

ADALYA



SUNA-İNAN KIRAÇ AKDENİZ MEDENİYETLERİ ARAŞTIRMA ENSTİTÜSÜ
SUNA & İNAN KIRAÇ RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON MEDITERRANEAN CIVILIZATIONS

ADALYA



SUNA-İNAN KIRAÇ AKDENİZ MEDENİYETLERİ ARAŞTIRMA ENSTİTÜSÜ YILLIĞI
THE ANNUAL OF THE SUNA & İNAN KIRAÇ RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON MEDITERRANEAN CIVILIZATIONS

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Yapım / Production

Zero Prodüksiyon Ltd.

ISSN 1301-2746

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A Church Beneath The Sea At Aperlae, Lycia

R.L. HOHLFELDER-R.L. VANN*

Aperlae was a maritime settlement of ancient Lycia (Fig. 1). It lay between the peninsula today called Sıcak Yarımadası and the mainland at the head of Asar Bay. Its beautiful location was not exceptional for this section of the coast where the rugged Taurus Mountains abruptly and dramatically meet the sea. The town was probably founded in the early Hellenistic era possibly during the reign of prospered until the late 7th century AD in one of the many inlets that characterize the Lycian shore. Although the bay was only partially sheltered and often exposed to the full force Ptolemy I and of adverse weather, it could have been used easily as a natural roadstead when winds and waves permitted and with care at other times¹. Given the formidable terrain blocking the site from ready access to the interior and the apparent lack of roads or tracks leading inland, the sea was Aperlae's primary link to the rest of Lycia and beyond².

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The authors wish to thank R.-C. Carter for sharing their vast knowledge of Aperlae and for their generous contributions to our survey. We also wish to acknowledge our respective universities, the University of Colorado and the University of Maryland, for their continuing financial support. Hohlfelder particularly wishes to thank the Council on Research and Creative Work of the University of Colorado for a faculty fellowship for AY 1998-9. During the tenure of this grant, he prepared this article while in residence at Oxford University. We also wish to thank E. Varinlioğlu and A. Işık, Director Generals of the Department of Museums and Sites; M. Pehlivaner, Director of the Antalya Museum; and K. Sams, president of the American Research Institute in Turkey. We also are grateful to our commissioners from 1996-1998: N. Atar, M. Demirel, and M. Erdem, H. Üregen has been our patron and friend throughout our project. Without his wisdom and guidance, our survey would not have happened. On site at Aperlae, A. Taşpınar has helped in many ways and has always been willing to share his quotidian experience of living on the ancient site and an occasional, and always welcome, glass of tea. Trimble Navigation (GPS) and Teltronics of Rockville, Maryland (field radios) provided valuable equipment for our survey. We thank both companies for their generosity. We also thank J. Humphrey for reading this paper and for his insightful substantive comments and editorial suggestions.

¹ R.L. Hohlfelder-R.L. Vann, "Cabotage at Aperlae in Ancient Lycia", *IJNA* 29.1, 2000, 26-35.

² One milestone was found at Aperlae. It is in a secondary position serving as a door jam or as part of the blockage of a doorway in the Late Antique fortifications near the East City Gate where it most likely originally stood. It probably was the caput viae of the one Roman road discovered thus far associated with the town. This road spans the isthmus separating Asar Bay and Kekova Roads. The milestone is from the period of the Tetrarchy and probably commemorates a rededication of an existing road during the reign of Diocletian (IGS III, 691).

This small coastal settlement, typical in most ways of other Lycian poleis, is essentially a site without a history. References in literary sources are limited and brief³. Some inscriptions found on or near the site add details⁴, but the record of the life of this remote provincial city is largely unknown. Most 19th century travelers bypassed the bay to stop in the better-protected waters of Kekova roads to the east. Several, including Beaufort and Cockerell, anchored in Kekova, then walked back across the Isthmus⁵ (Fig. 2).

No excavations have yet been undertaken at the site. In the 1970s R.-C. Carter sailed their yacht into Asar Bay on numerous occasions and conducted a preliminary survey of the extant remains of what was then a tranquil and largely unknown site. Their focus was primarily on the submerged ruins that distinguish much of Aperlae's waterfront (more than 1500 m² of which is now underwater), a commercial and public area of the Roman and Byzantine town that disappeared beneath the sea due to local coastal subsidence. The Carters scrupulously followed established protocols for what amateur investigators could or could not do without formal permission or a representative of the Ministry of Culture on site with them. They reported their discoveries to both the Department of Antiquities in Ankara and to the local museum in Antalya and produced a valuable article on their findings, which remains the starting point for any investigation of Aperlae⁶. Some scholars have visited since and added their observations⁷. Most recently, however, it has been overrun by waterborne tourists, drawn in their sailboats or day-charters to the natural beauty of this deserted site and to the mystery of an ancient city whose history is yet to be revealed.

In 1996, the authors began the first systematic survey of the ruins both on land and beneath the sea as an extension of the University of Maryland Survey of Ancient Harbors in Turkey⁸. Previous seasons had focused on Cilician harbors and their immediate surroundings. The opportunity to work at Aperlae with a team from the University of Colorado expanded those objectives. Here was not simply a well-preserved waterfront, but one that was inundated and thus held the promise of being more intact. Likewise, Aperlae offered our staff of architects and surveyors a unique opportunity to record the first measured drawings of the site. Fortification walls complete with towers, gates, and posterns communicated with a system of isolated signal towers spread along the adjacent

³ Stadiasmos MN 239; Pliny, NH 5.100; Hierocles 684.5.

⁴ IGS III, 690-693.

⁵ F. Beaufort Karamania (1818); C.R. Cockerell, *Travels in Southern Europe and the Levant* (1903).

⁶ R.S. Carter, "The Submerged Seaport of Aperlae, Turkey", *IJNA* 7.3, 1978, 177-185.

⁷ Among the most important are C. Foss, "The Lycian Coast in the Byzantine Age", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48, 1994, 1-52; G.E. Bean, *Lycian Turkey* (1978) 101-103; M. Zimmerman, *Untersuchungen zur historischen Landeskunde Zentrallykiens* (1992) 199-211.

⁸ R.L. Vann, "Ancient Harbors in Cilicia (Turkey)", in: D.H. Keith-T. Carrell (eds.), *Underwater Archaeology Proceedings from the Society for Historical Archaeology* (1992) 75-79; R.L. Vann, "A Survey of Harbors in Rough Cilicia: the 1991 Preliminary Survey", *AST* 10, 1993, 529-534; R.L. Vann, "Cilician Harbor Survey", in: R.P. Woodward-C.D. Moore (eds.), *Underwater Archaeology: Proceedings from the Society of Historical Archaeology Conference* (1994) 68-73; R.L. Vann, "Cilician Harbor Survey: the 1993 Survey of Soli-Pompeiopolis", *AST* 12, 1995, 529-34; R.L. Vann, "Cilician Harbor Survey: 1995 Survey of Korykos", *AST* 13, 1996, 123-33; R.L. Vann, "A Classification of Ancient Harbors in Cilicia", in: S. Swiny-R.L. Hohlfelder-H.W. Swiny (eds.), *Res Maritimae Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean from Prehistory to Late Antiquity* (1997) 307-319.

coasts. Within the immediate urban core were at least three churches (our submerged church is now the fourth), two baths of Imperial date, dozens of other public or domestic buildings, as well as a diverse range of cisterns and funerary monuments. Our hope is to provide an architectural survey of the site, documenting what physical remains still stand, thus building on the admirable foundation provided by the Carters. Our permit specified survey, so no archaeological probes were conducted. Preliminary reports of the work carried out in 1997 and 1998 have been published elsewhere⁹. Our purpose here is to report on the 1998 investigation of an apsidal building in the submerged part of the town's waterfront¹⁰.

This structure is located south of the West Baths and north of Room A (Figs. 3,4). Carter explored this area of the underwater ruins in the 1970s and located this structure on his sketch map. His text, however, only mentioned its existence and gave no details as to its function¹¹.

We discussed it briefly in our 1998 article and there suggested that it had been "...a church in one or more of its many structural incarnations"¹². Our identification was based primarily on the appearance of an unusually shaped apse within a basilica-style building featuring a central nave and two side aisles¹³ (Fig. 5).

Recovering a plan of this building was difficult owing to the limitations of cumbersome survey techniques. Since our license did not permit the use of SCUBA, we were restricted to repetitive surface dives using only snorkel equipment. Although the water over most of our entire area of interest is rarely more than 3.0 m, this method of shallow-water survey is less efficient and accurate than if SCUBA could have been employed. Moreover, a considerable overburden of debris obscured the entire area of investigation. Here too we had neither the permission nor the right equipment to remove the tumbled blocks and rubble that masked features of the church and hindered efforts to recover an account of its earlier, or possibly later, uses. But with considerable perseverance and physical endurance, we mapped, measured, and photographed the building and offer here a narrative to explain what the underwater ruins seem to represent.

We have suggested elsewhere that this structure, clearly based on a basilican plan with some regional design variation, was sited in an area of the harborfront that was probably in constant use from at least the 1st century BC to the 7th century AD¹⁴. This location was too critical to Aperlae's life not to have been occupied by some private or public structure

⁹ R.L. Vann-R.L. Hohlfelder, "Survey of Classical Harbors in Turkey: the 1996 Season at Aperlae", *AST* 15.2, 1998, 423-435; R.L. Vann-R.L. Hohlfelder, "Survey of Ancient Harbors in Turkey: 1997 Season at Aperlae", *AST* 16.2, 1999, 443-451.

¹⁰ For the best study to date of churches in this area see R.M. Harrison, "Churches and Chapels of Central Lycia", *AnatSt* 13, 1963, 117-151. The churches of nearby Kyaneai have been published in F. Kolb (ed.), *Lykische Studien* 1, *AsiaMS* 9, 1993; F. Kolb (ed.), *Lykische Studien* 2, *AsiaMS* 18, 1995. For the region farther west, see a recent study of the churches on Gemiler Island and the environs of Ölüdeniz in S. Tsuji (ed.), *The Survey of Early Byzantine Sites in the Ölüdeniz Area* (1995); V. Ruggieri, "Rilievi de architettura bizantina nel golfo di Simi", *OrChrist* 55, 1989, 75-100, 345-347.

¹¹ Carter op. cit. (supra n.6) 180, 183 Fig. 3.

¹² Hohlfelder-Vann op. cit. (supra n.1) 35.

¹³ Harrison op. cit. (supra n.10) does not cite an example of such a trilobed apse.

¹⁴ Hohlfelder-Vann op. cit. (supra n.1) 28, 35.

for as long as the site was regularly inhabited. Over a span of centuries one would expect several different buildings to have stood there, each serving this small provincial city in different ways. A Christian church, however, was improbable before the reign of Constantine (306-337 AD). Once the area had been consecrated, it is likely that a church or some type of religious building stood there until Aperlae was abandoned in the aftermath of attacks by Arab corsairs.

Visible evidence for earlier (probably Roman) use of this portion of the waterfront is scant. An undetermined length of finely worked ashlar foundation blocks, each c. 1.0 m long, stretches south under water from beneath a large pile of sea-bleached rubble and cobbles at the interface of the shoreline and the sea. It runs below the N wall of the church near the NW corner. Its southern terminus is now lost under the debris within the confines of the sanctuary. The size of these blocks, as large as anything found on land, suggests the existence of a large edifice on this site before work began on the church. This foundation course provides an important glimpse of an earlier phase of the waterfront's history, but it cannot offer any additional testimony by itself. Whether this Roman structure, perhaps in some way related to the adjacent West Bath complex, was in a ruinous state before construction of the church began or whether it was specifically dismantled to accommodate the new building are questions for which there are no answers at present.

Another surviving wall also suggests an earlier building phase. The eastern N-S wall of the church, the one distinguished by the trilobed apse, appears to extend past the northern E-W wall to disappear beneath the rubble pile on shore. Its configuration - inner and outer facings of stone filled with a core of rubble c. 0.70-0.80 m wide - suggests a construction much later than the ashlar foundation, which it parallels. It may have been linked with the church in some way, but today it appears to stand alone in relationship to no other extant walls. Another possibility is that this wall also may have had some association with the West Bath adjacent to the northwest. If this wall existed before the church existed, the apse might have been built into it. Perhaps a short course of another E-W wall on the exterior south side of the church, abutting but not part of the Christian building, may represent a companion, earlier construction. But for now, we can only note that the eastern N-S wall extends north beyond the church to vanish beneath the rubble debris on shore and that there is evidence for at least two earlier structural elements in the area where the church later stood.

The Early Church, as we will call the larger and earlier of the two phases, was c. 10x19.5 m in length and width (Fig. 5). Its size and proportions (1:2) were typical of similar Christian churches found in Lycia, notably Harrison's Churches A, B, and C at nearby Andriake¹⁵. It had a narthex with an entrance in the NW corner. The main entrance to the nave, distinguished by several surviving pavers, was aligned with the chancel and apse. Three pairs of column bases defined the nave and flanking aisle. No ancillary buildings or rooms seem to have been attached to the main hall, as was so often the case in Byzantine Lycia.

¹⁵ Harrison op. cit. (supra n.10) Fig. 17.

The apse is the most distinct extant feature (Fig. 6). It is 3.5 m wide and consists of three components: a central semicircle that emerged from two quarter-circles. Perhaps in some humble way, this design was intended to evoke the grander triconchos apses found in many Lycian churches¹⁶. Within its confines are pieces of marble revetment that might have belonged to an interior platform or bema to hold the altar (Fig. 7). Where the apse meets the nave, there is evidence of a marble step down to the church floor. The debris near the apse is heavily concentrated. It obscures the floor of the church and any other surviving details of this section of the building.

Except for two column drums on the S side and two bases or piers separating the N aisle from the nave, no other architectural elements were visible in the rubble field within the church. Such items may well have fallen prey to the ever-increasing number of snorkel swimmers who arrive by yacht. With no permanent guard on the site, the removal of antiquities is a reality, and in the two decades since the Carter visits many surface antiquities visible on land or on the sea have disappeared¹⁷. In addition, locals have found Aperlae a ready quarry for marble; these pieces are often burned to produce lime.

Evolving settlements alter their appearance over time as their needs change. Older buildings are often dismantled or their configurations modified to meet new needs or in the wake of natural disasters. The Early Church with its distinct apse underwent such a renovation. Perhaps the major earthquake around 529, a disaster that severely damaged nearby Myra the provincial capital of Byzantine Lycia, could have occasioned the significant renovation that is so visible in extant ruins beneath the sea¹⁸. Specific evidence of earthquake damage in Late Antiquity is not obvious on land. Underwater a few meters south of the church, however, a section of a later Roman or early Byzantine seawall was ripped from the fortification system of which it was a part and hurled seaward (south) some 7.0 m. It now protrudes from the seabed like a tilted monolith and speaks to a natural catastrophe that is likely to have damaged the Early Church. Perhaps this building was devastated beyond easy repair at that time.

Whatever the reason, it is clear that at some secondary point the Early Church was greatly reduced in size. A new N-S wall was constructed east of the original entrance and another doorway cut into the N wall. The new sanctuary, which we call the Later Church (Fig. 8), was considerably smaller (c. 10x11 m) than the one it replaced¹⁹. Spolia, perhaps destruction debris from the original church, appear in the new wall that redefined and reduced the size of this building. Two column drums are visible in the SW corner of the renovated building. The interior wall that once demarcated the narthex of the Early Church appears to have been removed, as was a long section of the E-W wall on the S side.

¹⁶ Ibid. Figs. 8, 10, 14.

¹⁷ Personal communication with R. Carter. Hohlfelder also remembers finding a piece of altar screen amidst the floor debris in 1996. He hand-fanned it and left it in-situ for photography the next day. Unfortunately, it vanished over night.

¹⁸ Foss op. cit. (supra n.7) 23.

¹⁹ The practice of building a later, smaller church within the walls of an earlier one seems to have been a fairly common practice in this region. See Harrison op. cit. (supra n.10) 130, 133 for other examples at Dikmen and Karabel.

After its removal, a large structure may have been built over the western portion of the Early Church extending down to the waterfront area. Its function cannot be determined but it seems likely that it served secular rather than religious needs. At the same time, a rectangular addition appears to have been built behind the Later Church with a short wall running E-W to brace the apse and perhaps support its roof. Its exact date cannot be determined by visual examination alone, but the crudeness of its walls suggests that it may have been added during the rebuilding program and that it was not an original element of the Early Church.

A portion of the floor within this rectangular structure survived in the NE corner. A section of polychrome mosaic featuring a geometric design remained in situ (Fig. 9). It ran beneath the bracing wall of the apse and there is no doubt that this addition was constructed over parts of the mosaic. Our first thought was that the mosaic floor may have been part of a larger apse that could have adorned the Early Church, and that the existing apse was a renovation associated with the building modifications that yielded the smaller Later Church²⁰.

In 1998, however, we found traces of the same mosaic floor in situ, some 9 m east of the original discovery on an approximate E-W line (Fig. 10), well beyond where an apse associated with the Early Church would have extended. The proportions of such a structure would have exceeded general norms for Byzantine churches. Clearly then the floor belonged to a very large (by local standards) Roman building that existed before either church was constructed. Perhaps such a structure was associated with the one of the two earlier N-S walls that predated the Early Church (Fig. 4).

The uncovering of the eastern segment of this mosaic floor occasioned a preliminary survey of the adjacent underwater area. In the last working days of 1998, our investigators reported numerous building elements lying on the sea floor east of the Later Church, including numerous columns (Fig. 11). Some were randomly scattered about; others had been re-used in later walls. Some large ashlar blocks were also found. These elements and some substantial wall foundations (not yet studied in detail) are consistent with the hypothesis that a large public building existed there. This submerged section of Aperlae's coastline will be the focus of a more extensive survey in the year 2000.

²⁰ A similar discovery of a mosaic outside a small Middle Byzantine cross-in-square church in Sardis in 1962 led to the excavation of a major Early Christian predecessor. G.M.A. Hanfmann, *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times* (1983) 196-204 Figs. 288-290.

Özet

Likya-Aperlae'da Su Altında Kalmış Bir Kilise

Maryland ve Colorado Üniversiteleri'nin 1996 yılından beri sürdürdüğü Aperlae antik kenti araştırmalarında, özellikle su altında kaldığı için iyi korunmuş olan liman bölgesi araştırmacılara benzersiz bir olanak sağlamaktadır. Çalışma grubunun ilk planlarını çıkardığı kent sınırları içinde dört kilise, İmparatorluk döneminden iki hamam, birçok kamu binası, evler, sarnıçlar ve mezar anıtları dikkat çekmektedir. Bu makale yalnızca bir kilisenin 1998 yılı incelemelerini içermektedir.

Yapının, kilise olarak tanımlanması başlıca sebebi tipik bazilikal planıdır. Sınırlı koşullar nedeniyle, kalıntının ancak su üstünden görünen kısmı fotoğraflanmış ve çizimleri yapılabilmektedir. Yapının iki evreli olduğu belirlenmiştir (Figs. 5,8). Erken Kilise adıyla tanımlanan ilk evrede yapı, 1'e 2 oranıyla Likya bölgesinin tipik kilise planına sahiptir. "Geç Kilise" evresinde ise bina, öncesine göre daha küçülmüştür.

Bazı yerel mimari özellikleri olan bazilikal planlı yapı için, olasılıkla, limanın MÖ. 1.yy.-MS. 7.yy. arasında yoğun yerleşim görmüş bu önemli noktası seçilmiştir (Fig. 5). I. Konstantin döneminden (M.S. 306-337) önce bir Hristiyan kilisesi yapılmış olması olasılığı yoktur ve kentin Arap akınlarıyla tahribine kadar da kullanım gördüğü anlaşılmaktadır.

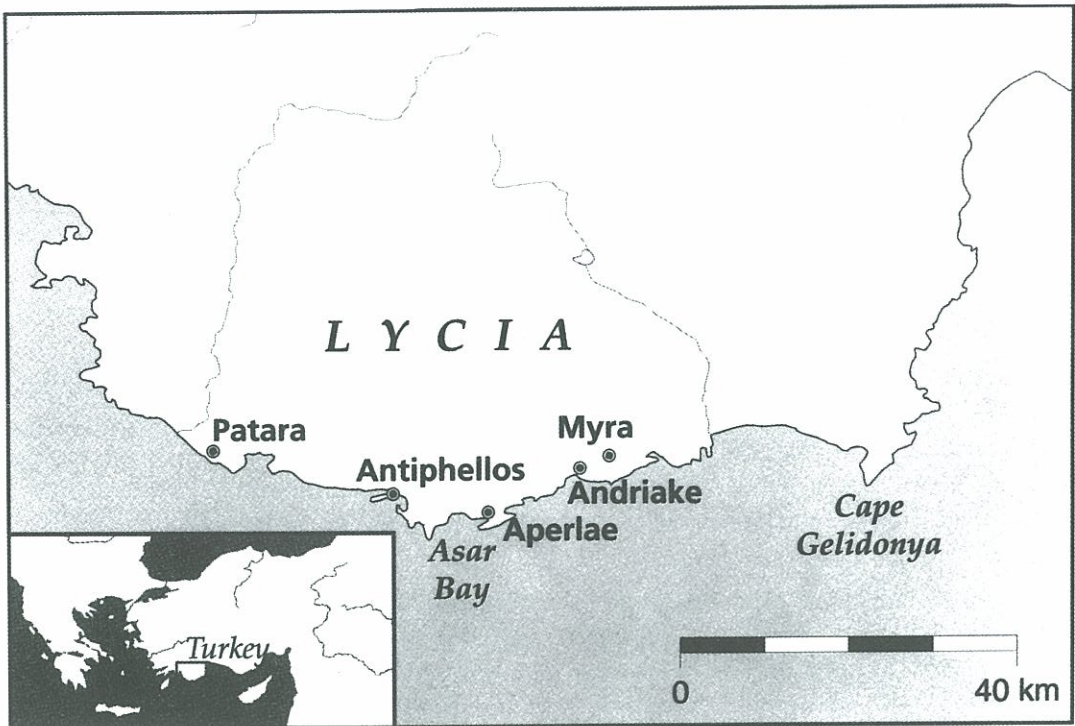


Figure 1 Location of Aperlae and neighbouring Lycian ports



Figure 2 Asar Bay, the Isthmus, and Kekova roads in the distance (R.L. Hohlfelder)

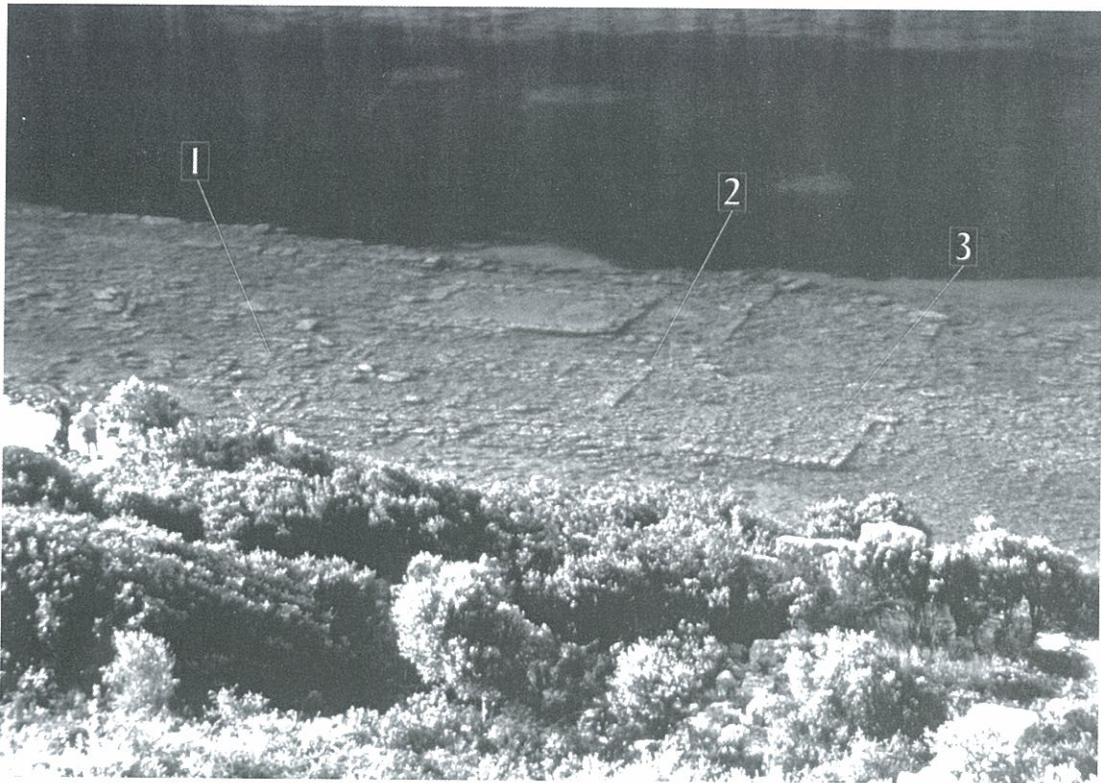


Figure 3 The submerged church. 1. The trilobed apse; 2. The late N-S wall that formed the western end of the church; 3. The narthex of the early church (R.L. Hohlfelder)

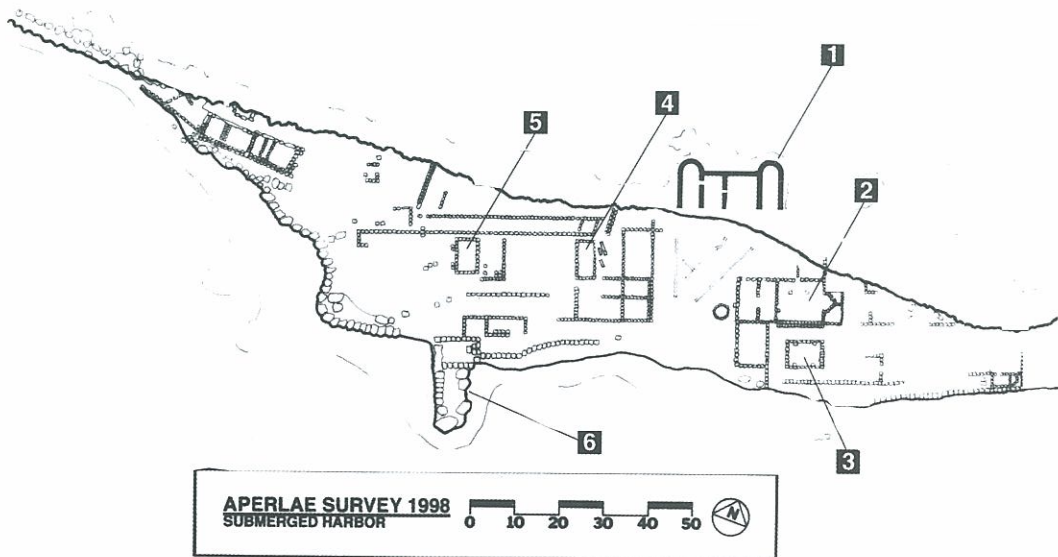


Figure 4 Map of submerged structures. 1. West bath complex; 2. Underwater church; 3-5. Rooms A-C; 6. Jetty (Kathryn H. Barth)

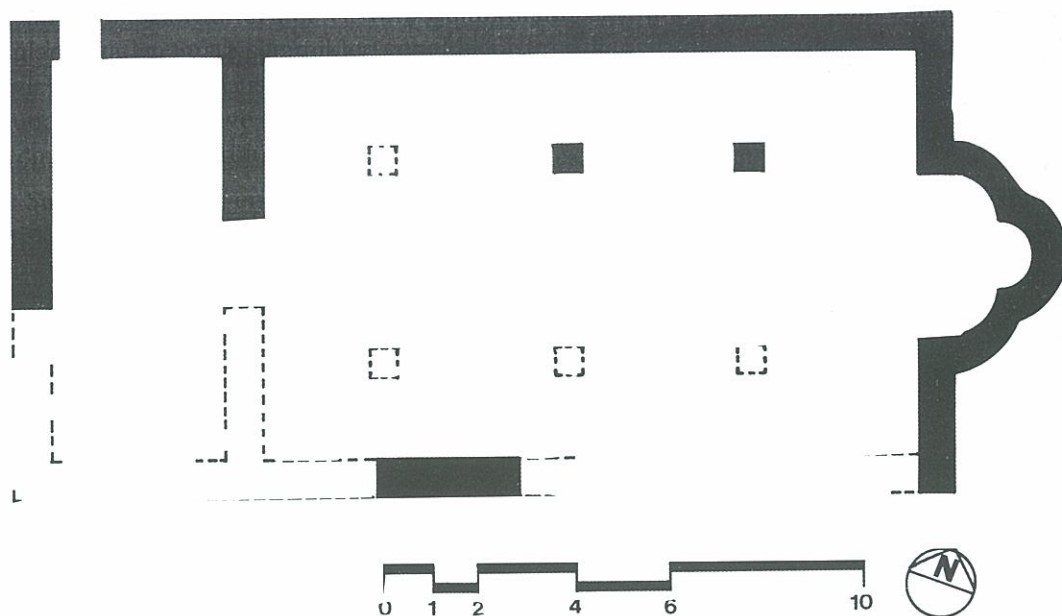


Figure 5 Plan of the early church (Kathryn H. Barth)

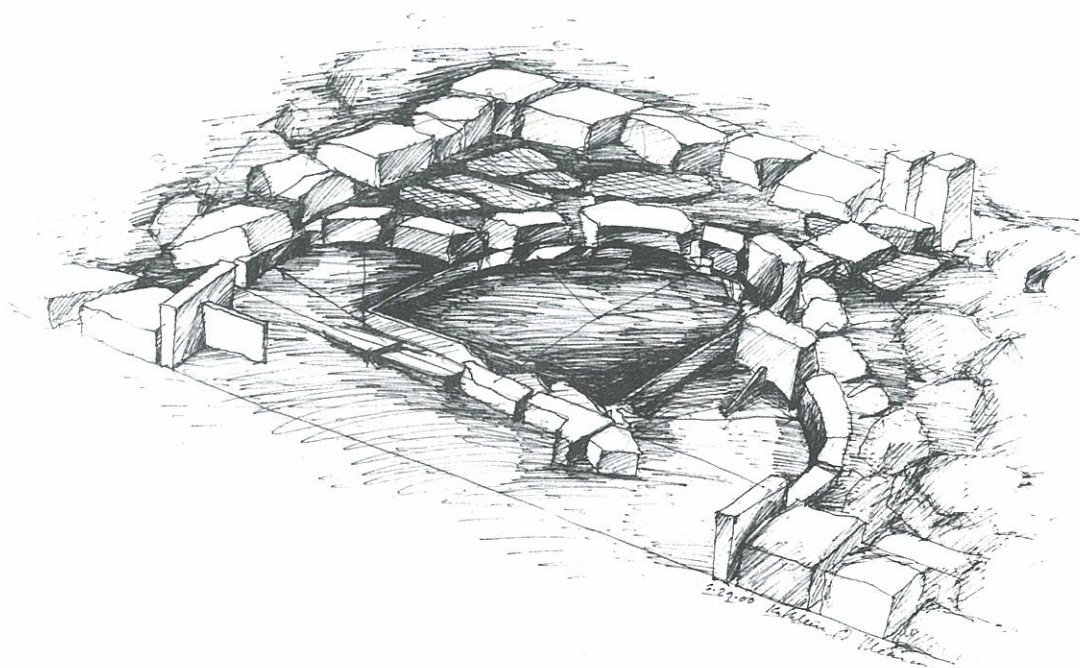


Figure 6 Perspective drawing of the trilobed apse (Kathleen O'Meara)



Figure 7 Tripod photograph of the trilobed apse (P. Nelson)

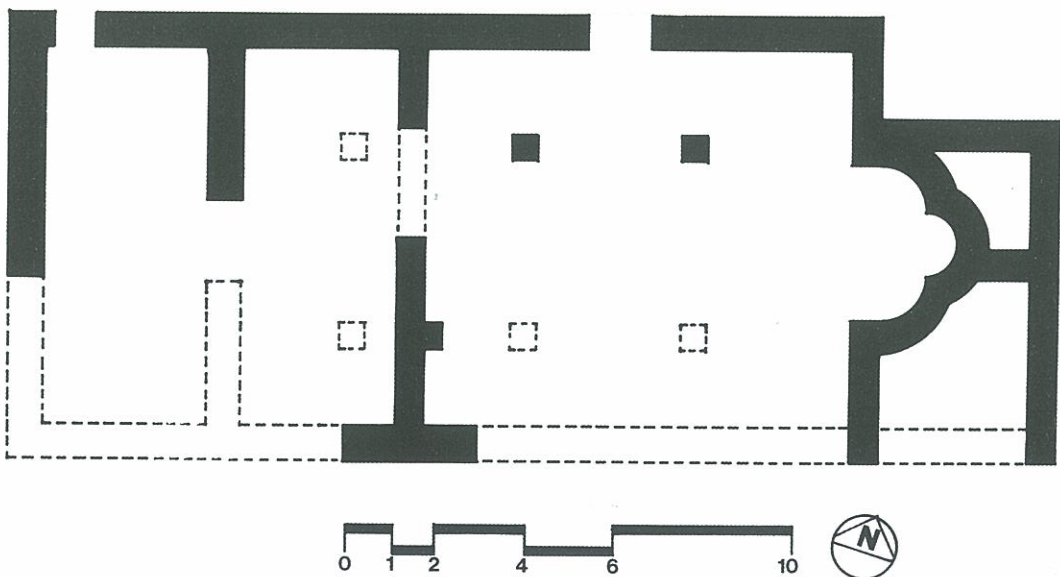


Figure 8 Plan of the later church (Kathryn H. Barth)



Figure 9 The bracing wall E of the trilobed apse resting on mosaic floor (R.L. Hohlfelder)

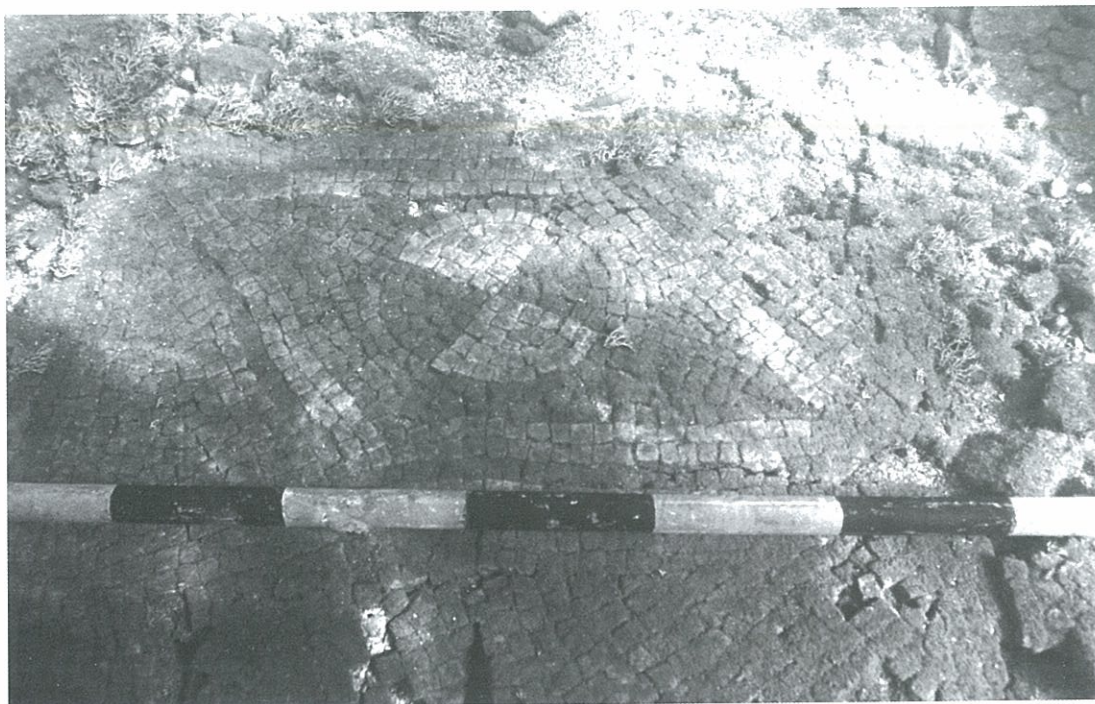


Figure 10 Section of the mosaic floor found in-situ (R.L. Hohlfelder)



Figure 11 Column lying in submerged area to E of the church (R.L. Hohlfelder)

