th century the city shrunk, and during the 12th century it was exposed to the raids of the Seljuk Turks. It was finally conquered by the Ottomans after 1261.

## Other Names

Ninoe, Stauroupolis, Caria, Aphrodisias, mod. Geyre

## Geographical Location

Western Asia Minor, mod. western Turkey

## Historical Region

Caria

## Administrative Dependence

Province of Caria

## 1. Aphrodisias during the Imperial Period

[Aphrodisias](#) emerged after the earlier city of Ninoe was merged with the neighbouring city of Plarasa. As betokened by its name, the city was renowned in ancient times for the cult of [Aphrodite](#). It reached its acme in the Roman era. The house of the Julii favoured the city above all the other cities of [Caria](#) because they considered their dynasty to be descendants of the goddess Aphrodite; already by the time of [Octavian Augustus](#) privileges were bestowed upon Aphrodisias, which were affirmed and expanded by the later Roman emperors. During the [Principate](#) period and Late Antiquity, Aphrodisias was famous for its [sculptures](#), which, when unearthed in the 1960s by the archaeologist Kenan Erim, caused considerable excitement among scholars, who now talk of the “sculptural school of Aphrodisias”. Aphrodisias sculptures have been discovered across the Mediterranean, especially in Rome, and are considered the finest examples of Late Roman Mediterranean sculpture.

## 2. Aphrodisias as the capital of the Caria province

As a result of the city’s ties with the imperial dynasty of the Julii, more important and ancient cities, like [Miletus](#) and [Halicarnassus](#), were ignored when the province of Caria was established. By 171/2 Aphrodisias had received the honorary title of metropolis of Caria. According to Ch. Roueché, this occurred between 250 and 260, when the new province of Caria-[Phrygia](#) was probably created. This view, however, does not rest on incontrovertible evidence. Soon after, however, between 301/2 and 305 at the latest, Aphrodisias became the capital of the province of Caria in the context of [Diocletian’s reforms](#). Aphrodisias is also mentioned as the metropolis of the [Caria province](#) in the *Synekdemos* of Hierokles (6th century).

## 3. Aphrodisias during the Early Byzantine Period

The evidence on the city’s history and development during the Early Byzantine period are few and sketchy. In 443 Emperor [Theodosius II](#) (408-450) sojourned in Aphrodisias. In the 6th century it appears that Aphrodisias experienced a period of acute crisis, that should be attributed to the plague that ravaged the empire in 540. A series of inscriptions discovered in the city, set up in honour of Rhodopaios, the *pater civitatis* Aphrodisiadae, speak of the need to avert “pestilence and famine”. In the 6th century also, the crisis attested in many other cities of the empire is recorded in an edict dating to 553, issued by E. [Justinian I](#) (527-565) after the plea of *pater civitatis* Aristokrates concerning the need to settle a dispute over the city’s lending sums of money to private individuals.<sup>1</sup> Asclepiodotus’ school of philosophy continued to operate until the 5th century, while the city was among the most



important intellectual centres of Late Antiquity.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Byzantine Aphrodisias

Aphrodisias is not mentioned in any Byzantine narrative sources; our knowledge on the city is drawn from archaeological research. Already by the Early Byzantine period, a large section of the city was enclosed by defensive walls dating to the 4th century or slightly after. Its centre was the cathedral, i.e. the old [Temple of Aphrodite](#), which was converted into a Christian wooden-roof **basilica** church, probably in the 5th century, with the carrying out of extensive works that exploited the full potential of Classical architecture. The metropolitan church remained in uninterrupted use until the 12th century, when it was destroyed by a fire. One of Aphrodisias' most important Christian monuments was the thronch Christian church, built over a street. A pre-existing four-column monument was used to provide support for the **dome**. According to the latest investigations, this temple dates to after the first half of the 7th century.

Early in the 7th century a devastating earthquake destroyed many of the city's public buildings and gave the coup de grâce to Late Roman Aphrodisias. The city walls still stood, but the [theatre](#), which apparently was still in use at the time (6th century Christian frescoes were found in it), was never rebuilt. On the contrary, its *koilon* was taken up by residential buildings, and together with the citadel it was surrounded by walls, which according to earlier views were dated to the 11th/12th century; latest research, however, shows them to be a work of the 7th or 8th century. Thus the Byzantine city of Aphrodisias acquired its castle. According to Brandes, "the archaeologists have detected a very rudimentary urban plan between the 7th and the 9th centuries" and "at best there was nothing more than a village". Thus, the prevailing view is that, contrary to its earlier period, the city did not manage to recover from the disaster wreaked upon it by the 7th century earthquake.<sup>3</sup> Of its public buildings, apart from the theatre, the [stadium](#) and the [odeum](#) were preserved, while the prefectural mansion was probably converted into the [bishop's palace](#) at an unknown time.

#### 5. The Middle Byzantine name of the city

The gradual Christianization of the empire necessitated the change of the city's distinctly pagan name. Aphrodisias was renamed to Stauroupolis, in the 7th century at the latest. Its ancient name was consequently erased from many inscriptions and was replaced by the new one, among else in the inscription over the city walls' north gateway. This change should be dated between 553 and 680. In the historical sources the new name is first recorded in the minutes of the Sixth Ecumenical Council ([Constantinople](#), 681). Already by the 8th century the city was referred to by the name of the province (Caria); this became standard practice after the 9th century, at least in the minutes of the ecclesiastical councils. The use of the province's name for its capital is not a local custom, for it was adopted by the authorities in Constantinople, as can at least be seen in the [notitiae episcopatum](#), where the metropolis is referred to as "Stauroupolis, i.e. Caria".<sup>4</sup> This denotation falls into disuse, however, in the 12th century, when the name Caria becomes established. The nearby modern village of Geyre has taken its appellation from the name 'Caria' as well.

#### 6. 12th and 13th centuries

In the late 12th century Aphrodisias suffered the consequences of the instability that prevailed in the relations between the Byzantines and the [Seljuk Turks of Rum](#). According to Foss, Aphrodisias was pillaged in 1188 by [Theodoros Mangaphas](#), lord of [Philadelphia](#), and in 1197 by the Seljuk Turks.<sup>5</sup> The evidence preserved in the text of [Niketas Choniates](#), however, affirm only the information pertaining to the Seljuk Turks. In the first case, Choniates apparently refers in general to the province of Caria, into which Mangaphas launched his attack carrying off many hostages and spoils. In the second case, Choniates refers specifically to the city of Aphrodisias, calling it "country town of Caria".

Aphrodisias was finally conquered by the Ottomans after 1261. For the year 1264 [George Pachymeres](#) reports that the situation in Caria was miserable due to enemy raids.<sup>6</sup> By 1280, the year of the co-emperor [Andronikos II Palaiologos](#)' (1272/1282-1328) campaign in the Maeander valley, Caria had already been abandoned by the Byzantines.

#### 7. Administration



A reference to a certain Tauropolis is cited in the treatise of [Constantine VII](#) (913-920/944-959) "On the **Themes**", in the chapter on the [theme of Kibyrrhaiotai](#); this city, according to A. Pertusi, the editor of the text, should be identified with Aphrodisias (Stauroupolis) and it is located on the map within the theme's border.<sup>7</sup> However, considering the city's position, it seems more likely that Aphrodisias should belong to the [theme of Thrakesion](#).

Excavations conducted in the site of Aphrodisias have yielded the largest number of seals ever discovered in a Byzantine city of Asia Minor. Apart from the seals of the metropolitans, there are seals belonging to **διοικηται**, **notarioi** who possibly acted as clerks of the **genikon logothesion**, as well as to **kouratores** of the imperial estates, dating to the Middle Byzantine period.

## 8. The city's inscriptions and the society of Early Byzantine Aphrodisias

The city's inscriptions, which have been studied systematically by Charlotte Roueché, contain many more references to professionals as compared to inscriptions from other cities; we should also note that among the inscriptions there is one containing one of the fullest texts of E. [Diocletian's](#) (284-305) edict *On Prices*. Inscriptions mentioning *makellarios* (butcher), *brakarios* (trouser-tailor), *iatros* (physician) and *scholastikos* (attorney), as well as the inscriptions of the *sellophoroi* (carriers of persons), the *oikodomoι* (builders) and of one *pandouros* (musician playing the pandouris, a kind of lute), of one *cursor* (an associate of the **cursum publicum**) and of one *keromatites* (a person who cured contusions), all date to the Early and Middle Byzantine periods. Apart from these, we have references to an *archidekanos* (responsible for conducting funerals and maintaining public order), a *capsarios* (servant at the public baths), a barber and a *pyktes* (boxer), as well as to the guild of *aurarioi* (goldsmiths). Of special interest are the inscriptions of the stadium and the theatre, where special *topoi* (i.e. seats) were allocated to the spectators. Apart from the usual inscriptions of the Greens (Prasinoi) and the Blues (Venetoi), there are inscriptions of professionals, supporters of one of the large **demoi** (the butchers, for example, were supporters of the Greens). The [Jews](#) of the city also possessed their special quarter.

1. According to the contents of the edict, the city of Aphrodisias possessed endowments that had been given to private individuals in the form of loans, provided that these individuals would each year give back part of the endowment to the city in cash or by sponsoring various activities. During this period, however, these individuals, relying on a law of Justinian I, refused to pay this sum to the city, arguing that they had already paid an amount more than two times the sum they had originally received. As a result the city lacked the funds to maintain the bathhouses and other public buildings.
2. Fowden, G., "The pagan holy man in late antique society", *Journal of Historical Studies* 102 (1982), pp. 33-59; Fowden, G., "The Platonist philosopher and his circle in late antiquity", *Φιλοσοφία* 7 (1977), pp. 359-383.
3. Brandes, W., *Die Stddte Kleinasiens im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert* (Amsterdam 1989), pp. 93-94. We should note, however, that the archaeological work in Aphrodisias revolves mainly around the city's sculpture and to its wider influence during Late Antiquity and the Early Byzantine period. As a result the Byzantine monuments have been neglected. See Cormack, R., "The classical Tradition in the Byzantine Provincial City: The evidence of Thessalonike and Aphrodisias", in: Cormack, R., (ed.) *The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage* (Variorum Reprints CS, London 1989), Additional Notes and Comments, 12.
4. Darrouzès, J. (ed.), *Notitiae episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (Paris 1981), no. 7.21.
5. Foss, C., "Aphrodisias", *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 1 (Oxford - New York 1991), p. 128.
6. Failler, A. (ed.), *Georges Pachymeres, Relations historiques I: Livres I-III*. CFHB 24.1 (Paris 1984), pp. 291.1-3.
7. Pertusi, A. (ed.), *Constantino Porfirogenito De Thematibus* (Studi e Testi 160, Citta del Vaticano 1952), pp. 79.35, 152.

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	<b>Foss C.</b> , "Aphrodisias", Kazhdan, A. (ed.), <i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium I</i> , Oxford – New York 1991, 128

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	Afrodisias, stadion <a href="http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/image/38956491">http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/image/38956491</a>
	Aphrodisias <a href="http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/image/38956496">http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/image/38956496</a>
	Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity: The Late Roman and Byzantine Inscriptions <a href="http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/ala2004/">http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/ala2004/</a>
	Aphrodisias, tetrapylon <a href="http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/image/38956474">http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/image/38956474</a>
	Aphrodisias, theatre <a href="http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/image/38957066">http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/image/38957066</a>
	Aphrodisias, Odeon <a href="http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/image/38956490">http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/image/38956490</a>

## Glossary :

	<b>basilica</b> In ancient Roman architecture a large oblong type building used as hall of justice and public meeting place. The roman basilica served as a model for early Christian churches.
	<b>cursus publicus</b>



Byzantine empire: the service of the public post (office), "δρόμος", dispatched into carrying the official correspondence as well as articles concerning the administering of the empire, but also applied to the military and the provincial administration. Two departments, manned with slaves, performed the duty: the *cursus velox*, that used horses, and the *cursus clabularis*, that used ox carts. Occasionally the cooperation of individual entrepreneur was in effect. Under Justinian I (527-565) the department of the *cursus clabularis* was abolished. The department of the *cursus velox* was abolished in the 12<sup>th</sup> c. in Asia Minor and soon after in the Balkans as well. The office was administered by the *Curiosus Cursus Publici Praesentalis* under the *Magister Officiorum*, the *logothetes tou dromou* (λογοθέτης του δρόμου) and in the end by an *interpreteur* (ερμηνευτής).

#### demoi

An important institution that the Byzantine cities inherited from their Roman past. In Constantinople and other cities of the Empire, the *demoi* were organized supporters of teams of the Hippodrome, while they also functioned as guilds promoting various causes. The most important *demoi* were the Greens (*Prasinoi*), the Blues (*Venetoï*), the Reds (*Rhoussioi*) and the Whites (*Leukoi*).

#### dioiketes

Middle - Late byzantine era: an official of the fiscal service, whose jurisdiction applied to a certain territory.

#### dome

A characteristic element of Byzantine architecture. The dome is a hemispherical vault on a circular wall (drum) usually pierced by windows. The domed church emerges in the Early Byzantine years and its various types gradually prevail, while they are expanded in the Balkans and in Russia.

#### kourator

(lat. *curator*) A functionary of the Byzantine state administration or a city magistrate, he was manager of public or private foundations as well as of imperial estates.

#### logothesion genikon

A bureau of the central administration with responsibilities over the economy of the Empire. The chief of the bureau, the *logothetes tou genikou*, was responsible for the economic administration of the Byzantine state.

#### notary (lat. notarius)

An official who registered transactions and certified documents.

#### Notitia episcopatum

The *Notitiae episcopatum* are official documents of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and Antioch, containing the ecclesiastical dioceses in hierarchical order. These documents were modified regularly.

#### pater civitatis

(lat., mean. the Father of the City). An office dating to the Late Antiquity and Early Byzantine years. It was an office of local civil administration and designates a magistrate whose responsibility was the restoration and maintenance of the city.

#### Principate

The Principate is the first period of the Roman Empire, beginning with the monarchy of Augustus (r. 27 BC - AD 14) and extending the 3rd century and the crisis that brought about the Tetrarchy of Diocletian. The Roman Emperors of the Principate strived to preserve the illusion of the formal continuance of the Roman Republic.

#### theme

A Byzantine term that signifies wide military and administrative units under the administration of a *strategos* (general). The institution was consolidated in the 7th century and was characteristic for the organization and the division of Byzantine Empire at the Middle Byzantine period. The term applies also to the army unit that resided in each administrative unit and was staffed by farmer-soldiers. The thematic system was maintained until the end of Byzantine period. However, in the Later Byzantine period it was used in order to declare mostly tax units.

## Sources

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### Chronological Table

4th cent. or later: Defensive walls are built around the city

possibly 5th cent.: The Temple of Aphrodite is converted into a Christian church

7th cent.: The city's castle is built

7th-8th cent.: Aphrodisias is included in the theme of Thrakesion

1188: Possible sack of Aphrodisias by Theodoros Magaphas

1197: The city is sacked by the Seljuk Turks

1261-1280: Aphrodisias is finally captured by the Muslims