

THE SEBASTEION IN APHRODISIAS
Structure and Meaning of a Temple Complex
for the Imperial Cult

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Introduction

Aphrodisias is located 140 km southeast of Izmir, at an altitude of about 600 m above sea level. In ancient geographical context, Aphrodisias was a city of Roman Asia Minor located in the northeastern part of Caria. The site was first excavated in 1904 and 1913. In 1961, a new and more thorough series of yearly campaigns has been initiated under the leadership of Professor Kenan T. Erim of New York University. After Professor Erim passed away in 1990, Professor R. R. R. Smith became the new excavation director.

In 1979, a monumental structure was uncovered. Through an examination of the dedication inscriptions, this building structure came to be identified as a "Sebasteion." The term "Sebasteion" is derived from the Greek "Sebastos," equivalent to the Latin "Augustus,"¹ and it is used to refer to a place devoted to the cult of the deified emperor

¹The word "Sebastos," as distinguished from the Latin "Augustus," may also have a stronger association with the display of religious reverence (*eusebeia*) to the emperor. See S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2.

Augustus-Sebastos and his Julio-Claudian successors. Reference to a Sebasteion at Aphrodisias was known from an unrelated inscription (CIG 2839). Although the connection of this inscription with the building structure cannot be established with absolute certainty, we will nevertheless refer to this building structure as the Sebasteion in our present study.

The purpose of this study is to examine the external structure of the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias and the message conveyed through such an architectural design. It has been noted that a building devoted to the imperial cult can take various forms and structures.² There were special rooms in gymnasia (Sardis) and there were free-standing buildings in their own sanctuaries (e.g. Ephesus, Eresus, Pergamum). These structures varied from simple rectangular buildings (e.g. Iotape) to buildings with a porch (Hyllarium) or a colonnade (Jussuf Deressi). The obvious question to ask is the reason why a particular architectural design was chosen. In this study, an attempt will be made to identify the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias with other known architectural types. Such an examination will hopefully contribute to our understanding of the “meaning” embedded in such a building.

First, before going into the main part of this study, the special relationship between Rome and Aphrodisias will be noted. Second, a general survey of the structure of the Sebasteion will be provided. Third, several Hellenistic building structures will be discussed as possible background to the peculiar structure of the Sebasteion.³ Fourth, two of the imperial forums in Rome will be examined and their structures compared to that of the Sebasteion. Finally, the relief panels on the porticoes will also be briefly described as such a discussion may qualify our conclusions derived from the previous sections.⁴

Although the main focus of this study is on the structure of a building devoted to the imperial cult, the significance of such an exercise for the study of early Christianity cannot be overemphasized. While

²Yegül rightly emphasized that “a determination of the architectural identity of the *sebasteion/kaisareion* should be totally flexible.” See Fikret K. Yegül, “A Study in Architectural Iconography: Kaisersaal and the Imperial Cult,” *Art Bulletin* 84 (1982), 18.

³In the remaining part of this paper, the term “Sebasteion” will be used to refer to the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias unless otherwise noted.

⁴One should also note that since the Sebasteion has not been fully excavated, any conclusion reached can only be a tentative one.

previous generations of New Testament scholarship tended to concentrate on only those archaeological data that are directly related to the text of the New Testament, recent research has shown the value of understanding the wider cultural and historical contexts from which early Christianity developed.⁵ This study, therefore, aims at providing further information on an aspect of the imperial cult as it developed in the first century BCE. Further research in this area will certainly prove to be useful as one attempts to examine the interactions between early Christianity and the religio-political institutions in Asia Minor.⁶

Aphrodisias and Rome

In discussing the Sebasteion as a place devoted to the Roman emperor(s), the relationship between Rome and Aphrodisias during the Julio-Claudian period needs to be mentioned.

A special relationship with Rome is reflected from the identification of the Aphrodisian Aphrodite with Venus, the mother of the Trojan prince Aeneas, and so both with the mother of the Romans and with the mother of the Julian *gens*. The earliest evidence came from Appian who recorded an oracle given to Sulla in Greece in the early stages of his campaign against Mithridates, urging him to dedicate to the Aphrodisian Aphrodite, who is related to the sons of Aeneas (BC 1.97).⁷

On the so-called Archive wall of the stage building of the Aphrodisias Theater, inscriptions which offer important information about the relationship between Rome and Aphrodisias were found. One of the early inscriptions mentioned a gold statue of Eros dedicated by Julius Caesar to Aphrodite.⁸ This dedication suggests that the Aphrodisians had already begun to establish ties with Caesar and the Julian family through their goddess before Caesar's assassination.

⁵See, for example, Helmut Koester and Holland Hendrix, eds., *Archaeological Resources for New Testament Studies*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

⁶For an excellent example of such works, see Steven J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993).

⁷Joyce M. Reynolds, "The Origins and Beginnings of the Imperial Cult at Aphrodisias," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 206 (1980), 71.

⁸Kenan T. Erim, *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1986), 29.

In 39 BCE, Aphrodisias received special privileges through a triumviral decree, a senatorial decree, a treaty, and a law. These documents, all inscribed on the Archive wall, granted the city freedom, a non-taxable status, and increased asylum rights of inviolability in Aphrodite's sanctuary. The close relationship between Octavian and Aphrodisias is evident here. On the Archive wall, one can also find another document in which Octavian referred to Aphrodisias as the "one city from all Asia" that he selected as his own. This close relationship did not change after Octavian became Emperor Augustus in 27 BCE.

This special relationship between Rome and Aphrodisias continued. From the other documents on the Archive wall, one can see that Aphrodisias was able to maintain her privileged position until the third century CE when Aphrodisias lost the autonomy she has enjoyed during the previous centuries.

From this brief survey, one can see the close relationship between Rome and Aphrodisias. It is with this background that one should examine the structure which was devoted to the imperial cult.⁹

The Structure of the Sebasteion

The Sebasteion was situated in the south-eastern part of the city of Aphrodisias, to the east of the Agora. The structure did not show any alignment with the visible remains of the Agora, nor with any other structure uncovered so far; its orientation was essentially east-west. The western end of the building was connected to a main north-south street that ran probably from the entrance of the sanctuary of Aphrodite to the theater.

The Sebasteion (fig. 1) complex consisted of four distinct parts: a propylon at the west end, two long porticoes,¹⁰ and a temple at the east end.¹¹ The propylon was a monumental two-storey structure that was

⁹For a detailed discussion on the relationship between Rome and Aphrodisias, see Joyce M. Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome: Documents from the Excavation of the Theatre at Aphrodisias Conducted by Professor Kenan T. Erim together with Some Related Texts* (London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1982).

¹⁰These are not exactly porticoes and some have used the term "pseudo-portico" to refer to these structures. In this paper, following the majority of scholars, I will simply use the word "portico" to refer to this structure.

¹¹For a detailed description of the structure of the Sebasteion, see Friedmund Hueber, "Der

set at an oblique angle following the line of the street. This propylon leads one into a long paved area (c. 14 x 90 m) flanked symmetrically by tall, three-storey porticoes (fig. 2) decorated with large relief panels in the upper two storeys. The porticoes were divided into rooms, each three intercolumniations wide. Therefore, these "porticoes" were actually long buildings with engaged columnar facade.

These porticoes had Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian orders of half-columns in their first, second, and third storeys, rising to a height of 12 m. Both porticoes were divided into "rooms" which are three intercolumniations wide. The south portico (fig. 2) had a wider central intercolumniation in the middle of each room with narrower side intercolumniations. The north portico, on the other hand, had intercolumniations which are all equal in length (1.64 m). This is the major difference between the north and south porticoes as far as external structural design is concerned.¹²

In the upper two storeys of both of these porticoes, the relief panels filled the spaces between the engaged half-columns for the entire length of the porticoes. There were forty-five intercolumniations on each storey of the south porticoes.¹³ The north portico, which was longer than the south portico, had five more relief panels on each storey. This brings the total of relief panels to one hundred and ninety panels. The south portico had imperial relief panels on the third storey and Greek mythology panels on the second storey. The north portico had allegory panels on the third storey and a series of *ethne* panels on the second storey.

The temple at the eastern end of the Sebasteion has not yet been fully excavated. However, several inscribed architrave blocks and other architectural fragments have been discovered close to the surface and nearby. These remains suggest that the temple was a large Corinthian style temple set on a high podium.¹⁴

Baukomplex einer julisch-claudischen Kaiserkultanlage in Aphrodisias," *Aphrodisias de Carie: Colloque de l'Université de Lille III*, ed. J. de La Genière and Kenan T. Erim (Paris: Editions Recherché sur les Civilisations, 1987), 101-6.

¹²For other minor differences between the two porticoes, see Erim, *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite*, 108; and Hueber, "Der Baukomplex einer julisch-claudischen Kaiserkultanlage in Aphrodisias," 104.

¹³See R. R. Smith, "The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," *JRS* 77 (1987), 95.

¹⁴See Hueber, "Der Baukomplex einer julisch-claudischen Kaiserkultanlage in Aphrodisias,"

From the architrave dedications, we learn that the construction of the Sebasteion was undertaken by two Aphrodisian families (which were perhaps related). One family dedicated the propylon and the north portico, the other the temple and the south portico. The propylon and the north portico were dedicated by two brothers, Menander and Eusebes, with Eusebes' wife Apphias. The temple and the south portico were also dedicated by two brothers, Diogenes and Attalus, with Attalus' wife Attalis Apphion.¹⁵ Dedication inscriptions on the propylon and the two porticoes point to the fact that they are all dedicated to Aphrodite, *Theoi Sebastoi*, and *Demos*.¹⁶ The dedication inscription on the temple architrave is very fragmentary but it seems natural to suppose that, like the propylon and the two porticoes, the temple was also dedicated to Aphrodite and the Julio-Claudian emperors.¹⁷

From the inscriptions on these four parts of the building complex, it is possible to date the construction of the Sebasteion as a whole to the Julio-Claudian period. The inscriptions show that the construction of the complex most probably started under Tiberius and finished under Nero.¹⁸

From the architectural plan and epigraphic evidence, a relative chronology of these four parts can also be hypothesized. The joining between the north portico and the propylon shows that the propylon was erected before the north portico. Furthermore, the south end of the propylon was finished before the south portico was adjoined. From this, it seems that the propylon was constructed first and it was immediately followed by the construction of the north portico. The erection of the south portico then followed the construction of the north portico. The temple itself cannot be placed in this relative chronology

105.

¹⁵Joyce M. Reynolds, "New Evidence for the Imperial Cult in Julio-Claudian Aphrodisias," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 43 (1981), 317.

¹⁶Reynolds, "New Evidence for the Imperial Cult in Julio-Claudian Aphrodisias," 318.

¹⁷See Joyce M. Reynolds, "Further Information on Imperial Cult at Aphrodisias," *Stant Class* 24 (1986), 110 n.12.

¹⁸Reynolds, "Further Information on Imperial Cult at Aphrodisias," 117: "The evidence so far suggests that as an imperial cult-place it took in no new dedications after the death of Nero; cults for the Flavian and successor dynasties seem to have been located elsewhere." From an examination of the architectural details of the building complex, Hueber ("Der Baukomplex einer julisch-claudischen Kaiserkultanlage in Aphrodisias," 106) has also concluded that the whole complex was built before the Flavian period.

with any certainty due to the spatial distance between the temple and other parts of the building complex and the lack of progress in the excavation of the temple area.¹⁹ Nevertheless, since we know that both the south portico and the temple were dedicated by the same family, it is reasonable to suppose that both the temple and the south portico were constructed in the same period of time.

From this general survey, one can see that the Sebasteion complex was a structure devoted to the Julio-Claudian emperors and the goddess Aphrodite which was related to that imperial family. It should not be surprising, therefore, that this complex originated from the early first century CE.

Hellenistic Archetypes of the Sebasteion

From a superficial examination of the external structure of the Sebasteion, one can already see the unusual features this structure exhibits. The combination of characteristics such as symmetry, axiality, frontality,²⁰ and the placement of the temple at the end of the complex deserves further attention. While previous studies have concentrated on the relief panels on the porticoes,²¹ this study seeks to explore further the parallel between the external structure of this complex and other building types of the Greco-Roman world. Since this complex is situated in Asia Minor, it seems natural to begin the comparison with Hellenistic building types.

Hellenistic Agora

The large area surrounded by large porticoes may remind one of the Hellenistic agora. The differences between the Sebasteion and the agora, however, should be noted.

¹⁹Hueber, "Der Baukomplex einer julisch-claudischen Kaiserkultanlage in Aphrodisias," 105-106. See also Ulrike Outschar, "Betrachtungen zur kunstgeschichtlichen Stellung des Sebasteions in Aphrodisias," *Aphrodisias de Carie: Colloque de l'Université de Lille III*, ed. J. de La Genière and Kenan T. Erim (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1987), 108-11.

²⁰Frontality refers to the stylistic feature where the temple is placed right up to, or quite near one of the sides, opposite to the entrance of the whole complex.

²¹See, for example, the articles written by R. R. R. Smith: "Myth and Allegory in the Sebasteion," *Aphrodisias Papers*, ed. C. Roueché and Kenan T. Erim (JRA Supplementary Series 1; MI: Ann Arbor, 1990), 90-100; "The *Ethne* from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," *JRS* 78 (1988), 50-77; and "The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," 88-138.

First, in the Hellenistic agora the peripheral buildings enclosing the square market place were usually planned as a series of stoas of various types but without any tendency to accentuate any particular element in the scheme. The idea of a temple dominating an agora was not a popular one in the Hellenistic world. Although there were plenty of shrines associated with agoras, they did not become the focus of the agora. The sanctuaries on an agora always played a secondary architectural role.²² In short, in the agora there was no single monument dominating the entire scheme in the way that the frontal view of the podium temple dominated the whole Sebasteion complex.

Second, openness and accessibility were the key traits of the Hellenistic agora. The Sebasteion, on the other hand, was an enclosed structure which lacked the openness that characterizes the Hellenistic agora. It was enclosed completely within its own precinct divorced from the traffic of the surrounding streets. In this way, the complex became a closely integrated unity separated from the external space. Although the same trend of isolating the agora from the external world became popular in the Greek cities of the eastern Empire, many would agree that this process began later than in the west, probably as a result of Roman influence.²³

From this, one can see that although the Hellenistic agora may have influenced the development of the structural plan of the Sebasteion, it does not seem to have directly shaped the external structure of the Sebasteion.

Hellenistic Temenos

The Hellenistic temple with its courtyard provides another possible background to the structure of the Sebasteion. Although most of the Greek temples were generally set in the middle of sanctuaries,²⁴ they can occasionally be set at one end of a sanctuary as, for example, in the sanctuary of Zeus Soter at Megalopolis and the sanctuary of Zeus at

²²One of the few exceptions is the example provided by the North Market at Miletus where there was a dominating temple. This, however, should be considered as a rather unusual exception. See J. J. Coulton, *The Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 175.

²³R. E. Wycherley, *How the Greek Built Cities* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1962), 82-84.

²⁴See, for example, the sanctuary of Asclepius at Cos and the sanctuary of Artemis at Magnesia.

Priene. In these two sanctuaries, both dated to the second century BCE, the temples were placed within the rear wing while their projecting façades formed the dominant focus of the courtyard area that preceded them.²⁵ Of these two, the one at Megalopolis, was especially interesting in that it was carried out according to the strictest principles of axially and symmetry.²⁶ Here, the alignment of the hexastyle columns with the outer columns of the rear portico, a feature that served to connect the temple to its peribolus and created a unity out of the two different elements, should be noted.²⁷

Although these examples do come close to the external structure of the Sebasteion, the marked contrast in dimension and scale should not be neglected. In those Hellenistic examples mentioned above, the courtyard was simply an appendage of the temple, a modest court for the performance of the rites in front of the altar. In the Sebasteion, however, there was a vast area between the propylon and the temple and the drastic visual effect created by such architectural design needs to be highlighted.

It is this aspect of the Sebasteion that leads one to examine certain processional ways as possible models for the structure of the Sebasteion.

Processional Way

Processional ways existed in the Greek world since the early archaic period. These include the Terrace of the Lions at Delos and the Sacred Road from Miletus to Didyma. In an urban setting, one can consider the Panathenaic Way at Athens leading from the Dipylon Gate to the Agora.²⁸ In the Hellenistic period this processional way seems to have had a width of 29 m, and by Pausanias' time at least, it had stoas along it.²⁹

²⁵Coulton has argued that symmetry and axially evident in these structures were based on earlier models in Egyptian architecture. See Coulton, *The Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa*, 171.

²⁶See James Russell, "The Origin and Development of Republican Forums," *Phoenix* 22 (1968), 322ff.

²⁷Here, it should be noted that in the Greek world, the axial approach to a temple was quite unusual. The entrance to the sanctuary was usually set opposite one angle of the temple leading to the sacrificial area between the altar and the temple. See Coulton, *The Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa*, 170.

²⁸See Coulton, *The Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa*, 177-79.

²⁹Pausanias 1.2.4-5.

Other examples can also be cited. In the sanctuary of Apollo at Thermon, two large stoas probably constructed in the third century BCE formed a sort of processional way of about 160 m long and 21 m wide, leading from the Bouleuterion to the temple of Apollo. Another example came from Delos where an avenue of 70 m long and 14 m wide was formed at the end of the third century BCE by the South Stoa and the Stoa of Philip.

The first colonnaded street known to us is the one built by Herod the Great at Antioch, sometime between 40 and 4 BCE. Josephus noted that he paved the *plateia* of Antioch, 3.6 km long, and built porticoes on either side of it.³⁰

With the porticoes on both sides of the paved way, the Sebasteion does resemble the colonnaded processional way found in the Hellenistic world. The processional way of the Sebasteion was, however, enclosed by the propylon and the temple. The unity of the whole structure was certainly unique to the Sebasteion and such a feature cannot be fully explained by an imitation of the Hellenistic processional way.

From the above discussion, one can see that while different Hellenistic building structures may have influenced the various aspects of the external structure of the Sebasteion, none of these alone should be considered as the model on which the Sebasteion was constructed. The failure to find a model from the Hellenistic world should not, however, stop us from searching for other possible models beyond the Greek East. In the following section, it will become clear that the construction of the Sebasteion was based on the model found in the Imperial Forums in the city of Rome.

The Imperial Forums

The closest parallel to the external structure of the Sebasteion can be found in the two imperial forums in Rome - those of Caesar and Augustus.³¹ Both have temples placed axially at the end of symmetrical flanking porticoes in a single integrated complex. In this section, these two imperial forums will be examined in greater detail.

³⁰Josephus, *BJ* 1.21.11.

³¹See Smith, "The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," 93.

Forum Iulium

The Forum Iulium was dedicated by Julius Caesar in 46 BCE, on a piece of land bought eight years earlier for 60 million *sesterces* (Cic. *Att.* 4.16.8).³² This forum stretched from the Argiletum on the southeast to the Atrium Libertatis on the Clivus Argentarius. It measured c. 160 x 75 m. It was not a perfect rectangle, however, as the narrow north end of the precinct was irregular due to the physical topography of the ground. The forum had two-storey porticoes on the east and west sides. The main entrance was at the southern end and at the north end stood the octastyle temple dedicated to Venus Genetrix, the mythical foundress of the Julian *gens*, with an equestrian statue of the Dictator in front of it.

The external structures of the Sebasteion and the Forum Iulium shared some essential similarities. First, both consisted of a large enclosed area with two porticoes on the sides leading to the temple at the end of the complex. Here, one can see how elements such as symmetry and axiality were present in both building structures.³³

Second, unlike other Greek temples, the temples in the Sebasteion and the Forum Iulium were both Corinthian temples placed on a high podium with steps only at the front. The element of frontality in both structures should be highlighted. In general, both temples seem to conform to the general Roman imperial style.³⁴ Furthermore, in both complexes, the temples were separately placed at the end of the flanking colonnades.

³²For a detailed description of the history of construction of the Forum Iulium, see James C. Anderson, *The Historical Topography of the Imperial Fora* (Bruxelles: Latomus Revue D'Études Latines, 1984), 39-45.

³³Axial symmetry is the outstanding element shared by all the imperial *fora*. See Peter H. von Blanckenhagen, "The Imperial Fora," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 13.4 (1954), 21f.

³⁴Zanker (*The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro [Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1988], 311) notes that "Temples built during the Early Empire are in general immediately recognizable, whether they be in Campania, North Italy, southern France, Spain, or North Africa. No matter what differences there may be in detail, the overall impression is always the same, always bearing the stamp of *aurea templa* built by the princes in Rome. These temples are always set on a podium, with grand staircase, tall Corinthian columns, richly ornamented entablature, and elaborate roof cornice."

Third, as mentioned above, the Sebasteion was dedicated to the *Theoi Sebastoi*. This is reflected from the sculptural display which began on the monumental gateway. Marble statues were displayed in the façade of the propylon, of which we have only inscribed bases. They represented the Julio-Claudian emperors, together with their mythical progenitors, Aeneas and Aphrodite.³⁵ Here, Aphrodite was called Prometor of the *Theoi Sebastoi*, i.e. Venus Genetrix.³⁶ The direct translation of this cult title reinforces a connection with the Forum Iulium where the temple was dedicated to Venus Genetrix.

From this, one can see the similarities between the two complexes. If the design of the Sebasteion was influenced by that of the Forum Iulium, one can still question the origin of the design behind the Forum Iulium.

From the Greek East, the influence of the Greek temenos, agora, and colonnaded processional way should not be ignored. Appian's comparison of the Forum of Iulium to the "squares of the Persians" (*BCiv.* 2.102) should remind us that the influence of the East is not a novel suggestion.³⁷

Scholars have generally agreed, however, that the most direct models for the Forum Iulium were from the Italic traditions. The most obvious example was the colonnaded rectangle of the forum of Pompeii dominated at one end by a temple dedicated to Jupiter. It was probably built before the late second century, or at the latest by the foundation of the Roman colony in 80 BCE.³⁸ Such a pattern of architectural design can be found in numerous Republican Forums.³⁹ Other examples from the Italic traditions can be drawn from the several sanctuary complexes in Rome itself.⁴⁰

³⁵Reynolds, "Further Information on Imperial Cult at Aphrodisias," 112.

³⁶See Smith, "The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," 95.

³⁷See Roger B. Ulrich, "Julius Caesar and the Creation of the Forum Iulium," *AJA* 97 (1993), 49-80.

³⁸Ulrich, "Julius Caesar and the Creation of the Forum Iulium," 73.

³⁹For a discussion on the numerous Republican Forums, see Russell, "The Origin and Development of Republican Forums," 326-31.

⁴⁰"The Origin and Development of Republican Forums," 323ff.

The existence of these models, however, should not undermine the uniqueness of the structure of the Forum Iulium. The creative combination of elements such as axiality, symmetry, and frontality with the injunctive type⁴¹ with such a scale is “sufficient to characterize it as a new and independent trend in the pattern of Roman architecture.”⁴²

An examination of the Forum Iulium would not be complete without a discussion of the functions of the Forum Iulium. According to Appian (*BCiv* 2.102) the forum was “not for buying and selling, but a meeting place for the transaction of public business.” In 44 BCE, literary evidence points to the fact that Caesar used the forum as a meeting place for the Senate (Suetonius, *Caes* 78.1; Livy, *Per* 116), an innovation much resented at that time, but it was in line with his intention to use the new forum for public business.⁴³

Other than public business, the forum also served as a commemorative *monumentum*, recalling Caesar's victories in Gaul and Britain. With the portrait statue of his horse, the forum recalls Caesar's achievement as a conqueror in both West and East.⁴⁴ In this sense, the forum was a complex that glorified its patron as a military hero. In fact, Dio Cassius (51.22.3) called it a heroon and celebrated the hero as divinely favored. In the words of Ulrich, “the Forum Iulium, focused upon the Temple of Venus Genetrix, was a physical manifestation of the ego of its patron, and a setting for his deeds.”⁴⁵

In dedicating his Forum to Venus Genetrix, at a crucial moment in the struggle for power in Rome and the Roman empire, Caesar had erected a monument not only in memory of her, but also in memory of

⁴¹“Injunctive type” refers to an enclosed area which is fenced in against the surroundings from which it isolates itself. In contrast, the “conjunctive type” refers to an area which is connected with the surrounding quarter and partly determined by the course of the adjoining thoroughfares.

⁴²Thure Hastrup, “Forum Iulium as a Manifestation of Power,” *AnalRom* 2 (1962), 53. See also Erik Sjöqvist, “Kaisareion: A Study in Architectural Iconography,” *Opuscula Romana* 1 (1954), 105 who argues that while the Forum Iulium should not be understood apart from its Hellenistic and Italic traditions, the unique combination of the various elements shows that “the final result may be considered a new creation.”

⁴³See Anderson, *The Historical Topography of the Imperial Fora*, 52.

⁴⁴See Pliny, *NH* 8.64.154-55 where the analogy with Alexander the Great is drawn.

⁴⁵Ulrich, “Julius Caesar and the Creation of the Forum Iulium,” 80.

his own lineage and thereby of himself, stressing his divine descent. In using the forum without hesitation to make public appearances, Caesar became “the first Roman ruler openly to proclaim his superhuman status (Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 78.2).”⁴⁶

From this, one can see that other than conducting “public business”, the Forum Iulium was also no less a monument in honor of the ruler himself. The implication of this for the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias should not be underestimated. In using the model of the Forum Iulium, the Sebasteion might also have been intended to convey the same message in honor of the Julio-Claudian family. The fact that one is not able to find a close parallel to the external structure of the Sebasteion in the Greek East and that the closest parallel comes from the Forum Iulium in Rome should alert one as to the special meaning that might have been embedded in the structure of the Sebasteion itself. Being a structure devoted to the Julio-Claudian emperors, the parallel between the Forum Iulium and the Sebasteion should not be too surprising. This point will become clearer as we discuss the Forum Augustum which was also built under the influence of the design of the Forum Iulium.

Forum Augustum

Before the Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE, Octavian vowed to construct a temple to Mars Ultor in the event of victory (Suetonius *Aug* 29.1; Ovid *Fasti* 5.569-78), a vow that took him forty years to fulfill in definitive form.⁴⁷ The temple eventually became part of a new forum - the Forum Augustum. This new forum came to be situated to the northeast of the Forum Iulium, extending in the direction of the Subura, toward the intersection of the Vicus Longus and the Argiletum.

The Temple of Mars Ultor was an octastyle Corinthian temple placed on high podium at the north end of the forum. The forum area was flanked by two-storey porticoes. Suetonius (*Aug* 31.1) implied that statues stood along the porticoes. Behind the porticoes were big semicircular *exedrae* in which stood statues of Aeneas, the kings, and other famous Romans of the past. The Forum Augustum is usually

⁴⁶Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 195.

⁴⁷The temple was dedicated in 2 BCE (Velleius 2.100.2; Dio Cassius 55.10.1, 6-10).

estimated to have been c. 125 m long⁴⁸ and 85 m wide including the colonnades, and 118 m including the hemicycles at their widest point. The precinct was enclosed by a massive circuit wall which rises to height of 33 m.⁴⁹

The external structure of the Forum Augustum was similar to that of the Forum Iulium (and the Sebasteion).⁵⁰ Both consisted of a monumental temple and a court with colonnades. As in Caesar's forum, the temple was placed on the longitudinal axis which is stressed by colonnades that run along the two long sides. Unlike the Forum Iulium, however, the court was no longer rectangular as two large apses project from the sides of the colonnades. This, however, is noticeable only if one looks at the architectural plan. It was not obvious to the visitors to the forum itself as the apses were concealed by the uninterrupted colonnades.

The Forum Augustum also served two purposes. First, like the Forum Iulium, it was used for "public business". According to Dio Cassius (55.10.1-5),⁵¹ it was used as the headquarters of several of the praetors and it was the foreign office of Rome where diplomatic business was housed.

The importance of the Forum Augustum lies, however, in the second purpose it served: the display of Rome's power and military glory. Unlike the Forum Iulium, few functional spaces were constructed. There was no speaker's platform (as the one in the Forum Iulium) and there were no flanking chambers or a suitable meeting place for the Senate. In Ulrich's words, the Forum Augustum was "an architectural paper tiger, as far as the seat of true power is concerned."⁵² This forum was "cramped with references to Rome's glorious past and monumentalizes

⁴⁸This figure is arrived at by measuring the distance from the rear of the temple apse to the hypothetical east side wall of the open square of the Forum Iulium. This, however, is not certain as the area where the two complexes joined has never been excavated, and the exact forms of the eastern side of the Forum Iulium and the southwest end of the Forum Augustum still need to be determined.

⁴⁹For a detailed discussion on the architectural structure of the Forum Augustum, see Anderson, *The Historical Topography of the Imperial Fora*, 65-100.

⁵⁰Most scholars agree that the Forum Iulium set the general pattern for the other imperial fora.

⁵¹Anderson, *The Historical Topography of the Imperial Fora*, 82ff.

⁵²Ulrich, "Julius Caesar and the Creation of the Forum Iulium," 80.

the local environment, but unlike the Forum Iulium, it [was] no usurper of power."⁵³

In other words, the manifestation of power and glory seems to be the focus of this complex. Here, Ovid's description provides us with the impression one will get when visiting such a forum:

Mighty is Mars and might is his temple. He could not reside in the city of his son Romulus in any other way. The building itself would have been a worthy monument to the victory of the gods over the Giants. Mars may unleash savage war from here, when an evil-doer in the East incites us or one in the West tries to bend us to his yoke. Mars strong in armor looks upon the temple pediment and rejoices that unvanquished gods occupy the places of honor. At the entrance-ways he sees arms of all sorts from all the lands conquered by his soldier [Augustus]. On one side he sees Aeneas with his precious burden and about him the many ancestors of the Julian house.... He gazes upon the temple and reads the name Augustus. Then the monument seems to him even greater. (*Fasti* 5.533ff.)⁵⁴

Here, it should be noted that both Venus and Mars were connected with the genesis of the Roman people. According to the myth of Rome's foundation, Mars had seduced Rhea Silvia and become the father to the twins Romulus and Remus and the ancestors of the Romans. But Rhea Silvia belonged to the family of Aeneas and could therefore be incorporated into the family tree of Augustus. Venus and Mars were then both considered as ancestors of the Romans, though by different partners.⁵⁵ From this, the connection between the Forum Iulium and Forum Augustum can be seen although the two temples were dedicated to two different gods.

From the above discussion, one can see that while both imperial forums are similar in structure, the Forum Augustum seems to be intended less for practical purposes as it was designed to highlight the glory and power of the Roman people (and their leaders). This, I believe, is important for the understanding of the structure of the Sebasteion. Unlike the Forum Iulium, the porticoes of the Sebasteion seems to "have had no practical function" and its design was "not to answer any practical

⁵³ Ulrich, "Julius Caesar and the Creation of the Forum Iulium," 80.

⁵⁴ This quotation is taken from Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 112.

⁵⁵ For the connection between Venus and Mars before Caesar, see Stefan Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 128ff.

need.”⁵⁶ It seems that the primary purpose of these porticoes was to act as architectural frames for the series of relief panels.⁵⁷ In these porticoes, there is no evidence that the chambers had been used. Whether the second and third storeys were functional is also questionable since there is no evidence for proper floors and ceilings.⁵⁸ In this sense, the purpose of the structure of the Sebasteion may be similar to that of the Forum Augustum. The external structure of both forums was modeled after the Forum Iulium, but both of them were not intended primarily to serve any practical purpose. Their existence was to highlight the power of Rome. In the Forum Augustum, both Caesar and Augustus were honored. In the Sebasteion, the whole Julio-Claudian family became the focus of the imperial cult.

While it is difficult to determine whether the Sebasteion was modeled directly after the Forum Iulium or the Forum Augustum, the external evidence seems to point to the former. If this was the case, then the development from the Forum Iulium to the Forum Augustum may be compared with the development from the Forum Iulium to the Sebasteion. In both cases, the “monumental” aspect of the forums was highlighted; and both the Sebasteion and the Forum Augustum departed from their predecessor in putting more emphasis on the visual effects produced by the forums.

This conclusion concerning the function of the Sebasteion will be supported by an examination of the relief panels on the second and third storeys of the porticoes.

The Portico Relief Panels of the Sebasteion

While a discussion of the “meaning” of the Sebasteion would not be complete without a discussion of the relief panels, the space available here prevents us from providing even a reasonably sufficient description.

⁵⁶Smith, “The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias,” 94.

⁵⁷It seems that these porticoes are simply there to hold the relief panels. Such use of the “wall” as “painting” was popular during the times of Augustus and it was connected with the rise of the imperial cult. See Outschar, “Betrachtungen zur kunstgeschichtlichen Stellung des Sebasteions in Aphrodisias,” 111-12. Smith (“The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias,” 94) considers this as “the architecture of imperial authority.”

⁵⁸At only two places (Rooms 1 and 13/14) in the south portico is there evidence of stairs to the second storey.

Nevertheless, one can refer to a number of detailed studies on the relief panels of the Sebasteion.⁵⁹

On the second storey of the north portico was a series of *ethne* panels.⁶⁰ The *ethne* were each personified as a single statue figure in high relief standing on an inscribed base. Out of the sixteen discovered and identifiable inscribed bases, thirteen represent foreign peoples and three represent islands. Reynolds has suggested that the various peoples and places represented here illustrate the various accomplishments of Augustus as a ruler and conqueror.⁶¹ From the geographical distribution of such people groups, one can notice the number of *ethne* we have from the edges of the empire: Arabs, Bosporans, Calceci, Dacians, Piroustae, Rhaeti, and probably the Ethiopians. This seems to point to the extent of the Roman rule and the power of the Roman Empire is evident here.⁶²

On the third storey of the north portico was a series of allegory relief panels. Here, only two panels were discovered and identified. In style and conception the cosmic allegories on these panels seem to be Hellenistic.⁶³ In the setting of this Sebasteion, these figures provide a universal setting for the highly particular *ethne* featured below on the second storey. From this, it seems that the north portico as a whole served to depict the Roman empire as one which is without end.

Moving to the south portico, the second storey had a series of Greek mythology relief panels. This series is the best preserved part of the whole sculptural display on the Sebasteion. Of the original 45 panels, 30 were discovered. Among the images there were many favorites - for example, much of Herakles and much of Dionysus.⁶⁴ The less familiar

⁵⁹Please refer to footnote 21 above.

⁶⁰The exact location of many of the relief panels on a particular storey cannot be determined with any certainty. Furthermore, whether a certain panel was originally placed on a certain storey can also be questioned.

⁶¹Reynolds, "New Evidence for the Imperial Cult in Julio-Claudian Aphrodisias," 326-7.

⁶²See Smith, "The *Ethne* from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," 70-77 for a further discussion on the different people groups represented here as well as the possible parallels of such a list in other architectural monuments.

⁶³See Smith, "Myth and Allegory in the Sebasteion," 92 who points out that "the statues of Night, Day, Earth, Heaven, Morning, and Noon carried in the festival procession of Antiochus IV at Daphne sound very similar (Polybius 31.3 = Athenaeus 5.195G)."

⁶⁴See Smith, "Myth and Allegory in the Sebasteion," 95.

images when understood seem to be a new rendering of known stories. As a whole, the myth panels seem designed to give a representation of the Greek world through its mythology.

On the third storey of the south portico was a series of imperial reliefs.⁶⁵ Of the few remaining reliefs, we have images of emperors which include Augustus, Claudius, Agrippina, and probably Germanicus. Furthermore there are images reflecting the theme of imperial victory. These include scenes of the emperor Claudius overwhelming a pleading personification of Britannia; and Nero overpowering Armenia. The combination of these imperial images and the Greek mythology point to an attempt to place the Julio-Claudian emperors within the history of the Greek people.

If one is to take the two porticoes as a whole, the relief panels seem to refer to the glory of the Julio-Claudian emperors in an universal setting. Furthermore, such a unique combination of the various themes might have served to stress “the close mythological and historical ties binding Aphrodisias and Rome.”⁶⁶ This conclusion certainly agrees with the one derived from an examination of the external structure of the Sebasteion in light of the comparison between the Sebasteion and the two imperial forums.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, one can see that the Sebasteion was probably constructed according to the design of the Forum Iulium and that such a choice of architectural model may well have been intentional. Furthermore, like the Forum Augustum, it is possible that the Sebasteion was also constructed without any particular “practical” function in mind.⁶⁷ Its main purpose was to highlight the power and glory of the Julio-Claudian emperors and to emphasize the ties between Aphrodisias and Rome.

⁶⁵See Smith, “The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias,” 97ff.

⁶⁶Erim, *Aphrodisias: City of Venus Aphrodite*, 23.

⁶⁷It is possible, of course, that the structure was later used for different purposes. This does not mean, however, that the construction of the Sebasteion was intended to meet any particular need.

ABSTRACT

The significance of the development of the Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor has long been recognized by New Testament scholars. This study aims at examining one building complex devoted to the imperial cult in the first century of the Common Era: the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias. In examining the architectural design of this monumental structure, it is evident that the primary meaning of the Sebasteion resides in its ability to highlight the power of the Roman emperors and to reinforce the ties between Rome and Aphrodisias.

撮 要

新約學者早已認為羅馬的君王崇拜在小亞細亞的發展是重要的。本文旨在研究位於愛芙狄詩雅的太子廟：在公元一世紀用作君王崇拜的綜合大樓，通過研究這座大樓的建築設計，我們知道建築這座大樓顯然是為展示羅馬君王的實力，以及加強羅馬和愛芙狄詩雅人的維繫。

Fig. 1 Plan of Sebasteion

(Bernard McDonagh, *Turkey: The Aegean and Mediterranean Coasts* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1989], 363.)

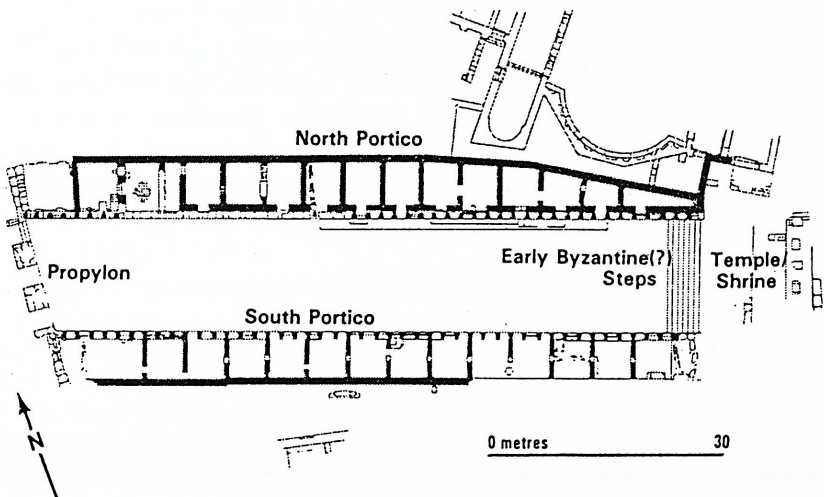


Fig. 2 Section of Sebasteion South Portico

(R. R. Smith, "The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," *JRS* 77 [1987], 92.)

