



Summary :

The prytaneion is located on the north side of the state agora of Ephesus next to the odeum. It consisted of a peristyle courtyard to the north of which two non-communicating sets of rooms were arranged. Archaeological research in the area has identified four building phases, the preserved remains, however, date from the Augustan period (1st century BC).

Date

1st century BC

Geographical Location

Ephesus

1. Location

The building (map no. 24) was located on the north side of the [public agora](#) (map no. 18) of [Ephesus](#). To its east was a temple dedicated to Emperor [Augustus](#) and the goddess [Artemis](#) (map. no. 23),¹ as well as the bouleutereion-odeum (map no. 22). From this point began a small road, the so-called 'Clivus Sacer', which in a slight diagonal direction met the [Curetes Street](#), which offered direct access to the lower section of the Roman town.²

2. Architectural Description

The building was rectangular with two main sections. A square courtyard formed in the south-western corner, while a monumental [portico](#) to its north, led to the two non communicating sets of rooms.

2.1. Courtyard

The remains of this space advocate for its restoration as a three-sided Ionic [peristyle](#) courtyard measuring 13,00x14,50 m. A drain for the collection of rain water ran around the courtyard. In the centre of the court is a rectangular foundation measuring 2,50x2,10 m. It was possibly the base for one of the three Roman copies of the [Ephesian Artemis](#), which were found in this area.³

2.2. Portico

To the north side of the courtyard, a [stoa](#) served as a [porch](#) to the interior rooms behind. It was of the [Doric order](#), with five unfluted columns, 7,35 m wide and 8 m. high. The portico gave a monumental character to the building, emphasizing at the same time the meaning of the rooms to which it led. The columns and the [entablature](#) were covered with inscriptions of the Imperial era which are a valuable source of information for the interpretation of the building's function and the city's public issues. Although the portico follows the forms and proportions of the Augustan architecture, some construction details reveal a remodelling during the Severan era (end of the 2nd, beginning of the 3rd century AD).⁴

2.3. Rooms I, II

The portico functioned not only as a facade for the halls behind, but also as a common element between them. The western of these sets consists of two similar rooms, one behind the other.⁵ Each room had a central column, while the doorways were slightly off center. In Room II, three different types of wall-construction can be discerned. The lower part of the wall consists of large well cut blocks laid in pseudo-isodomic style, that belongs to the Hellenistic construction. Above this type follows another, which makes use



of small stones and mortar in roughly ashlar coursing. This style is considered part of the Augustan construction. The upper parts of the walls belong to the Byzantine period.

The function of these two rooms is unclear. However assumptions have been made regarding the purpose of room I. It has been suggested that its size and the position of the doorways was suitable for the accommodation of 10 couches, thus, it could have been a banqueting room.⁶

2.4. Rooms III, IV

To the east of these two halls (I, II), Room III is the most impressive structure of the entire composition. It is a large hall (12,25x13,52 m.), with four columns placed toward the corners. Access was gained via the porch through a broad central doorway. Two smaller side doors in the corners, in the south side, are considered later openings in the wall. In the northern wall of the hall, exactly opposite to the central entrance, was another opening leading to another room (IV), which was destroyed during the building's remodelling in Byzantine times.

The floor of Room III was paved with marble slabs while in the middle of the floor one can discern a square foundation. The walls were either of ashlar masonry with some mortar, a style dated to the Augustan period or of coursed brick and mortar, which belonged to the Severan era (end of the 2nd, beginning of the 3rd century AD). In the four corners were columns which were heart-shaped in section, with a total height of 6,26 m. They rested on Ionic bases with high pedestals. Their shafts were monolithic, made of gray granite. The capitals were of composite type and were also heart-shaped. The monumental character and the architectural characteristics of the structure define the room's religious function.

One can also observe the existence of two low, parallel brick walls stretching between the pedestals on the eastern and western side of the room, which are most probably another repair from the Severan period or even later. These walls seemed to have followed the curve of the corners on the north side. Their function is enigmatic. They have been identified as bases for seats although the identity of the citizens who gathered in this hall remains unknown.⁷

3. Date

The dating of the building is a complicated issue due to the many and diverse building phases. Indicative references to chronological data which occurs from the study of the architectural components have already been made.

The building presents four construction phases which can be dated to the Hellenistic period, the Augustan era (end of the 1st century BC, beginning of the 1st century AD), the Severan period (end of the 2nd, beginning of the 3rd century AD), and finally the Byzantine times. The pseudo-isodomic masonry style, which is visible in some sections of the construction, suggests an earlier building phase which dates from the Hellenistic period and more specifically around the 3rd century BC, the period of the city's refoundation by [Lysimachus](#) (1st half of the 3rd century BC). Most of the preserved remains belong to the Roman period. Many elements, such as the inscriptions on architectural components, architectural characteristics as well as the findings, testify the building's reconstruction at the beginning of the 1st century AD, as part of Augustan building program. The style of heart-shaped columns in room III, the quality of the brickwork as well as the inscriptions on the building's portico are indications of later repairs and interventions which certify the building's restoration, based on the existing ground plan without formal changes, during the Severan era, more specifically at the beginning of the 3rd century AD.

The building was finally completely destroyed at the end of the 4th century AD. Many architectural members of the Prytaneion were used for the reconstruction of the [Baths of Scholastica](#) at the end of the 4th century AD. In detail architectural components, such as Doric columns with their capitals were incorporated into the walls of the renovated bath complex. Moreover, marble drums inscribed with lists of cures were reused in the construction of the north side of the Embolos. Less important repairs took place during the Byzantine period.⁸



4. Function

Since the building's architectural remains came to light it has been suggested that they belonged to the city's prytaneion. Before we examine the evidence which supports this function, we must consider the basic characteristics of [prytaneia](#) in general. These were monumental public buildings, which adopted the architectural features of private residences. They were located inside or near the agora. Their interior housed the city's communal hearth (hestia). It was also used for the accommodation of the city's official guests and visitors and it was also used for the dining of privileged persons honoured by the city.

In the example from Ephesus we observe that based on architectural criteria the building's layout accumulates the general characteristics of a prytaneion, i.e. the courtyard, the Hestia hall, and the dining room, identified as Halls III and I respectively, while it also contained subsidiary rooms. The quality of construction is exquisite, as befits an important civic building.⁹

The above opinion on the interpretation of the building as the prytaneion of Ephesus, is further supported by inscriptions dated in the Imperial era. In particular, inscriptions provide information on the topographical site of the prytaneion.¹⁰ Moreover, many inscriptions found in the area mention the worship of Hestia as well as other deities, such as Apollo and Demeter, while on the drums are inscribed lists connected to the "curetes", priests of Ephesian Artemis, celebrants and other religious officials.¹¹ All archaeological evidence supports the identification of the building as the city's prytaneion.

5. History of the archaeological research and the state of preservation

Systematic excavation of the north section of the public agora, east of the bouleuterion-odeum, took place by the Austrian Archaeological Institute and the archaeologist F. Miltner between 1955 and 1958. Until then only a single column was visible. Between 1956 and 1957 the ruins of the city's prytaneion came to light and the results of the excavations were published. Today, the visitors can see very few of the building's architectural remains in situ, mainly the foundation, while some of the columns of the central room III and two Doric columns of the portico have been restored.¹²

1. The area between the prytaneion and the bouleuterion-odeum in Ephesus is known as the Rhodian peristyle. It is an open-air courtyard measuring 33x28 m., with porticoes along its three sides; its interior seems to have accommodated an architectural composition with two small temples or altars. It was initially considered directly connected, architecturally and functionally, with the prytaneion, while it was thought to date from the Hellenistic period. See Miltner, F., «Ergebnisse der österreichischen Ausgrabungen in Ephesos im Jahre 1956», AAW 94 (1957), p. 23-25; Miller, S. G., *The Prytaneion. Its Function and Architectural Form* (London 1978), p. 103-104. The above opinions however have been dismissed; In more recent publications regarding the city's historical topography, the structure is identified as a temple dedicated to Augustus and Artemis, which dates from before 25 BC. It can no longer be supported that a constructional and functional relation exists between the eastern Rhodian peristyle and the facilities of the prytaneion. See Alzinger, W., *Augusteische Architektur in Ephesos* (Wien 1974), p. 51-55; Scherrer, P., *Ephesos. Der Neue Führer, 100 Jahre Österreichische Ausgrabungen 1895-1995* (Wien 1995), p. 86; Scherrer, P., «The historical topography of Ephesos», in Parrish, D., *Urbanism in Western Asia Minor, New Studies on Aphrodisias, Ephesos, Hierapolis, Pergamon, Perge and Xanthos* (Journal of Roman Archaeology supplementary Series Number 45, Portsmouth 2001), p. 70-71, note 59.

2. At the juncture of Couretes street with the smaller road which leads to the so-called Prytaneion was an arch, from which relief pedestals depicting a ceremonial sacred procession are preserved. By this relief representation the smaller road is called Clivus Sacer in modern research. Keil, J., *Ephesos, Ein Führer durch die Ruinenstätte und ihre Geschichte* (Wien 1964); Miller, S.G., *The Prytaneion. Its Function and Architectural Form* (London 1978), p. 98-99.

3. Miller, S. G., *The Prytaneion. Its Function and Architectural Form* (London 1978), p. 98-99; Wiplinger, G. – Wlach, G., *Ephesos, 100 Years of Austrian Research* (Vienna 1996), p. 70.

4. Miller, S. G., *The Prytaneion. Its Function and Architectural Form* (London 1978), p. 100-101; Miltner, F., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 43 (1956-1958), p. 27-39.



5. The first room (I) measured 6,65x8,35 m., while the second Room (Room II), had the same width but was longer in length (8,73 m.).
6. Miller, S. G., *The Prytaneion. Its Function and Architectural Form* (London 1978), p. 105-106.
7. The opinion that it was the meeting place of the Boule has been disputed; there is also no evidence to prove a correlation between the function of the prytaneion with the Boule during the antiquity. Miltner, F., «Ergebnisse der österreichischen Ausgrabungen in Ephesos im Jahre 1956», *AAW* 94 (1957), p. 23-25; Miltner, F., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 43 (1956-1958), p. 27-39; Miltner, F., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 44 (1959), p. 289-310; Miller, S. G., *The Prytaneion. Its Function and Architectural Form* (London 1978), p. 101-103, note 16.
8. Alzinger, W., *Augusteische Architektur in Ephesos* (Wien 1974), p. 51-55; Miller, S. G., *The Prytaneion. Its Function and Architectural Form* (London 1978), p. 104-107; Miltner, F., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 44 (1959), p. 305-307; Eichler, F., «Die österreichischen Ausgrabungen in Ephesos im Jahre 1960», *AAW* 98 (1961), p. 68; Eichler, F., «Die österreichischen Ausgrabungen in Ephesos im Jahre 1961», *AAW* 99 (1962), p. 38-41; Eichler, F., «Die österreichischen Ausgrabungen in Ephesos im Jahre 1962», *AAW* 100 (1963), p. 46; Eichler, F., «Die österreichischen Ausgrabungen in Ephesos im Jahre 1963», *AAW* 101 (1964), p. 40; Scherrer, P., *Ephesos. Der Neue Führer, 100 Jahre Österreichische Ausgrabungen 1895-1995* (Wien 1995), p. 86-88; Wiplinger, G. – Wlach, G., *Ephesus, 100 Years of Austrian Research* (Vienna 1996), p. 70.
9. Alzinger, W., *Augusteische Architektur in Ephesos* (Wien 1974), p. 51-55; Miltner, F., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 43 (1956-1958), p. 27-39; Miltner, F., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 44 (1959), p. 289-310; Miller, S. G., *The Prytaneion. Its Function and Architectural Form* (London 1978), p. 107-109; Keil, J., «Kulte im Prytaneion von Ephesos», *AS* (1939), p. 119-128; Merkelbach, R., «Der Kult der Hestia im Prytaneion der griechischen Städte», *ZPE* 37 (1980), p. 77-92; Erdemgil, S., *Ephesus* (Istanbul 1987), p. 25-26.
10. Meriç, R. – Merkelbach, R. – Nollé, J. – Şahin, S., *Die Inschriften von Ephesos, teil VII.1 (Nr. 3001-3500)* (Bonn 1981), no. 3071, p. 72-74.
11. For the lists of curetes see Engelmann, H. – Knibbe, D. – Merkelbach, R., *Die Inschriften von Ephesos (teil IV, Nr. 1001-1446)* (Bonn 1980), no. 1001-1080b, p. 1-57.
12. Wiplinger, G. – Wlach, G., *Ephesus, 100 Years of Austrian Research* (Vienna – Cologne – Weimar 1996), p. 70.

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Glossary :

	capital
	The uppermost part of a column or pillar crowning the shaft and supporting the entablature. The decoration of the capital characterizes the ancient greek orders of architecture. In Doric order the capitals are decorated with abacus and echinus, in Ionic with spiral scrolls (volutes), while the corinthian capitals are composed of small corner volutes and a basket-shaped body decorated with rows of acanthus leaves.
	composite order
	It is a mixed order, developed in the late roman imperial period. Its capital combines the Corinthian acanthus leaf decoration with volutes from the Ionic Order. It may have unfluted shaft, while the details of the entablature resemble those of the Corinthian Order.
	doric order, the
	One of the three orders or organizational systems of Ancient Greek originated on the mainland and western Greece. It is characterized by short, faceted, heavy columns with plain, round capitals (tops) and no base. The capital consists of a necking which is of a simple form. The echinus is convex and the abacus is square. Above the capital is a square abacus connecting the capital to the entablature. The Entablature is divided into two horizontal registers, the lower part of which is either smooth or divided by horizontal lines. The upper half is distinctive for the Doric order. The frieze of the Doric entablature is divided into triglyphs and metopes. A triglyph is a unit consisting of three vertical bands which are separated by grooves. Metopes are plain or carved reliefs. The Doric order comes without an individual base. They instead are placed directly on the stylobate. The capital consists of a necking which is of a simple form. The echinus is convex and the abacus is square. Above the capital is a square abacus connecting the capital to the entablature. The Entablature is divided into two horizontal registers, the lower part of which is either smooth or divided by horizontal lines. The upper half is distinctive for the Doric order. The frieze of the Doric entablature is divided into triglyphs and metopes. A triglyph is a unit consisting of three vertical bands which are separated by grooves. Metopes are plain or carved reliefs. The Doric order comes without an individual base. They instead are placed directly on the stylobate.
	drum
	The cylindric parts of stone or marble, of which a column is built up.
	entablature, the
	The upper part of the classical order, that rests on the columns, it consists of the architrave, frieze and cornice.
	peristyle
	A colonnade surrounding a building or a courtyard .
	porch
	The covered space at the front of a gate on the building's entrance or a stoa.
	pseudo-isodomic masonry
	Masonry built of blocks of the same height within each course , but each course varying in height.
	stoa, portico, the
	A long building with a roof supported by one or two colonnades parallel to its back wall.