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Since the reconstruction of its façade, the Celsus library of Ephesus has become one of the best known classic monuments in Turkey (Fig. 1). It is to be seen on postcards, on prospects and posters of tourism firms, even on the Turkish bank note of 20 million lira. The hundreds of thousands of tourists who yearly visit Ephesus and, walking down the Embolus from the agora, see the magnificent artefact from afar, know it best. From the point where the marble road turns north to the theatre, the visitor has only to walk a few more metres to reach a little square, the west side of which is comprised by the library. On the north side is the marble gate, also by now reconstructed, of the donators Mazaïos and Mithridates from the time of Caesar Augustus (4/3 BC), through which the lower agora, the trade centre of Ephesus, can be reached.

The library's marble façade rises with nine steps to 17 m height, with a width of 21 m. Whoever stood before it was amazed: not only by its actual size, but by the magnificence of the prospect of the two floors, by the profusion of its structuring, especially when the morning sun enhances the effect through plays of light and shadows. In the basement, before the entrance wall, are four pairs of columns on pedestals and with composite capitals. Above them lies a rich entablature which, instead of running through, turns off at an angle of 90 degrees after each column pair and runs over the three entrances in the actual wall. The middle one of the three portals is wider and higher, and has a richly decorated frame like the other two. Above them are windows: a small one above the middle entrance, a larger one above each of the lower side entrances. The column pairs, above which the entablature runs on the front level, form so-called tabernacles that shelter richly ornamented wall niches with figures between the portals.

The upper floor offers a surprise because the four column pairs do not repeat themselves, only the three tabernacles stand above the places of the four downstairs, as if they wanted to cover the entrances and also shelter the windows of the upper floor directly above them from the rain. The Corinthian upper floor columns are lower and thinner than those downstairs, they also stand further apart. The upper order is crowned with a lighter entablature above which are pediments: a pointed one in the middle above the main entrance, one segment pediment each on the right and left. The first and eighth columns on the upper floor are somehow superfluous, but not without a function: the entablature projects above them at column width, accented especially by the outer edges, so that the façade appears to be a closed wall in which there is yet a rhythmic change showing pathetic emphases. The columns shafts are made of one piece each of honey-coloured marble from Synnada in Inner Anatolia, the other pieces of white Ephesian marble. The inscriptions and statues of the façade will be mentioned again.

One finesse of the Roman architect, noticed by Friedmund Hueber during the preparations for the reconstruction, deserves to be mentioned here: the façade has a so-called curvature, which means that the horizontal joints of the stone building rise slightly in the middle, and that not only at the wall bases, but through all layers up to the entablature of the entrance floor. This works against the optical phenomenon that seen from afar, a perfectly straight line seems to hang through. There



Fig.1

are other optical tricks: the lower floor columns in the middle are longer than those on the outsides, their pedestals are correspondingly flatter, while those of the outer columns are higher. By this perspective, not conceived consciously by the eye, the breadth of the façade seems to be greater than it actually is. Only the two middle entablatures on the lower floor are on a line, the two on the outsides are taken back slightly obliquely, as if the façade were puffing itself up. This enhances the effect of powerful plasticity.

Whoever steps through this splendid façade, above the middle portal of which the function of the building is also chiselled in as "library", may be astounded to see that there is only a hall of about 14.50 m by 9.50 behind this colossal façade, and that there are no adjoining rooms except for an apse in the middle of the back wall (Fig. 2). The extravagance is yet understandable when one has read the inscription on the façade and knows that there is a crypt with the sarcophagus of the donator under the apse. But of this later.

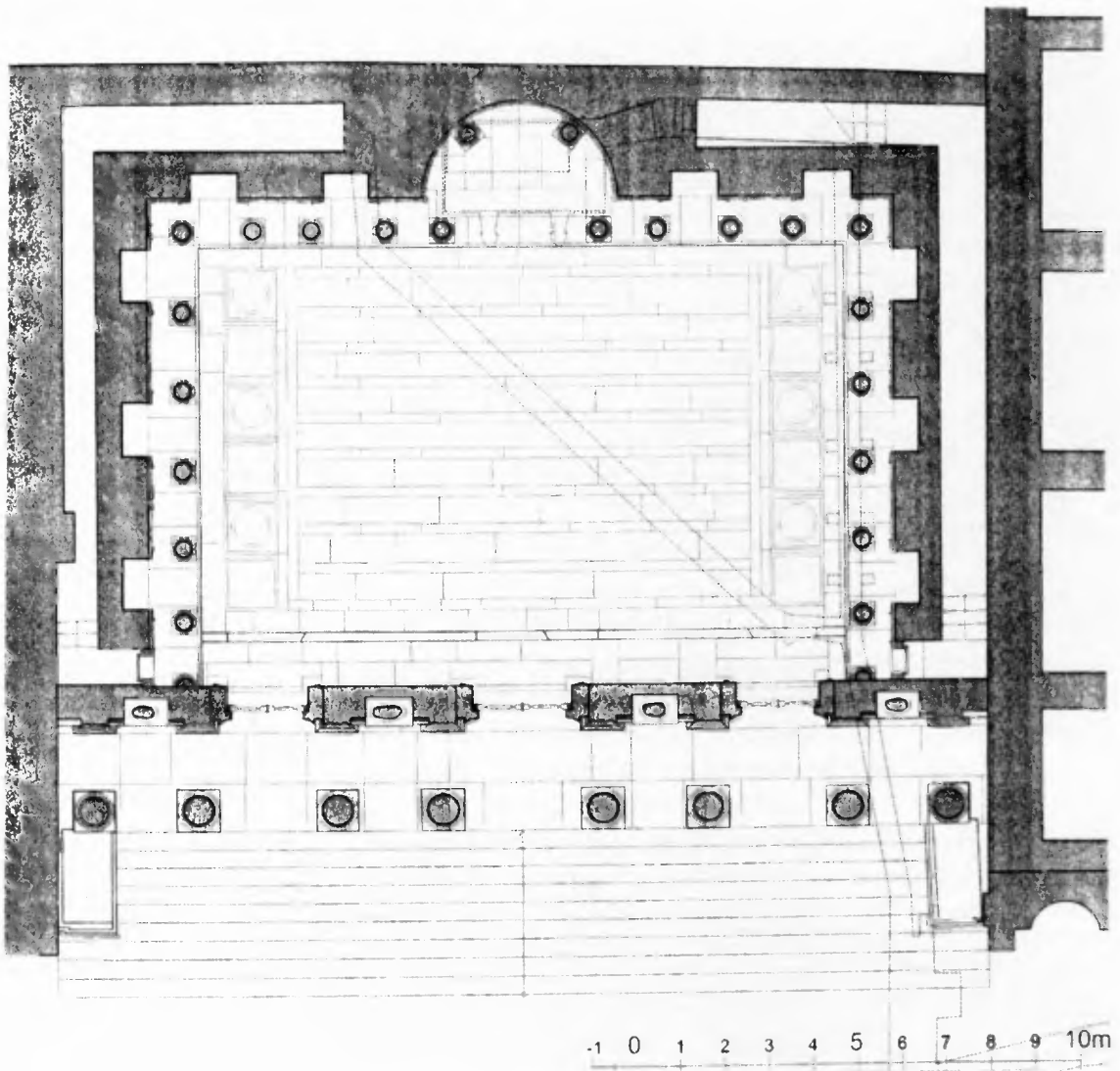


Fig.2

A hundred years ago, nothing was yet known of this best preserved Roman library. Its ruins were hidden under the debris of the city of Ephesus that was deserted in the early middle ages. In 1903, during the Austrian excavations directed by Rudolf Heberdey, the heap of rubble from the façade that had collapsed during an earthquake was found. By the end of the stage in 1904 the building, at once recognized as a library, was brought to the surface under the supervision of Josef Keil (Fig. 3), the stone blocks were laid out on the adjoining lower agora. After an exact measuring of the ruins and the thorough combination of the architectural parts, the architect Wilhelm Wilberg was able, as early as 1908, to present a reconstruction of the façade that was essentially right. The excavators had not found the library as it had been built in the early second century AD. Judging by the ceramics in the filling of the aisle behind the southern book closets, the building seems to have been destroyed in the second half of the third century AD. Either the well-known earthquake of 262 AD had rendered it unusable, or the Goths who plundered the defenceless city of Ephesus shortly afterwards had set fire to the library. In any case, some time afterwards the hall, preserved

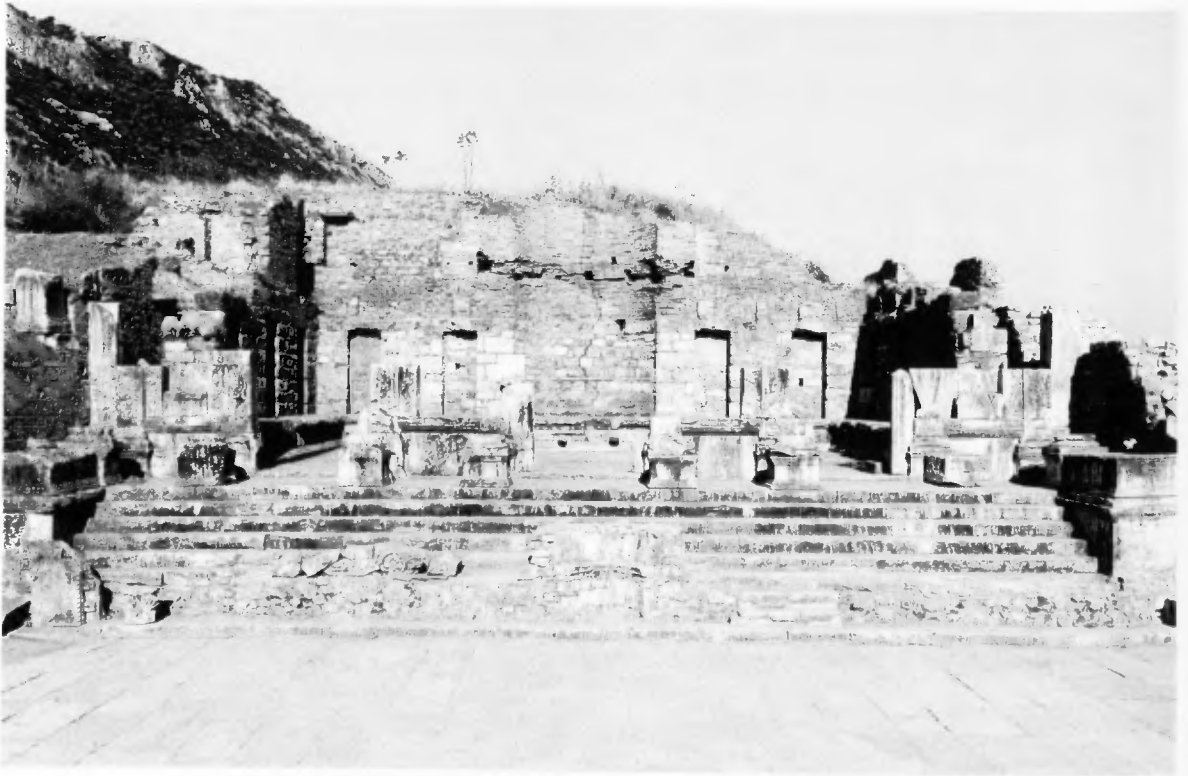


Fig.3

only to half its original height, was added to an adjoining residential building as a courtyard. The yet intact façade was only much later, probably in the sixth century AD, used as a fountain façade. A basin, fed by a water pipe coming from the south, was built on the steps. The three entrances were walled up, the half-destroyed hall behind filled up with rubble. The façade was restored, painted white and decorated with old marble statues brought over from somewhere else. A new inscription stated a certain Stephanos as the official responsible for this improvement of the city. Much later, probably not before the 11th century AD, everything was destroyed in an earthquake.

Blocks that jutted out of the heap of debris or lay on its top were sometimes taken away by lime burners, but there were enough left from 29 layers of the building, 750 blocks in all, to venture the reconstruction. The author of these lines took the initiative for this in 1968/69 as a member of the Austrian excavation team, won over Friedmund Huber, then yet a student, as architect and the companies Hochtief AG in Essen and Kallingerbau in Vienna as patrons. After the excavation leader Prof. Dr. Hermann Vetters and the Turkish directorate of antiquity had also been convinced of the project, the reconstruction could begin in the autumn stage of 1970 and finished in 1978. Senator Anton Kallinger took the whole of the considerable costs upon himself.

We deliberately reconstructed only the façade, in which the supplemented parts in artificial stone can be recognized on closer examination even by laymen. We left the hall in its ruinous condition, but restored it. Even without the inscription, the function of the building is clearly recognizable: in the walls of the flat rectangular hall (16.72 m by 10.92 m) ten closet niches have been left out: two on each side of the apse, three each at the south and north walls (Fig. 4). These niches, in which of course wooden cabinets were inserted, are all 0.57 m to 0.60 m deep and 2.55 m high. But their width varies slightly, not because of negligence, but because of cunning calculation: the

middle niches of the south and north walls are 1.20 m wide, the ones to their right and left at each wall are 1.15 m wide, those at the back wall only 1.07 m. Because the observer does not recognize these little differences at once, or perhaps not at all, but assumes that all niches or closets are of equal width, the hall appears to be bigger than it actually is. In front of the niches runs a continuous podium, 0.94 m high and 1.02 m wide. Since no steps lead to this podium, it was surely reserved to the library attendants who took the book rolls out of the closets for the visitors. This base, that was also the floor of the apse, was also used as a pedestal for the thin columns of a gallery, twice five at the back wall, six each (including the corner columns) at the side walls. Except for one or two bases only the traces of their positions have remained of these columns. They were surely taken away in late antiquity, when the house was built in, and used somewhere else. Traces in the back wall reveal that the columns carried an entablature and a gallery floor that enclosed five wall cabinets on each side and was about 4.30 m higher than the podium. It is probable that there was another row of slightly shorter columns above the lower ones, which carried another gallery in front of the third closet row. Since, contrary to Wilberg's assumption, the wooden ceiling lay only 12.15 above the marble floor, the height of two upper closet rows must have been a little less than that of the lower. So here too was a perspective effect. Since no traces of stairs are to be found, the library attendants can only have reached the podium by mobile wooden steps and from this arrived on the next gallery level by ladders and through hatches. In any case we have thirty wall cabinets which housed rotuli, perhaps also already codices or other documents. It is pointless to speculate how many book rolls the library might have held at its best time. Since we do not know how high the upper cabinets were, how many wooden shelves they contained, and whether the rolls had to be kept in rows or heaps, the theoretically calculated number of 12.000 cannot be confirmed. It is also unclear whether the cabinets have ever been full.



Fig.4



Fig.5

Greek libraries stored their book rolls on narrow wooden shelves in inconspicuous rooms by a peristyl with exedrae and a great banquet hall (oikos) where scholars read, taught and celebrated. In Rome a representative library type developed probably from the late republic on (first century BC), in which the walls of the hall were decorated with magnificent cabinets let into the walls, which could only be reached with steps or by a podium. The cabinets could be arranged on one, two or three floors that were reached by staircases, ladders or continuous galleries. This is also the case in the Bibliotheca Ulpia on the Traianus forum in Rome, which was built before the Celsus library and officially opened in 113 AD. It consists of two enormous halls, each double the size of our hall, facing each other across the courtyard with the column of Traianus, perhaps as Latin and Greek libraries. The intact wall niches are 0.65 m deep and no less than 2.00 m wide. The height even of the lowest row of cabinets is not preserved, but here too three rows of cabinets can be assumed. In the axis of the hall is an aedicule which contained a large statue now lost of Minerva, Apollo or the emperor. We will never know whose statue stood in the apse of the Celsus library. But the narrow crypt under the apse contains even today the sarcophagus with the earthly remains of the donator (Fig. 5). The sarcophagus, chiselled out of a marble block, is 2.68 m long, 1.10 m wide and 1.75 m high, and decorated with garlands carried by Eros's and Nikes. On the lead box that contains the bones lay a plain wooden cover, there were no burial gifts, as is stated 1904. The sarcophagus must have been brought in during the construction of the library, since the entrance to the crypt, a passageway leading from the hall by the back of the north and west walls, is too narrow. Corresponding to that passage is another false one at the south side, which ends by the apse. It has been argued again and again that these corridors of about 1 m width were built to keep the book rolls dry by double walls. This is a mistake: the ostensible outer

walls of the library belong to adjoining buildings, the roofs of which led to these open passage-ways like the roof of the library. This is also proven by the fact that the passages on the north and south sides slope to the west and in the direction of the apse on the west side, where the water flows into two canals that lead under the library hall and drain the area in front of the façade.

But let us get back to the donator. The main inscription of the façade, chiselled into the highest fascia of the architrave on the lower floor, states his full name: Tiberius Iulius Celsus Polemaeanus. The inscription also reveals that his son, the Roman consul Tiberius Iulius Aquila, built the library in his memory, which was finished – clearly after the death of its patron – by the heirs; Tiberius Claudius Aristion, three times asiarch, was the executor of the will.

Two detailed inscriptions on the cheeks of the stair banisters, which used to bear two equestrian statues of the honoured patron, state all offices in the career of Tiberius Iulius Celsus after the Roman fashion, in Greek in the south, in Latin in the north. Thanks to the keen perception of old historians, especially that of Josef Keil, it has been possible to assign the offices to certain years. Accordingly Celsus, as we shall shortly call him, was probably born in Sardeis. His father was a Roman knight, hence rather wealthy. Celsus read the law and began his military career 68 AD as military tribune in Alexandria, in the legion that was to proclaim its commander Titus Flavius Vespasianus emperor in the next year. After the latter had triumphed over his rival Vitellius, he made his loyal liegeman Celsus senator about 70 AD. After this, Celsus was in his first office as a civilian as aedilis in Rome. In the mid-seventies he was praetor, supreme judge in Rome. From 78 to 85 AD he was first sent to Cappadocia as legatus iuridicus, then was commander of a legion in Syria and after that governor in Bithynia and Pontos. About 85/87 he was in charge of the pension fund for veterans in Rome, from 89 until 91 AD he was a legate in Cilicia. In appreciation of his services the emperor Domitianus made him consul suffectus in Rome in 92 AD. After these honours, he was able to be elected into the noble council of priests of the quindecimviri sacris faciundis. In the following years, he was curator aedium sacrarum et operum locorumque publicorum populi Romani in Rome for an unknown length of time. In this office he was responsible for the finances and organization of imperial building projects in the capital, which had reached enormous proportions in the reign of the emperors Domitianus (who reigned 81-96 AD) and Traianus (r. 98-117 AD). The culmination of Celsus' successful career was, as for every consul before him, the office of proconsul (governor) of the rich province of Asia, with the seat in Ephesus, given to him in 105/6 AD. After this last office he seems to have stayed in Ephesus and died there before 114 AD. His son, Tiberius Iulius Aquila, continued the library project as a burial gift for his famous father. He himself, born 70-75 AD, had been suffect consul in Rome in 110 AD after a career hitherto unknown to us. After the gigantic Traianus forum was formally opened in 112 and the Caesar's forum completely restored in 113 AD, architects and building guilds must have become available whom Aquila could hire for his Ephesian project, thanks to his own and especially his father's good relations to the building industry of the town of Rome. On the Celsus library, the construction of which began about 113/4 AD, there appeared a relief style cultivated on the Traianus and Caesar's fori, and ornamental motives from the city of Rome which had been unknown until then in Asia Minor. The construction must have lasted only three to four years, but Aquila died shortly before the building was completed.

How did the connection of library and tomb come about? Honouring rich citizens for important services for their hometown had been a tradition for centuries among the Greeks. Erecting a mausoleion in the midst of the city was forbidden as a principle, it was only allowed as very special honours. There are very few other honorary places of burial in Ephesus. We do not know how far Celsus had favoured Ephesus as a proconsul or even before that. Perhaps he had promised

to build a library of which there was express need, and to donate his own collection of books. It would be a tempting, but wholly improvable assumption that the great historian P. Cornelius Tacitus, who was proconsul of Asia in Ephesus in 112 or 113 AD, pressed old Celsus to write this testament. Perhaps Aquila attained the licence to build the library above his father's tomb in return for the services of the library itself. This would not be very much out of the ordinary. In the city of Argos in Greece, the donator of a public thermal bath had a burial place for himself and his family built in its midst. But the direct model for Celsus's tomb would be the emperor Traianus himself, who was buried, after his own will, in the pedestal of his famous, still intact column, which stood on his forum, between the afore-mentioned libraries. These buildings had just been completed when the planning phase of the Celsus library began. The connection between the library and the tomb now has a deep meaning, for in was believed in antiquity that taking part in the spiritual world, which was embodied by Apollo and the muses, made that person immortal. Thus Romans of the second and third centuries AD liked to decorate magnificent sarcophagi with the figures of philosophers and muses or Apollo and muses, and the deceased hold book rolls in their hands which document their spiritual interest.

In the donation inscription of the Celsus library, which was chiselled on the façade of the lower floor over the farthest southern niche and reconstructed with the original fragments (Fig. 6), there is no reference to the tomb, the obvious main function of the building. The detailed statements are only about the generosity of Aquila, the thrift of his heirs and the organisation of the library. Because of a deplorable blank, we unfortunately do not know the annual salary of the (two or three?) librarians, or the budget for the acquisition of new books. Librarians did not have a lot of standing. Their annual salary must have been about 400 dinars. Because of its uniqueness, I quote the inscription in its preserved original:

"To Tiberius Iulius Celsus Ptolemaeanus, consul and proconsul of Asia. Tiberius Iulius Aquila Ptolemaeanus, consul, his son, built the Celsian library out of his own funds, with all the building decorations, the statues and books. He also left 25.000 dinars for its equipment and for the acquisition of books, 2000 dinars of which were spent in one year, so that from the annual interest of the remaining 23.000 the library will be kept and its attendants will be paid [800] dinars, which shall be paid to them on the birthday of Celsus for all times. And also according to the will of Aquila new books shall be bought every year. And also his [Celsus's] statues shall be hung with wreaths thrice a year. And also all other statues shall be decorated every year on the [birthday] feast of Celsus. After the same heirs had commissioned the equipment of the library with the 2000 dinars taken [from the capital], the library was officially opened on the feast of Celsus [?], so that... on the seventeenth on the month... according to the wording of the will, no [demand nor] deduction nor expenditure shall be put up to them from the stated funds, for the heirs of Aquila have wholly completed the work. Executor of the will was Tiberius Claudius Aristion, three times asiarch."

Next to other things, it becomes clear that Aquila's miserly heirs took 2000 dinars from the donation capital to complete the equipment of the library, so that with an interest of 8% on the capital not 2000 but only 1840 dinars were available annually, if the opening was not delayed for a year to add the interest back to the capital. If three library attendants are assumed who perhaps cost 1.200 dinars, only about 640, at most 800 dinars are left for the decoration of the statues, the cleaning of the building and the acquisition of new books, which seems very little. Even with only two library servants the funds are still very low. If the library itself was ever important, the city of Ephesus must have contributed books or money.



Fig.6

Evidently, Aquila and his heirs cared only about the fame of Celsus and hence of his family. That is why virtues of Celsus stood in the wall niches of the lower floor: *sophia* – the wisdom, *arete* – the diligence, *ennoia* – the understanding, after an inscription added in late antiquity, and *episteme* – the erudition of Celsus. The traces of fastening reveal that these about life-sized figures, like the equestrian statues on both sides of the staircase, were cast in bronze. Probably as early as the third century AD they were melted down as valuable metal, and female marble statues saved from other ruins were put in their places in the sixth century AD. Four pedestals, which were preserved and put up again on the upper floor, bore bronze statues that are also lost. According to the detailed inscriptions, they were three honorary statues of Celsus and one of Aquila. Two of them were donated by Celsus's daughter Lulia Quintilia Isaurica, two by her son, Celsus's grandson, Tiberius Claudius Iulianus, who had already become a praetor. Serials of honorary statues of this kind were not uncommon in the time of the Roman emperors. They show the honoured



Fig.7

person in different clothing and posture, hence in different roles that he played and that embodied different offices or "virtues": Celsus might have been shown as a soldier in armor, as an official in the toga and as a scholar in a philosopher's cloak.

The decoration of the façade contains other allusions to the donator in the tomb as well as the client, but also hidden allegories that refer to death and the hereafter, hence to the function of the library as a mausoleion: in the six middle pilasters of the eight on the lower floor stand the twelve fasces with axes, to whom Celsus was entitled as a consul. The eagles flying out of garlands of the frescoes of the lower floor could refer to Aquila's name (aquila = eagle) as well as to the eagle of apotheosis, on whose wings a deified person is borne to the heavens. In the garlands of the pilasters on the lower floor are Eros's hunting wild animals, a playful image of the virtue of the deceased. Psyche tying down Eros in another relief means that the immortal soul has vanquished over bodily urges. Bellerophon not only tames monsters but also rises to the heavens when he conquers the immortal horse Pegasus. On the upper floor the pilasters show intertwined vine and ivy, both plants with Dionysiac meaning. They refer to the eternal death and rebirth of Dionysos-



Fig.8

Bacchus, god of fertility and death. Lastly, the Medusa heads in the three façade pediments are symbols of death and at the same time signs to ward off evil, which also reappear on the lid of the sarcophagus.

This most beautiful honorary tomb thus secured the fame of Tiberius Iulius Celsus Polemaeanus, that of his son and his descendants. But the city also profited from it. Not only did the main street, the Embolos leading from the upper city, get an eye-catcher; the library also catered to a practical need. We know from an inscription that there was an *audeitorion* (in Latin *auditorium*), meaning a judiciary building, immediately by the library. Doubtlessly there was need for documents and literature there. The Celsus library must have been not only a literary-philosophical collection of books for rhetoricians and aesthetes, but also a legal archive. But it had this important function for less than 150 years. Since then, except for an intermission of about a millennium, only the façade pleases the visitors – and hopefully will continue to do so for many centuries.