

MONUMENTAL TRANSFORMATIONS: TWO COPIES OF A LETTER FROM HADRIAN AT APHRODISIAS

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1. INTRODUCTION. READING A “COPY”? CONTEXT, CUES AND CONTENT

It is only in very rare circumstances that one has the opportunity to compare different copies of a monumental inscription. Examinations of “same text” or “copy” inscriptions in Aphrodisias have already observed how similar texts do not always result in similar inscriptions.¹ This case study will compare two copies of a letter from Hadrian to the people of Aphrodisias, which were set up by different individuals at different times and places, and with different roles in the urban landscape. Using the commentaries and translations by Joyce Reynolds and focusing on physical differences in both the reading context and the presentation of writing, the survey will examine how public documents could be monumentally transformed into different roles and contexts within the urban landscape.

The first monument, *I.Aphrodisias 2007* 11.412, was reused in paving a road between the Hadrianic Baths and the Civil Basilica (Map 1, nos. 19-21).² The white marble panel preserves four documents from the reign of Hadrian dating from 119-125.³ A later version of this letter survives at the top of Column III on the so-called “Archive Wall” more accurately described as a dossier at the theatre (Map 1, no. 13), where it was inscribed between the mid- to late 2nd c. and the first quarter of the 3rd c.⁴ The chronological difference between the first and second versions is ca.

¹ Reynolds 2000; Graham 2017; Graham 2018. Except where otherwise stated, all dates in this chapter are CE.

² Reynolds 2000, 5.

³ On Hadrian’s letters to Aphrodisias see also Thornton 2008.

⁴ The so-called “Archive Wall” was not a functional archive but a monumental dossier (Kokkinia 2016, 10 n. 2; Graham 2021, 572 n. 13). While its date is not secure (there is more than one period of carving), it is accepted that construction postdates Antonine renovations and predates the second half of the 3rd c. (Reynolds 1982; Kokkinia 2016, 19; Graham 2021, 572 n. 9).

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50–100 years. These monumental inscriptions illustrate the importance of context and visual association in the urban landscape. They also raise a key question: was a monumental document, set up in a different time and space, meant to be seen as a “copy” or should each inscription be treated in its own right?

Reynolds’ scholarship provides an excellent commentary and detailed catalogue of many discrepancies between the two texts. Despite numerous differences or “inaccuracies”, which are often abbreviations or omissions, she notes that there is “no difference in the overall meaning between the two versions”.⁵ This is an important factor to consider when contrasting the two different monumental inscriptions. The series of “inaccuracies” in the later version of the text (*I.Aphrodisias* 2007 8.24) lead Reynolds to conclude that the subsequent copyist and/or carver was not as assiduous or precise.⁶ While this may be true, changes to the text did not result in significant compromises in its meaning. The assumption that a text had to be a faithful copy or that subsequent changes and/or omissions were made in error, suggests that changes were accidental, rather than deliberate. By examining the presentation of writing, one can explore how and why changes were made, and whether these changes increased, decreased or had no impact on the arrangement (or *ordinatio*), appearance and/or the accessibility of the monumental inscription for a broader audience. The following discussion will consider differences between both the text and the appearance of these monumental inscriptions in the urban landscape.

2. A “COPY” VERSUS AN “ORIGINAL” DOCUMENT

One of the great limitations in understanding the transformative journey from text to monument is the fact that modern scholars seldom have the “original” version of a document or manuscript. In a modern context, our original text of a document is often a surviving monumental copy. Our ability to gauge the extent and significance of changes that may have taken place, therefore, is limited. A further issue in assessing monumental copies also lies in the term itself: what do we mean by a “copy”? How an inscription was presented to ancient viewers and the way that inscriptions are presented in modern publications can impact both the perception and analysis of these materials; so how we define and apply “copy” matters.⁷

There is often an assumption that a copy was intended to be a perfect imitation of the original. Its success in this endeavour, therefore, is a factor of how well it replicates the text. Changes to the “original” are then often seen as errors, the sign of a less successful copy. In reality, a copy could also be an illustration, a replication of

⁵ Reynolds 2000, 15.

⁶ Reynolds 2000, 15. Reynolds 1982, 112 and 118 discusses “abnormalities” in this version of the letter.

⁷ For more discussion cf. Graham 2018, 275–277.

the original message, which did not necessarily require a faithful rendering of the exact text, merely its content and overall message.⁸ This is a crucial distinction, especially in the case of a monumental document, which is not only the conveyor of a textual message but also a physical one. In a monumental landscape of passing viewers, an inscription not only had to read like a document, it had to look like a one, by means of a recognisable visual framework and cues.⁹ Assessments of physicality and framework of writing include a broader audience of neuro-diverse viewers in a public context: one need not be literate to recognise the form of a monumental document or to connect its meaning to orality and/or oral performance.¹⁰ From a practical perspective, it was quite difficult to compare the full text of monumental documents in different places without standing in the two places at once. One could, however, compare the experience of viewing these monuments: their physical appearance, layout, and urban context. Do different appearances and textual versions convey varying functions and objectives?

Documents were subject to alterations both in the transition from one medium to another and when subsequent copies were made. These alterations in the text and visual framework of writing are a testament to the evolving nature and expectations of urban viewers: changes are not only reflected in letterforms but also in the presentation and arrangement of writing.¹¹ Skills in arranging and articulating inscriptions in architectural spaces develop alongside the use of visual cues (spaces,¹² dots, *hederae distinguentes*, and *litterae notabiliores*).¹³ These changes in the visual framework are not only decorative but often functional: catching the eye of the viewer and offering greater accessibility in engaging with and identifying types of monumental writing. Subsequent recarvings of a monumental document could fundamentally alter the presentation and therefore the perception of writing in a public context. These “copies” do not need to be an exact version or the original text, nor is it assumed that they carried the same function or meaning.¹⁴ A key factor in understanding the role of monumental documents is a consideration of why and for

⁸ Chaniotis 2015, 682–685; Graham 2018, 276–278; Graham 2021, 588.

⁹ Cooley 2014, 143–144; Kokkinia 2016, 51; Graham 2021, 599.

¹⁰ Slater 2008, 260–269; Graham 2021, 577.

¹¹ For copies in building dedications cf. Graham 2017; 2018. For the role of visual cues and location in monumental writing cf. Cooley 2014, 143–155; Eastmond 2015, 251–255; Graham 2021, 575–599. For visual cues in letter writing cf. Sarri 2018, 114–123.

¹² In addition to blank spaces (*vacats*) or indentations in the margins, the increased space surrounding decorations or dots can also enhance visual emphasis around certain words or expressions.

¹³ While a poorly inscribed text can be made at any time, the regularization of letterforms, use of serifs, spaces, margins and decorations, as well as formulaic elements, tend to increase in the Imperial period alongside the epigraphic habit of production.

¹⁴ For example, see comparisons of monumental versions of Augustus’ *Res Gestae*, especially the *Monumentum Ancyranum*, in Cooley 2012 and Kokkinia 2021.

what purpose a monumental copy was made. Addressing different locations and visual frameworks for writing, therefore, is not simply a question of visible aesthetics but a fundamental part of understanding how inscribed monuments were intended to function in an urban landscape.

3. THE READING CONTEXT: READING A COPY

Recent studies in cognitive neuroscience have proven what carvers, publishers, readers and writers have known for millennia: people do judge a book by its cover. The way that writing is framed (e.g. the use of margins, paragraphs, blank spaces, punctuation, decoration, and lettering) plays a fundamental role in the reading process, be it a text or a visual landscape.¹⁵ As readers we not only expect this framework, we are reliant upon it, and often take it for granted. Scholars of epigraphy, raised on beautifully arranged Oxford Classical texts, often stumble with their first inscribed monument: inscriptions are their own genre of writing with a different experience, audience, and skillset. To understand how an audience at Aphrodisias viewed monumental documents as copies, one needs to consider how an inscribed copy could reflect changes in function, meaning and the expectations of a viewing audience. Viewers of monumental documents were aware that other versions were available in the city's archives, where the experience of reading, limited to an elite literate audience, was fundamentally different.¹⁶ By contrast, monumental writing, situated in a bustling urban atmosphere, where it lay in competition with sensory distractions (light, sound, colour, touch), included a broad neuro-diverse audience of happenstance viewers. Differences in context, medium, and expectation of the reader shape the perception and meaning of documents in ancient and modern contexts.¹⁷ The ability of a reader to differentiate reading contexts and versions (original vs. copy, papyrus vs. stone) is also a product of format and approach.¹⁸

A monumental document was, by definition, a copy of a text with a different context, function and meaning, which often had to be integrated into a broader urban landscape and/or a monument. The assumption that readers had to engage with the text in order to engage with the monument may be misleading. Passing readers were probably not going to halt in their tracks to read Hadrian's letter concerning taxes

¹⁵ Deheane 2009, 13–18 and 157–159; Willingham 2017, 2–5; Jansen 2014, 280–281; Graham 2021, 575–578.

¹⁶ Cooley 2012, 159–161. In an archival context, documents were written on a wooden white board or papyrus and stored in a place where they could be read or consulted. These materials, like modern publications (e.g. Reynolds 1982 or *L.Aphrodisias 2007*), were created primarily for a literate audience: the intent of the reader and the function of the writing, in both cases, was to access specific information.

¹⁷ Berti 2017, 3–5; Eastmond 2015, 5–8; Petrovic *et al.* 2018, 16–20; Graham 2021, 576–599.

¹⁸ Modern published formats can diminish physical elements and the urban context of an inscription, both of which were primary points of interaction for the ancient viewer (Graham 2013 and 2021).

on nails. A monumental collection of imperial correspondence validating Aphrodisias' privileges, however, had applications both as symbolic illustration of the city's importance and as a tangible means of reinforcing these rights.¹⁹ One need not be literate or to read these documents in detail to recognise their role as representations of imperial authority and protection.²⁰ An analysis of monumental factors – location (the context of reading) and appearance (the presentation of writing with formulaic elements and visual cues) alongside textual changes – is a means of examining the differing values and expectations that applied to reading in a monumental landscape.

4. READING HADRIAN'S LETTER TO APHRODISIAS: *I.APHRODISIAS 2007* 11.412, LL. 13–27

4.1 Assessing the Urban and Reading Contexts of *I.Aphrodisias 2007* 11.412

I.Aphrodisias 2007 11.412 was discovered in 1994 on a road surface close to the Basilica, at the south west corner between the Portico of Tiberius and the Hadrianic Baths (Map 1, nos. 19–21), where it appears to have been affixed to a wall.²¹ Whether it was connected with the bath building or the nearby Civil Basilica is uncertain.²² The large panel (0.815 m wide and 0.89 m high) carried some traces of red paint with letters ca. 1.4 cm in height.²³ The collection of letters consists of two full documents and two shorter letters, which Reynolds labels as “defective”.²⁴ How does “defective” apply in a monumental context: are the texts defective as monuments or as textual copies? Reynolds' comment, important from a textual perspective, illustrates how scholars can retrospectively apply modern expectations of the term “copy” to ancient documents: namely, that a copy must be an accurate rendering of the original. The transformation from text to monument, however, was not only a physical transition of medium and place, it was also a transformation of text within a finite monumental space. In addition to a scholarly textual analysis, one must also consider the expectations of an ancient audience: did viewers expect an exact replication of the original document, or merely a version that was visually recognisable in message and appearance? Given the variation in literacy rates between ancient

¹⁹ Kokkina 2016, 51; Graham 2021, 599.

²⁰ Ma 2012, 149: “... place lends or even creates authority. By associating their presence with pre-existing prestigious places or monuments, inscriptions aim at making the reader accept them as obvious parts of durable physical ensembles”.

²¹ Reynolds 2000, 5. Nail holes survive at the corners of the text. However, there is no surviving wall in the vicinity. Reynolds suggests that the text had been reused.

²² While copies of inscriptions are known in the Baths of Hadrian (Graham 2018, 294–298), document collectives have also been observed at the Civil Basilica (Stinson 2008; Reynolds 2008).

²³ Reynolds 2000, 5. Reynolds notes that the red paint was lost when the text was cleaned of limescale deposits (Reynolds 2000, 8 n. 6).

²⁴ Reynolds (1982, 112; 2000, 5) notes a number of incomplete and/or defective documents in collective monuments at the so-called “Archive Wall” and the Hadrianic collective respectively.

and modern readers, perhaps one should not assume that modern expectations reflect those of an ancient viewer.

Reynolds notes other oddities in the collection of letters, which would be unusual if this inscription was meant to be used as an archive. The four documents from the reign of Hadrian were not inscribed in chronological order, nor do they record four different events.²⁵ While the subject of the second letter (ll. 13-27), regarding an exemption from taxation on nails, may not seem to be a riveting read, Hadrian's reaffirmation of Aphrodisias' privileges was clearly important after his succession.²⁶ Nail tax and/or prohibitions on iron production were the subject of a number of inscribed documents at Aphrodisias, suggesting that it was a significant and recurring issue.²⁷ The nail tax may also have been relevant to the context: the Hadrianic Baths and the Civil Basilica required many nails for their construction.²⁸ The collection of documents, the last two of which refer to the construction of an aqueduct, may have functioned more broadly as a testament of imperial support and collaboration.²⁹

4.2 Visual Cues and Formulaic Elements

Although the text has been carefully laid out with a number of decorations (Figs. 65A-65B), there appear to be difficulties in execution: the text in the right-hand margin sometimes exceeds the border, which is both unsightly and difficult to read. Reynolds accurately describes the inscription's appearance as "orderly without being monotonous ... but it would not, I think, tempt a modern passerby to decipher it ... and one may wonder whether it was attractive to an ancient reader".³⁰ She raises key distinctions both between ancient and modern audiences as well as the act of perception: whether writing, however legible, was likely to engage a passing viewer. Perception can transcend questions of literacy in monumental writing: as the epigraphic habit developed, the role of public writing shifted from a primarily symbolic record to a recognisable form of visual art, which had to captivate and compete with imagery in the urban landscape. A papyrus in an archive may not have needed to entice an audience to get their attention, but a monumental document did.

²⁵ Hadrian's letters do not appear in chronological order. The first two letters date from 119. The later letters, concerning an aqueduct, dating to 125 and 124, were abbreviated (Reynolds 2000, 5).

²⁶ The letter dates to 119, less than two years after Hadrian's succession (Reynolds 2000, 16).

²⁷ Kokkinia 2005, 259-262 provides a detailed consideration of monumental inscriptions pertaining to the subject of nail tax, including both the texts from this article, the title text of her work (*LAphrodisias 2007* 12.510), and another surviving letter from a Roman official (*LAphrodisias 2007* 2.307, 2nd-3rd c.).

²⁸ Reynolds 2000, 16.

²⁹ Similar examples of this type of monument are observed at the theatre of Aphrodisias such as the "Artemidorus Monument" and the dossier wall respectively (Reynolds 1982, 11, 33-37; Kokkinia 2016, 31-35, 51; Graham 2021, 578, 584-587).

³⁰ Reynolds 2000, 8.

I.Aphrodisias 2007 11.412, ll. 13–27³¹

- (previous document's main body) • εὐτυχεῖτε **Ⲛ** ἐπὶ Κλαυδίας Παυλείνης.
 [Αὐτοκράτ]ωρ Καῖσαρ, θεοῦ Τραιανοῦ Παρθικοῦ υἱός, θεοῦ Νέρουα υἰόνος Τραιανὸς
 15 [Ἄδριανὸς] Σεβαστὸς, ἀρχιερεὺς μέγιστος, δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας τὸ τρίτον,
 [ὔπατ]ρος [τ]ὸ τρίτον, Ἀφροδισιέων τοῖς ἄρχουσι καὶ τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ
 [χαί]ρειν. • τὴν μὲν ἐλευθερίαν καὶ αὐτονομίαν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα τὰ ὑπάρξαντα
 ὑμῖν τὰ παρά τε τῆς συνκλήτου καὶ τῶν πρὸ ἐμοῦ αὐτοκρατόρων, ἐβε-
 βαίωσα πρόσθεν. • ἐντευχθεὶς δὲ διὰ πρεσβείας περὶ τῆς τοῦ σιδή-
 20 ρου χρήσεως καὶ τοῦ τέλους τῶν ἥλων, καίπερ ἀμφισβητησίμου τοῦ
 πράγματος ὄντος διὰ τὸ μὴ νῦν πρῶτον τοὺς τελῶνας ἐπικεχειρη-
 κέναι καὶ παρ' ὑμῶν ἐγγέγειν ὅμως εἰδὼς τὴν πόλιν τά τε ἄλλα τει-
 μῆς οὐσαν ἀξίαν, καὶ ἐξηρημένην τοῦ τῆς ἐπαρχείας τύπου,
 ἀπαλλάσσω αὐτὴν τοῦ τελέσματος καὶ γέγραφα Κλαυδίῳ *ιν*
 25 Ἀγριππείῳ τῷ ἐπιτρόπῳ μου, παραγγεῖλαι τῷ μεμισθωμέν[ω]
 τὸ ἐν Ἀσίᾳ τοῦ σιδήρου τέλος ἀπέχεσθαι τῆς ὑμετέρας πόλεως.
 εὐτυχεῖτε **Ⲛ** ἐπὶ Κλαυδίου Ὑψικλέους ἥρωος. **⊙** Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ κτλ

“(previous document's main body). Farewell. (In the first stephanephorate of) Claudia Paulina. The emperor Caesar, son of divine Trajan Parthicus, grandson of divine Nerva, Trajan Hadrian Augustus, *pontifex maximus*, holding tribunician power for the third time, consul for the third time (119 CE) greets the magistrates, the council and the people of Aphrodisias. Your freedom, autonomy, and other privileges given to you by the senate and the emperors who have preceded me I confirmed earlier. But having been petitioned by an embassy about the use of iron and the tax on nails, although the matter is controversial, since this is not the first time that the tax-collectors have undertaken to collect it from you too, nevertheless knowing that the city is in other respects worthy of honour and is removed from the *formula provinciae*, I release it from payment of the tax and I have written to Claudius Agrippinus my *procurator* to instruct the contractor for iron tax in Asia to keep away from your city. Farewell. (In the stephanephorate of) Claudius Hypsikles, *heros*. The emperor Caesar etc. (translation by J. Reynolds)”.

Leaves (cf. ll. 13, 27) are not only ephemeral and/or decorative in this document, but serve to highlight key transitions from one document to the next (Figs. 65A–65B). As an inscribed text, one can imagine how a few lectional signs and decorative elements, as well as blank spaces often surrounding these decorations may

³¹ The text presented here differs from the one edited by Reynolds in what concerns some of the visual cues. The revision has been carried out on the basis of the available photographs. The sign • indicates what in the text appears to be a dot, while the sign ⊙ indicates what Reynolds calls “scroll”.

have served to visually distinguish some aspects of formulaic elements, such as the *formula valetudinis*, noting the name of the author, the recipient, a greeting and a closing,³² and to provide practical information for Greek and Roman audiences, such as dating either by means of a local official (stephanophorate) or by imperial titles.³³ Crowding and excesses in this part of the margin also illustrate the carver's attempt to maintain an *ordinatio* with key words in the prominent left-hand margin, where the reading eye begins: Ἀυτοκράτωρ (emperor, l. 14) and Ἄδριανός (Hadrian, l. 15).³⁴

4.3 Content: Textual Changes

Expressions of dating, though important, were not standardized in the inscription: while the local stephanophorate is named at the start of each document, the expression of imperial titles varies, even in the first two letters recording the same date.³⁵ Although Pompey was mocked for his deliberations on how to record his third consulship (*consul tertium* or *COS TERT*) in his theatre dedication, the episode illustrates the roles that titles and numerals could play in monumental inscriptions: in addition to providing a date, a title could also offer a degree of flexibility in organising the text.³⁶ Reynolds rightly observes discrepancies in numerical expressions, which she considers as weaknesses in the replication of the original text; in fact, these discrepancies (a long numeral τὸ τρίτον or an abbreviated one: τὸ γ̄) often reflect practical compromises in the execution of the inscription.³⁷ These changes

³² Reynolds 2000, 8: "Within the text there are either plain dots or vacant spaces, usually at helpful places, but their distribution is not invariably satisfactory". The opening lines of the first two letters reveal a careful arrangement of text in the margins (cf. n. 34 below). As the documents progress, visual emphasis (decorations and vacats) fall away from more visible space in the margins towards the middle of a line (ll. 4, 9, 17, 19), where they are less easy to find.

³³ These offices were often given to women or deceased men as a *postmortem* dedication (Reynolds 2000, 12). Similar dating features are also found on Salutaris' foundation at Ephesus: letters are dated by the local Ionian calendar and/or a consular date (*IEphesos* 27).

³⁴ Similar compromises are made in the first document, since the carver begins the collective (ll. 1-4) with indentations, decorations and line breaks that prioritise key information in the left-hand margin, where the reading eye begins: l. 1 the stephanophorate, l. 2 imperial titles (imperator), l. 3 name of the author (Hadrian), l. 4 the name of the recipient (Aphrodisias). He makes significant compromises in the right-hand margin in order to achieve this, abbreviating a numeral (l. 2) and exceeding the margins in ll. 2-3.

³⁵ Reynolds (2000, 8) notes the varying citations of the consular figures, which go back and forth between a longer numeral τὸ τρίτον and a simple τὸ γ̄. These forms of citation vary in all four documents: cf. n. 37 below.

³⁶ Gel. 10.1.7: "Tiro, Cicero's freedman once wrote: When Pompey was about to dedicate the temple of Venus Victrix ... and was writing the text for the inscription of his name and title, he began to ask others whether it was proper to write *consul tertio* or *consul tertium* ... Cicero persuaded him to abbreviate it as *COS TERT*".

³⁷ The shorter numeral occurs when the carver is trying to fit a date at the end of a line (l. 3: δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας ὕπατος τὸ γ̄) or towards the end of a long document (l. 44: δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας τὸ η̄, ὕπατος τὸ γ̄). When spacing and line breaks are not an issue, longer titles are used as at ll. 15-16: δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας

had little or no impact on the text but they can illustrate how carvers prioritised the placement of key information in prominent spaces.³⁸

The inclusion of a local stephanophorate may have been a practical consideration but it was by no means necessary or common; it is unprecedented in imperial and/or administrative letters at Aphrodisias.³⁹ The prominent positioning of Claudia Paulina's name, in particular, is noteworthy (Fig. 65A): inscribed in slightly larger letters and indented in the top frame of the text (l. 1).⁴⁰ This office was also visually emphasised in the second document (l. 13) with a leaf, before exceeding into the right margin (Fig. 65B). In a text with few focal points, why was visual emphasis afforded to a name that was probably absent from the original letter? While the inclusion of the local official may have had an archival or referential function, highlighting a name was also a means of honouring a person in the local community.⁴¹

Paulina's name survives on a number of inscriptions, including an honorary base and a building dedication from the Civil Basilica.⁴² The prominent inclusion of her role in this document could have provided a further connection between her civic roles and benefaction in the city. There are similar monumental parallels in Aphrodisias, such as the prominent rendering of Zoilos' name in a letter on the "Archive Wall", who also featured in a large monumental dedication on the stage building and elsewhere in the city.⁴³ A similar juxtaposition of letters and monumental dedications also survives at the *bouleuterion* in Ephesos, where the Vedii Antonii rededicated the stage and were honoured in an imperial letter.⁴⁴ If Claudia Paulina and/or her family were connected with a monumental dedication from the Long Hall's east colonnade at Civil Basilica (*I.Aphrodisias* 2007 6.2), then a series of inscribed imperial letters featuring her name in or around that context would

τὸ τρίτον | ὕπατος [τ]ὸ τρίτον; ll. 29-30: δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας τὸ ἕνατον | ὕπατος *vac.* τὸ τρίτον. It is also worth noting the carver's error at the start of the third document (ll. 29-30): an abbreviated numeral τὸ γ̄ was inscribed, erased and then reinscribed with the longer numeral τὸ τρίτον.

³⁸ The only way to notice these inconsistencies in numerals was to read all four documents in one sitting, which few people were likely to have done.

³⁹ All recorded letters begin with imperial or administrative titles: *I.Aphrodisias* 2007 8.2, 8.24, 8.25, 8.29-31, 8.33-37, 8.99, 8.100-104, 12.25, 12.538, 15.330.

⁴⁰ *I.Aphrodisias* 2007 11.412, l. 1: [ἐπὶ Κλαυδίας Παυλείνης] τὸ • ᾠ •.

⁴¹ Reynolds (2000, 12) suggesting that a stephanophorate may have been a matter of local interest or a reference to a civic file where a master-copy was kept; both refer to another copy for readers.

⁴² Paulina's name survives on an honorary base (*I.Aphrodisias* 2007 11.50). The title "daughter of the city" suggests a significant civic benefaction, which could refer to a Flavian building dedication at the Civil Basilica (*I.Aphrodisias* 2007 6.2), but the identification is by no means certain (Reynolds 2008, 136; Stinson 2016, 125).

⁴³ The text of *I.Aphrodisias* 2007 8.29 begins with Zoilos' name, towards the top of column IV (Graham 2021, 586-587), which can be seen in the right-hand corner of Fig. 66. The "Artemidorus monument" is another example of a collective monument at the theatre (Reynolds 1982, 11).

⁴⁴ Bier 2011, 98-106; Kalinowsky 2021, 299-317; Kokkinia 2003, 203-207.

fit well within the epigraphic habit of the mid-2nd century.⁴⁵ The subsequent inscription of a series of imperial documents (Diocletian's price edict, early 4th c.) on the north façade of the Civil Basilica could suggest that other documents were kept in or around this structure.⁴⁶

4.4 Conclusions

Reynolds describes this version of monumental document as “generally better” than its later counterpart, on the basis that it seems to reflect a more accurate version of the original letter.⁴⁷ In this respect, she is correct. However, it is worth asking: were passing readers considering accuracy or were they more likely to engage with the presentation of writing? While the text of the document was more accurate, the presentation of the writing was somewhat challenging and not likely to engage a reader, as Reynolds herself observes.⁴⁸ The lettering is fairly small and the documents were only minimally distinguished with visual cues, which could have operated as signals for seasoned readers or points of emphasis for an oral performance, but do not provide a readily recognisable image of a document or a collection of letters for a passing viewer. While one could argue that this dossier of Hadrianic letters formed part of an archive, the theory is somewhat impractical in application: the letters are not all complete or in order, nor are they easy to find within the inscription.

The experience of viewing this document as a monument was fundamentally different from reading these letters in an archive, not only in medium, location and presentation of writing but also in terms of message. Hadrian's letter on nail tax is inextricably part of a collective, attesting the emperor's continued contact and support of the city. The monument's message and associations were also different: the prominent presentation of Claudia Paulina, who was likely added to the inscribed text, suggests an honorary acclamation.⁴⁹ This feature could explain anomalies in the last two documents: they were of lesser importance and space was limited. As a collection of letters, this inscription was a testament to the city's special status, a tangible talisman of civic pride and protection, and a means of honouring local individuals. It was not, however, a faithful record of imperial correspondence or an easily accessible and/or functional archive. While some aspects

⁴⁵ For dating of the Basilica cf. Reynolds 2008, 133–140 (doc. 1); Stinson 2008, 83; Stinson 2016, 16–19.

⁴⁶ See Stinson 2016, 5, 21–22, for a diagram of the inscribed documents on the façade.

⁴⁷ Reynolds 2000, 16.

⁴⁸ Cf. n. 29 above.

⁴⁹ Her name continues to be mentioned in inscription in the 3rd c. at Aphrodisias (*LAphrodisias* 2007 13.618 records a fifth (*postmortem*) stephanophorate in the second quarter of the 3rd c.).

of the original letters were maintained, others were changed to accommodate the text's new role as a public monument.

5. READING A LATER COPY ON THE DOSSIER WALL: *I.APHRODISIAS* 2007 8.34

5.1 Assessing the Urban and Reading Contexts of *I.Aphrodisias* 2007 8.34

The second copy or version of the letter was inscribed ca. 50–100 years later. Like the first inscribed text, the letter was part of a larger collection of monumental documents inscribed along a key urban thoroughfare: the north *parodos* wall, which served as a main urban entrance to the theatre at Aphrodisias.⁵⁰ In comparison with the earlier inscription, the size and scope of this monumental dossier was massive: a selection of imperial correspondence from over 300 years was inscribed in five columns along the wall, across a space that is nearly 11 m in width, ranging from ca. 5 m (column II) to 2.5 m (columns III–V) in height.⁵¹ One advantage of this copy of the letter is that it remains *in situ*, so more can be understood regarding its accessibility and role in the urban landscape. Today, one can easily access the writing, which is still legible. In antiquity, however, the experience of viewing was likely constrained by the context's location and function: on a performance day the entrance was often crowded and noisy. Therefore, it would have been somewhat inconvenient to stand and/or read for a protracted period. Although few would engage in a full reading, passing viewers with varying levels of literacy could recognise focal messages as well as formulaic elements and the visual framework of a letter.⁵²

Within the collective dossier, this document fell at the top of column III, just below the arch of a barrel vault (Fig. 66). The size of the inscribed panel was slightly larger (0.90 m by 0.61 m) as are the inscribed letterforms (ca. 2–2.5 cm high). The arrangement of these forms affords an advantage to the reader as they are seldom, if ever, crowded into the margins; across seventeen lines there is only an instance of hyphenation (ll. 8–9). This careful arrangement provided a visual framework that was absent from the earlier inscription and probably from the original letter.⁵³

⁵⁰ For a detailed assessment of the monument cf. Reynolds 1982 (text); Kokkinia 2016 (design of inscription and presentation); Graham 2021 (experience of reading and use of visual cues).

⁵¹ Dimensions for the wall are from Kokkinia 2016, 12–13, with lettering from Reynolds 1982, 33.

⁵² Kokkinia 2016, 47; Graham 2021, 574–575.

⁵³ While surviving Roman period letters in papyrus and wood often display a more limited use of visual cues, such cues are evident on some surviving letters and seem to increase as layout features of Roman letter writing at this time (Sarri 2018, 116–121).

*I.Aphrodisias 2007 8.34 (I.Aphrodisias and Rome 15)*⁵⁴

- Αὐτοκράτωρ Καίσαρ θεοῦ Τραιανοῦ Παρθικοῦ υἱός
 θεοῦ Νέρουα υἱόνος Τραϊανός Ἀδριανός Σεβαστός,
 ἀρχιερεὺς μέγιστος, δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας τὸ γ,
 Ἀφροδισιέων ἄρχουσι βουλῇ δῆμῳ χαίρειν.
 5 τὴν μὲν ἐλευθερίαν καὶ αὐτονομίαν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα
 τὰ ὑπάρξαντα ὑμῖν παρά τε τῆς συνκλήτου καὶ
 τῶν πρὸ ἐμοῦ αὐτοκρατόρων ἐβεβαίωσα πρόσθεν.
 Ἐντευχθεὶς δὲ διὰ πρεσβείας περὶ τῆς τοῦ σιδή-
 ρου χρήσεως καὶ τοῦ τέλους τῶν ἥλων καίπερ
 10 ἀνφισβητησίμου τοῦ πράγματος ὄντος διὰ τὸ
 μὴ νῦν πρῶτον τοὺς τελῶνας ἐπικεχειρηκέναι
 παρ' ὑμῶν ἐγγέγειν, Ὅμως εἰδὼς τὴν πόλιν
 τὰ τε ἄλλα τειμῆς οὐσαν ἀξίαν καὶ ἐξηρημένην
 τοῦ τύπου τῆς ἐπαρχείας, ἀπαλάσσω αὐτὴν
 15 τοῦ τελέσματος καὶ γέγραφα Κλ(αυδίου) Ἀγριππείνῳ
 τῷ ἐπιτρόπῳ μου παραγγεῖλαι τῷ μεμισθωμένῳ
 Τὸ ἐν Ἀσίᾳ τέλος ἀπέχεσθαι τῆς ὑμετέρας πόλεως.

“Imperator Caesar Trajanus Hadrianus Augustus, son of the divine Trajanus Parthicus, grandson of the divine Nerva, *pontifex maximus*, holding the tribunician power for the third time, greets the magistrates, council and people of the Aphrodisians. Your freedom, autonomy and other (privileges) which were given you by the senate and the emperors who have preceded me, I confirmed earlier. I have been petitioned through an embassy about the use of iron and the tax on nails. Although the matter is controversial, since this is not the first time that the collectors have attempted to collect from you, nevertheless, knowing that the city is in other respects worthy of honour and is removed from the *formula provinciae*, I release it from payment and I have written to Claudius Agrippinus, my *procurator*, to instruct the contractor for the tax in Asia to keep away from your city (translation by J. Reynolds)”.

5.2 Visual Cues and Formulaic Elements in *I.Aphrodisias 2007 8.34*

There are a number of different visual cues in operation in this inscription, and though they will be addressed individually, it is important to consider how these elements functioned collectively in the presentation of the text. In comparison to the

⁵⁴ The text presented here differs from the one edited by Reynolds in what concerns some of the visual cues. The revision has been carried out on the basis of the available photographs. Capital letters in bold are used to highlight the *litterae notabiliores*. The sign at l. 15 indicates what appears to be an *ano stigma*.

earlier inscription, this version is more visually appealing and articulate, presenting not a block of text but a series of different clauses with more dramatic emphasis on key information and formulaic elements. The text was set in a prominent visual context at the top of column III within a collective of beautifully presented documents whose execution artfully reflects their form, function and meaning.⁵⁵ Surrounded by space at the top, a clear margin on the left and an architectural margin on the right, this inscription offered an impressive image of writing and control.

Within this framed space, further visual cues offered more subtle distinctions within the letter. The use of indentations and capitulation (*litterae notabiliores*: slightly larger letters in the left-hand margin of ll. 1, 8, 17 and the middle of l. 12) draw attention to key messages and grammatical breaks in the text, some of which are unmarked in the earlier inscription. A break between the opening section and the main body of the letter, marked in the earlier text by a dot (*I.Aphrodisias* 2007 11.412, l. 17), is conveyed in this version by a slightly indented T at the beginning of l. 5, which heralds an affirmation of the city's privileges.⁵⁶ The only other pause in the earlier inscription (*I.Aphrodisias* 2007 11.412, l. 19), a dot before a clause about freedom from the iron tax, is visually highlighted in the later version (*I.Aphrodisias* 2007 8.34, l. 8) with larger E and an indentation in the left-hand margin. The later version provides two additional points of visual emphasis: a *littera notabilior* O in the middle of l. 12 signifies the city's worthiness, and a *littera notabilior* T, indented in the left margin (l. 17), which emphasises the end of the letter and a directive for tax officials "to keep away" from the city. The space produced by the use of a *littera notabilior* at the beginning of the next letter (*I.Aphrodisias* 2007 8.31, l. 1: Ἀυτοκράτωρ) visually differentiates between separate documents on the column. On the whole, the later version presents a visually discernible document, which was more readily recognizable in form, function, and message.

Visual cues such as indentations, margins, blank spaces and line breaks emphasise messages about the city's special privileges and imperial protection of these rights. This visual network operates on two levels: aiding a potential reader and providing a recognizable visual framework for the passing viewer. Painstaking efforts in arrangement and execution of the text are also evident in the line breaks. The impressive organization of *I.Aphrodisias* 2007 11.412, which broke only four words across line breaks, is improved: there is only a single word break (*I.Aphrodisias* 2007 8.34, l. 8).⁵⁷ This remarkable framework, however, came at a cost. Textual changes as well as ligatures were used to facilitate this organisation

⁵⁵ For a detailed analysis cf. Kokkinia 2016, 19–20; Graham 2021, 589–590.

⁵⁶ While this letter is not larger than those on two lines beneath it, which also begin with a *tau*, the letter is visually out of line with the adjacent rows and it appears to be more heavily serified.

⁵⁷ This word break was also in the earlier version (*I.Aphrodisias* 2007 11.412, l. 19), suggesting that the first inscription may have been used for the planning of the second.

(cf. ll. 13–14) and to prevent word breaks over lines. The excellent execution of *I.Aphrodisias 2007 8.34* reflects the values and careful planning that are often observed in the dossier wall.⁵⁸

5.3 Content: Textual Changes

In this unusual case of two surviving copies, we have a rare opportunity to observe how and why textual changes were made. Firstly, there are a number of omissions. The name of the local *stephanephoros*, a key element of the first monumental inscription, is absent here. On a functional level, this omission did not impact ones' ability to date the text: the emperor's tribunician powers are recorded on l. 3. The visual framework of the first four lines created a distinctive section for the heading or *formula valetudinis* (naming the author, recipient and greeting of a letter). Arranging the text within this space, however, required a bit of editing. To create a visual break between the emperor and his titles (ll. 1–3) and the recipient (l. 4), the emperor's consulships were omitted and an abbreviated numeral was used for his tribunician power: τὸ ᾗ instead of τὸ τρίτον. To fit the recipients on l. 4, connectives and definite articles were omitted.⁵⁹ This arrangement also allowed for visual emphasis on the start of the first clause (l. 5) with a slightly emphasized T and an indentation.

Similar compromises occur at the end of the text. A vacat in the right-hand margin of the earlier inscription (*I.Aphrodisias 2007 11.412*, ll. 24–45) drew attention to the name of the *procurator*, Claudius Agrippinus, although his two names were split across the lines. In the later version (*I.Aphrodisias 2007 8.34*, l. 15) the name Claudius was abbreviated as ΚΛ with an *ano stigmatē*, so that the carver could fit the full name of the *procurator* at the end of the line. The final line was also abbreviated to fit in the space: τοῦ σιδήρου was omitted and the closing εὐτυχεῖτε, “farewell”, was cut.⁶⁰ These changes were not mistakes but deliberate alterations to create an image of writing that clearly conveyed the form and function of a monumental document. Such an arrangement was not possible without editing the original text. From the perspective of the viewer, these compromises, which had little impact on meaning, created a more visually engaging and accessible image of writing.

⁵⁸ Kokkinia 2016; Graham 2021.

⁵⁹ Compare *I.Aphrodisias 2007 11.412*, l. 16 (Ἀφροδεισιέων τοῖς ἄρχουσι καὶ τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ χαίρειν *vac.*) with *I.Aphrodisias 2007 8.34*, l. 4 (Ἀφροδεισιέων ἄρχουσι βουλῇ δήμῳ χαίρειν *vac.*). Similar omissions are evident in documents on columns III and IV of the dossier wall; shorter imperial titles with no numeral are observed in *I.Aphrodisias and Rome 12–15* (Reynolds 1982, 101–118; Graham 2021, 588).

⁶⁰ The “farewell” is often absent in copies of letters on the dossier wall but this omission also served to integrate the letter into the monumental collective (Graham 2021, 588 and 593–594). Imperial titles can also be abbreviated in these letters, which are also not in chronological order (Reynolds 1982, 112; Kokkinia 2016, 51; Graham 2021, 593).

5.4 Conclusions

What is the point of comparing two similar copies of an inscribed document? In this case, one is allowed a rare insight into a process that is often veiled in mystery: the editorial transformation of a written text into an inscribed monumental document. One can see how underlying variations in text and appearance may reflect the differing functions that monumental documents played on the urban landscape. Collections of letters set out by different individuals at different times, in different places, convey different images of writing, with varying messages and points of emphasis. How these points of emphasis were conveyed, however, through the use of visual cues and a visual framework, suggest that a similar set of visual criteria applied to monumental documents and their urban viewers.

Monumental documents do not conform to modern concepts of expectations of a copy. Rather, these copies suggest that a number of criteria applied to the organisation and arrangement of a monumental inscription. The physical presentation of writing on the dossier wall suggests that the carver and/or the commissioners of the monument were guided primarily by the expectations of an audience, the context and the objective of the monument. With little compromise to the meaning of the original text, the collective monument offered an overall consistency in terms of message and appearance of inscribed documents as larger than life testaments to the city's special status.⁶¹ Set within a broader collective of letters and documents, this later copy of Hadrian's letter reflects not only a different physical space and arrangement but also different associations within the collective.⁶² As a result, the image, message and function of this letter changed significantly from its predecessor.

6. CONCLUSIONS ON MONUMENTAL DOCUMENTS AS COPIES

The criteria we apply impact how we view and interpret copies. The resulting conclusions are also very different. If we are looking for an accurate technical copy of a document in a monumental inscription, then we are probably employing a set of criteria and expectations that are quite different from those of viewers in the urban landscape. Reynold's close and careful reading of the two texts observes that the first copy is the most compelling and "accurate" version of the document. From the perspective of a passing viewer, however, one could argue that the later copy of this document was a "better" version of a monumental inscription: it was more engaging and accessible, conveying a message to a broader audience through carefully constructed a visual framework. Neither set of conclusions must exclude the other, both have an important role in understanding the concept of a copy and how it

⁶¹ Kokkinia 2016, 51; Graham 2021, 599.

⁶² Similar themes of imperial intervention and the importance of the city are visually drawn out across this collective (Graham 2021, 593–595).

can be perceived in different ways. This study adds a further perspective on monumental documents, reflecting the values of a commissioner and an urban audience.

One can understand why Panciera seeks to differentiate “documents” in his classification of what defines an inscription.⁶³ The transformation of a document from its original version into an inscribed monument often marked a shift in appearance, audience and function of writing; in short, it became a distinct object.⁶⁴ This transformation raises broader questions of terminology: how does the way that we describe and classify documents impact how we view and interpret these sources? While one cannot provide a detailed answer, this study seems to suggest that labels and approaches can play a fundamental role in both the perception and analysis of an inscription. Therefore, as the editors of *I.Aphrodisias 2007* (Roueché, Reynolds and Bodard) have done, we should consider carefully how we define and present inscriptions, and whether or not modern classifications reflect how these sources would have been experienced by ancient viewers. For example, when copies of building dedications existed in different parts of the same building, connections between these texts were likely to be made.⁶⁵ The lack of connection between copies of Hadrian’s letters, however, seems to suggest that documents carved in different places and different times may not have been viewed as copies. In this respect, the *I.Aphrodisias 2007* publication of these texts as unique documents is well-justified.⁶⁶

In a modern context, one often witnesses the transformation of an object or image that, once released in the wilds of social media, can take on quite a different function and/or meaning. Although some documents, such as the *senatus consultum de Aphrodisiensibus*, stipulate that copies were to be present in specific spaces, it is important to remember that these prescribed monuments may not have been the only copies in circulation.⁶⁷ It seems possible, perhaps likely, that the existence of numerous copies of official letters, inscribed in different urban contexts, was not so rare a phenomenon as it might seem. A document could be reinscribed and reused by different people or institutions for a variety of functions and meanings that went well beyond its original form.⁶⁸ It is this possible divergence in functions and

⁶³ Panciera 2012, 5–7.

⁶⁴ Davies 2004, 325–326; Eastmond 2015, 249–254; Graham 2021, 599.

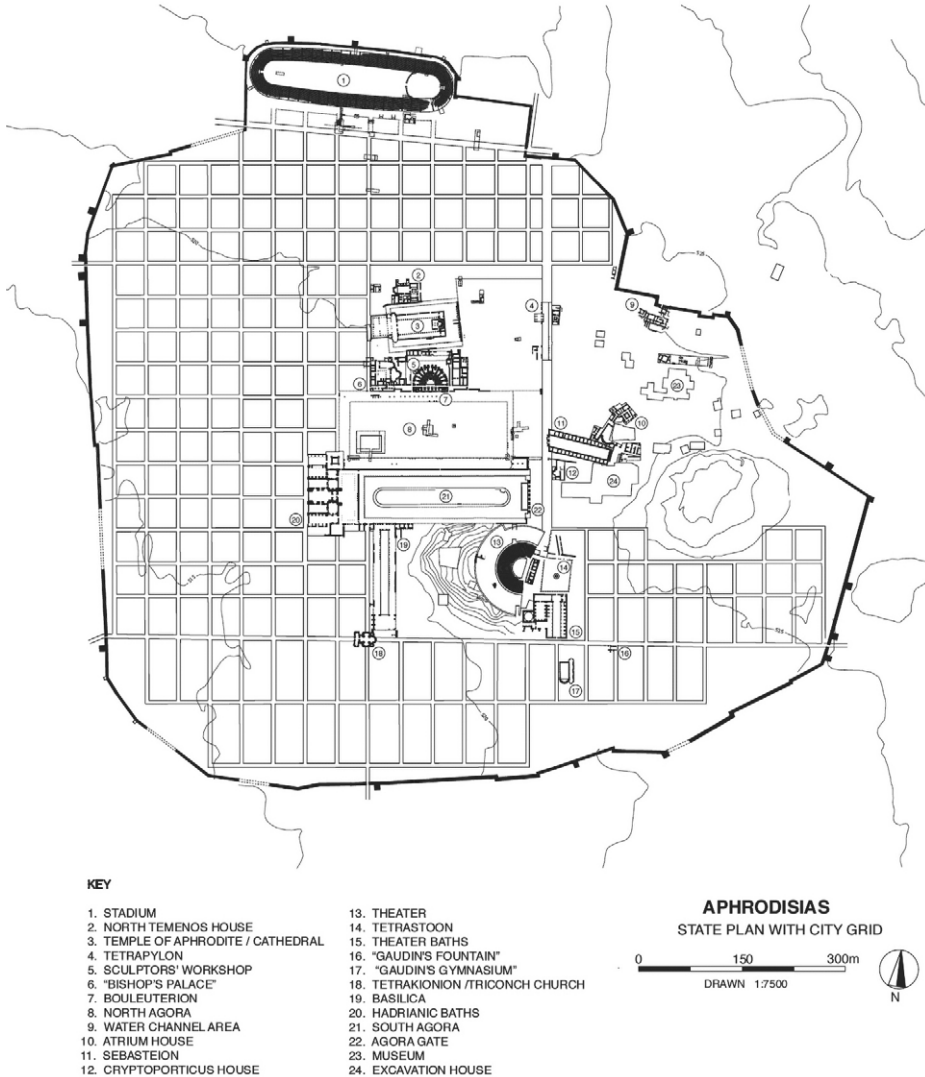
⁶⁵ Graham 2017; 2018.

⁶⁶ A note connecting the two versions of the inscriptions on the website, however, might be useful.

⁶⁷ Cooley 2012, 162–164, 178–179. Corbier 2013, 17. In the case of letters regarding iron production (Kokkina 2005, 259–262), it seems likely that there were at least two additional letters on this topic in the urban context at Aphrodisias, one in the *bouleuterion* (*I.Aphrodisias 2007* 2.307) and one reused in the city wall (*I.Aphrodisias 2007* 12.510).

⁶⁸ For scholarship on the subsequent reuse of inscribed materials at Aphrodisias cf. Sitz 2019. For copies in art cf. Small 2008, 227–251. For different uses of document copies as part of a larger dossier cf. Kokkinia 2016 (the so-called “Archive Wall”) and Kokkinia 2021 (the *Monumentum Ancyranum*).

meaning that one needs to keep in mind when studying and publishing inscribed documents, especially texts that a modern reader might classify as a “copy”. Like the original ingredients of a recipe, the text is only part of the story; for the resulting monument, the proof is in the pudding: execution, context and intention impact the outcome every time.



Map 1. Aphrodisias. Courtesy of NYU excavations at Aphrodisias.

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