

Aspendos

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Aspendos or **Aspendus** (Pamphylian: ΕΣΤΦΕΔΥΣ; Attic: Ἄσπενδος) was an ancient Greco-Roman city in Antalya province of Turkey. The site is located 7 kilometres (4.3 mi) northeast of central Serik.

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History



Aspendos theatre from the upper gallery

Aspendos was an ancient city in Pamphylia, Asia Minor, located about 40 km east of the modern city of Antalya, Turkey. It was situated on the Eurymedon River about 16 km inland from the Mediterranean Sea; it shared a border with, and was hostile to, Side.^[2]

Some scholars associate the city's name with "Azatiwadaya". The known city of that name was founded by Azatiwada of Quwê on his *eastern* frontier, at Karatepe.^[3] According to later tradition, Aspendos was founded rather earlier by Greeks who may have come from Argos.

The wide range of its coinage throughout the ancient world indicates that, in the 5th century BC, Aspendos had become the most important city in Pamphylia. At that time the Eurymedon River was navigable as far as Aspendos, and the city derived great wealth from a trade in salt, oil and wool.

Aspendos did not play an important role in antiquity as a political force. Its political history during the colonisation period corresponded to the currents of the Pamphylian region. Within this trend, after the colonial period, it remained for a time under Lycian hegemony. In 546 BC it came under Persian domination. The fact that the city continued to mint coins in its own name, however, indicates that it had a great deal of freedom even under the Persians.

Circa 465 BCE Cimon led an Athenian navy against a Persian navy in the Battle of the Eurymedon, and destroyed it. Aspendos then became a member of the Delian League.^[4]

Aspendos

Ἄσπενδος (Ancient Greek)



The Roman theatre in Aspendos has been preserved remarkably well.^[1]



Shown within Turkey

Alternate name	Aspendus
Location	Serik, Antalya Province, Turkey
Region	Pamphylia
Coordinates	36°56′20″N 31°10′20″E﻿ / ﻿36.93889°N 31.17222°E﻿ / 36.93889; 31.17222
Type	Settlement

The Persians captured the city again in 411 BC and used it as a base. In 389 BC Thrasybulus of Athens, in an effort to regain some of the prestige that city had lost in the Peloponnesian Wars, anchored off the coast of Aspendos in an effort to secure its surrender. Hoping to avoid a new war, the people of Aspendos collected money among themselves and gave it to the commander, entreating him to retreat without causing any damage. Even though he took the money, he had his men trample all the crops in the fields. Enraged, the Aspendians stabbed and killed Thrasybulus in his tent.

When Alexander the Great marched into Aspendos in 333 BC after capturing Perge, the citizens sent envoys asking him not to garrison soldiers there. He agreed, provided he would be given the taxes and horses that they had formerly paid as tribute to the Persian king. After reaching this agreement Alexander went to Side, leaving a garrison there on the city's surrender. Going back through Sillyon, he learned that the Aspendians had failed to ratify the agreement their envoys had proposed and were preparing to defend themselves. Alexander marched to the city immediately. When they saw Alexander returning with his troops, the Aspendians, who had retreated to their acropolis, again sent envoys to sue for peace. This time, however, they had to agree to very harsh terms; a Macedonian garrison would remain in the city and 100 gold talents as well as 4,000 horses would be given in tax annually.

In 190 BC the city surrendered to the Romans, who later pillaged its artistic treasures.^[5] Toward the end of the Roman period the city began a decline that continued throughout Byzantine times.

Greek and Roman structures

Aspendos is known for having the best-preserved theatre of antiquity. With a diameter of 96 metres (315 ft), the theatre provided seating for 12,000.^[6]

The theatre was built in 155^[6] by the Greek architect Zenon, a native of the city. It was periodically repaired by the Seljuqs, who used it as a caravanserai, and in the 13th century the stage building was converted into a palace by the Seljuqs of Rum.^[7]

In order to keep with Hellenistic traditions, a small part of the theatre was built so that it leaned against the hill where the Citadel (Acropolis) stood, while the remainder was built on vaulted arches. The high stage served to seemingly isolate the audience from the rest of the world. The 'scaenae frons' or backdrop, has remained intact. The 8.1 metre (27 ft) sloping reflective wooden ceiling over the stage has been lost over time. Post holes for 58 masts are found in the upper level of the theatre. These masts supported a velarium or awning that could be pulled over the audience to provide shade.^[6]

The Aspendos International Opera and Ballet Festival offers an annual season of productions in the theatre in the spring and early summer.

Nearby stand the remains of a basilica, agora, nymphaeum and 15 kilometres (9.3 mi) of a Roman aqueduct. The Roman Eurymedon Bridge, reconstructed in the 13th century, is also in the vicinity.

Coinage



Aqueduct of Aspendos



The Basilica

Aspendos was one of the earliest cities to mint coins. It began issuing coinage around 500 BC, first staters and later drachmas; "the hoplite on the obverse represents the soldiery for which Aspendus was famous in antiquity,"^[8] the reverse frequently depicts a triskelion. The legend appears on early coins as the abbreviation ΕΣ or ΕΣΤΦΕ; later coinage has ΕΣΤΦΕΔΙΙΥΣ, the adjective from the city's local (Pamphylian) name Estwedus. The city's numismatic history extends from archaic Greek to late Roman times.^[9]

Bishopric

The Christian bishopric of Aspendus was a suffragan of the metropolitan see of Side, the capital of the Roman province of Pamphylia Prima, to which Aspendus belonged. Of its bishops, the names of four are recorded in extant documents: Domnus was at the First Council of Nicaea in 425, Tribonianus at the Council of Ephesus in 431, Timotheus at the 448 synod held by Flavian of Constantinople, which condemned Eutyches, and at the Robber Council of Ephesus held the same year, and Leo at the Second Council of Nicaea in 787.^{[10][11]}

No longer a residential bishopric, Aspendus is today listed by the Catholic Church as a titular see.^[12]

Aspendos International Opera and Ballet Festival

The theatre hosts the annual Aspendos International Opera and Ballet Festival organized by Turkish State Opera and Ballet since 1994, with international participation of opera and ballet companies and an audience of about 10,000.

Dalida held her last concert there on 28 April 1987.

References

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Silver Stater from Aspendos dated 370-333 BC, featuring scenes from Olympic sports. City/Region: Pamphylia, Aspendos; Denomination: AR Stater; Composition: Silver Date: 370-333 BC; Obverse: Olympic games-type scene: two wrestlers grappling, the letters delta and alpha between their legs; Reverse: ΕΣΤΦΕΔΙΙΥΣ, Olympic games-type scene: Slinger, wearing short chiton, discharging sling to right, triskeles on right with feet clockwise; Size: 23.6mm, 10.851g; Reference: SNG Cop 233; SNG France 87

External links

- History of Aspendos (<http://www.adiyamanli.org/aspendos.html>)
- Aspendos photos folder (<http://crydee.sai.msu.ru/album/trips/2006.06.Turkey/Aspendos/index.html>)
- Maps of Aspendos (https://web.archive.org/web/20070225082118/http://maps.turkeyodyssey.com:80/city/maps_of_aspendos.php)
- How to go to Aspendos (<http://www.tourantalya.com/how-to-go/?place=the-antique-theatre-of-aspendos/>)
- Plan of the Aspendos Antic Theater (<http://www.turkeyinphotos.com/photos/aspendos/>)
- The Theatre at Aspendos, The Ancient Theatre Archive, Theatre specifications and virtual reality tour of theatre (<http://www.whitman.edu/theatre/theatretour/aspendos/introduction/aspendo.intro1.htm>)
- Livius.org: Aspendus (<https://web.archive.org/web/20080312235846/http://www.livius.org:80/a/turkey/aspendus/aspendus01.html>)
- Aspendos html5/full screen panoramas taken December, 2012 (<http://www.zmetro.com/?p=5010>)
- Over 350 pictures from several visits (<http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/aspendos>)
- Aspendos Archaeological Project 2008 - (<http://www.aspendosproject.com/index.html>)



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