

The multifaceted architectural refinements in the Julio-Claudian Sebasteion at Aphrodisias

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Building upon the previous work by F. Hueber and U. Outschar,¹ this study offers new research on the Sebasteion's significant architectural refinements, which can be defined as intentional design strategies resulting in minimal deviations from strict rectilinearity, verticality or squareness. The first part of this study identifies where the refinement of curvature is and is not used throughout the Sebasteion complex. A striking pattern of curvature corresponds to the well-documented shared patronage of the complex, demonstrating that the refinement was a choice, not an imperative, for its builders. We also report on a newly-excavated and remarkable example of curvature from the podium of the Sebasteion's W façade, the Propylon, and for comparison's sake, curvature in the earlier *proskenion* of the Theater. Using anastylosis, digital photogrammetry and 3D printing technology, the second part of this article presents new evidence for unprecedented refinements in the Propylon's aedicular architecture. The plans of the two double-height *aediculae* and three internal staircases are not rigidly square or orthogonal, as previously thought, but deliberately deviate from having square corners using right angles. After detailed descriptions of these features, several options for their interpretation are presented. Overall, this work brings to light astonishing aspects of the architecture of the Sebasteion, a building already widely appreciated for its sculptures.

The Sebasteion was excavated by K. Erim between 1979 and 1986 (figs. 1-2).² Construction on this imperial cult complex began during the early reign of Tiberius, only to

* *Frequently cited works:*

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- Hueber 1984 F. Hueber, "Beobachtungen zu Kurvatur und Scheinperspektive an der Celsusbibliothek und anderen kaiserzeitlichen Bauten," in *Bauplanung und Bauphysik der Antike (Diskussionen zur antiken Bauforschung 4)* 175-200.
- Hueber 1987 F. Hueber, "Der Baukomplex einer julisch-claudischen Kaiserkultanlage in Aphrodisias: ein Zwischenbericht zur theoretischen Rekonstruktion des Baubestandes," in J. de la Genière and K. Erim (edd.), *Aphrodisias de Carie. Colloque Lille* (Paris) 101-6.
- Hueber 1999 F. Hueber, "Optical refinements in Roman imperial architecture," in Haselberger (ed.) 1999, 211-23.
- Outschar 1987 U. Outschar, "Betrachtungen zur kunstgeschichtlichen Stellung des Sebasteions in Aphrodisias," in J. de la Genière and K. Erim (edd.), *Aphrodisias de Carie. Colloque Lille* (Paris) 107-22.
- Smith 2013 R. R. R. Smith, *Aphrodisias VI. The marble reliefs from the Julio-Claudian Sebasteion* (Mainz).

1 Hueber 1984; Hueber 1987; Outschar 1987; Hueber 1999; cf. Haselberger 1999, 20-22.

2 K. T. Erim, *Aphrodisias: city of Aphrodite* (London 1986) 106-83. For a history of the Sebasteion's excavations, see Smith 2013, 49-53.