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The So-called Imperial Cult Temple for Domitian in Ephesos

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The following study¹ is dedicated to the building complex in Ephesos that has entered scholarly literature as an imperial cult temple for Domitian (Plan 4).² In addition to an overview of the history of research and a review of its period of construction and usage, the late antique fate of the complex forms a particular focus of interest.

History of Research

The Temple of Domitian is located to the west of the Upper Agora on the north slope of Bülbüldağ.³ It was discovered in 1930 when the exposed area was investigated by J. Keil with regard to the location of the so-called Parthian Monument.⁴ At that time the cella of the temple, the peristasis on the eastern and northern sides, and isolated sections of the stepped substructure were brought to light. Furthermore, the altar was also discovered in a test trench running east-west over the courtyard covered with paving stones. Immediately after the excavation, M. Theuer completed a reconstruction of the ground plan which is still valid today. It was hypothesized that colonnades formed an architectonic framing for the temenos, at least for the west, south and east sides. The excavator extrapolated the dating of the site and its meaning on the basis of two sculpture fragments, a head and a lower arm that were discovered in secondary use in a late antique-Byzantine wall built into the substructures.⁵ He interpreted these fragments, parts of an acrolithic colossal statue, as pertaining to a cult image for the emperor Domitian and associated them with thirteen statue bases that were originally set up by various

¹ I would like to thank N. Gail, Ch. Kurtze and H. Schwaiger for their support and S. Cormack for the translation from German to English.

² On this, see, summarising, Scherrer 1997; Thür 2004. See Kirbihler in this volume. S. Friesen (1993) has argued that the complex should be known as the Temple of the Flavian Sebastoi, and it is commonly denoted in the subsequent literature as either the Temple of Domitian or the Flavian imperial temple.

³ For the Upper Agora see a summary in Steuernagel in the present volume.

⁴ Keil 1932a.

⁵ Keil 1932a, 59-60.

cities of Asia Minor in a sanctuary dedicated to that emperor.⁶ After his *damnatio memoriae*, his name was erased and replaced by that of his father Vespasian. Keil connected the material with the epigraphic and numismatic evidence that attests the existence of a neokorate for Ephesos under Domitian, and he subsequently identified the area he had excavated as an imperial cult sanctuary. In contrast, he dated the associated altar to the 3rd century CE on the basis of a stylistic analysis of the preserved relief plaques, connecting them with a renovation or reconstruction.⁷ Due to the extremely limited state of preservation, no secure conclusions were possible regarding the superstructure of the temple. This deficit was probably also the reason for the cessation of field research after only one campaign.

It was only in 1958 that the so-called Terrace of Domitian again became the focus of research that continued until 1962.⁸ In the course of excavations directed by F. Miltner and F. Eichler, approximately half of the area to the north of the temple site was exposed, and a 'Domitian Street' running to the south, as well as the adjacent tabernae on both sides, were investigated. Targeted excavations below ground level provided information on the earlier development of the area, revealing that it dated back at least to the Hellenistic period. Additionally, a test trench along the northern front of the temple terrace up to the western entrance to the cryptoporticus clarified the urban architectural context to the west. This work turned up an additional fragment of a colossal statue, consisting of the big toe of a left foot.⁹ Only a few years later, in 1969-70, officials of the Efes Müzesi in Selçuk under the direction of S. Türkoğlu und R. Meriç organised the removal of debris from the western corridor of the cryptoporticus and found additional fragments.¹⁰ By this date at the latest it had become clear that the sculptural fragments belonged to more than one cult statue.¹¹ In the 1970s investigations into the architectural history of the area finally took place, including the north façade of the Terrace of Domitian, culminating in a reconstruction proposal by A. Bammer.¹²

The most recent research extended from 2009 until 2011 and encompassed excavations in the temple and at the western boundary of the temenos and the eastern area of the courtyard; a precise recording of the construction of the temple;

⁶ Keil 1919, 17-18.

⁷ Keil 1932a, 57-58.

⁸ Miltner 1959b, 35; Miltner 1960, 23; Eichler 1962, 47; Eichler 1963, 57 (on work in the region of the Fountain of Laecanius Bassus); Eichler 1964, 41 (on research on the east front of the Plaza of Domitian); summarising: Vetters 1972-75b, 311-330.

⁹ Eichler 1962, 47.

¹⁰ Türkoğlu and Meriç 1972; Meriç 1985, 239.

¹¹ Meriç 1985, 240.

¹² Vetters 1972, 8. Bammer 1978-80, 81-88; Bammer 1985, 124 Fig. 26: The reconstruction is nevertheless no longer tenable. Demonstrably false is the orientation of the altar, the location of the colossal statue, and the height of the north façade.

and the first geophysical survey of the temenos.¹³ The altar also became the focus of current research.¹⁴

The Temple

In the center of the complex, a pseudo-dipteral temple with a peristyle of 8 x 13 columns (fig. 1.1c) stands on a six-stepped substructure (24 x 34 m). A pronaos with four prostyle columns is situated in front of the cella, which measures 7.5 x 13 m and is oriented to the east. There is no opisthodomos. In addition to the stepped substructure, only the foundations of the temple are preserved; not a single architectural element of the superstructure can be associated with the temple with any certainty. The architectural type of the pseudo-dipteral temple, where the extended peristasis almost constitutes a covered walkway around the cella, represents a Hellenistic development that was particularly popular in the 2nd century BCE in Asia Minor.¹⁵ The Temple of Apollo in Alabanda and the Temple of Hekate in Lagina, both late Hellenistic foundations, can be cited as comparanda.¹⁶ Temples in Ankyra,¹⁷ Seleukeia at Kalykadnos¹⁸ and Aizanoi¹⁹ nevertheless provide evidence of the continuity of this type into the Roman imperial period. The Ephesian pseudo-dipteral temple must also be situated within this tradition, although it belongs to the smaller representatives of the type (fig. 1.2). Since nothing of the superstructure is preserved, no secure statements are possible regarding its architectural order. Reverses of coins which depict the neokorate temple have to be rejected as informative sources for this question due to the schematic nature of their representation.²⁰ Although in general the Ionic order was the dominant form in pseudo-dipteral temples, nevertheless the examples in Lagina²¹, Seleukeia²² and possibly also Ankyra²³ reveal that the Corinthian order could also be employed.

Fig. 1.1. Terrace of Domitian. a. ground level, b. middle level, c. temple terrace (top level) emphasised. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/S. Ladstätter-C. Kurtze.

Fig. 1.2. The Temple of Domitian and Comparable Pseudo-dipteral Temples. ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Math-S. Ladstätter.

¹³ Ladstätter et al. 2009, 15; Ladstätter et al. 2010, 56; Ladstätter et al. 2011, 9-11.

¹⁴ Landskron 2016.

¹⁵ Schulz 2012, 165.

¹⁶ See the summary in Schulz 2012, 167 fig. 1.

¹⁷ Kadioğlu, Görkay and Mitchell 2011, 79-98.

¹⁸ Berns 1998, 140.

¹⁹ Schulz 2010, 89.

²⁰ Friesen 1993, 65; Karwiese 2012, 65 no. 260; 97 no. 426.

²¹ Tırpan, Gider and Büyüközer 2012, 185-86.

²² Berns 1998, 152.

²³ Kadioğlu, Görkay and Mitchell 2011, 92-93; Görkay 2012, 209, 212.

The cult statues must have been placed in the temple, although no traces of any bases could be identified, not even during the excavations of 2009, since the late antique disruptions were too great. Therefore the reconstruction of the installation has to remain hypothetical, and any evidence in this regard has to be obtained exclusively from the sculptural fragments. These reveal that cult statues existed at three times lifesize, that is between 5 and 5.5 m; for these, bases of adequate size must have stood in the cella of the temple. The attribution of the colossal head to Domitian does not stand up to iconographic analysis. Instead, it is far more likely to have been an idealized portrait of his already-divinized brother, Titus (fig. 1.3),²⁴ made out of dolomitic marble from Thasos, a material that was often used for the production of sculpture.²⁵ From the remaining fragments, V. M. Strocka reconstructed a statue pair consisting of Vespasian in the costume of Jupiter, and, at his right, Titus in a cuirass turned towards him.²⁶ S. Friesen increased the group to at least three emperors, namely Vespasian, Titus and Domitian, who was later replaced by Nerva.²⁷ And finally P. Scherrer considered the possibility of up to five statues, whereby these would have been set up against the rear wall of the cella as well as along the sides.²⁸ Due to the poor state of preservation of the building, the archaeological evidence provides no additional information, which was also confirmed by the excavations of 2009 (fig. 1.4). The rear area of the cella was robbed out to below the ancient level of usage, and was then completely destroyed by late antique-Byzantine installations.²⁹ In the area towards the front, two paving slabs were recorded in their original position, yet nevertheless in a location where no statue bases could have been erected. Ultimately it cannot be determined how many imperial statues were set up in the cella, and to whom the temple was actually dedicated. The assumption that it was a sanctuary for the Flavian imperial house, however, finds support in the epigraphic evidence.³⁰

Fig. 1.3. Ephesos. Colossal Head of Titus. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

Fig. 1.4. Temple of Domitian. View of the Temple After the Excavation. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

In late antiquity, the temple was demolished and a massive walled structure with an articulation of pillars on the exterior was set up in the location of the cella. In the interior, a number of compact mortar elements were documented. Based on comparisons with other building types, the structure, which is only preserved in a

²⁴ Daltrop, Hausmann and Wegner 1966, 26. 38. 86; Kreikenbom 1992, 213.

²⁵ Herrmann and Newman 1995, 78.

²⁶ Strocka 1989, 92 n. 58.

²⁷ Friesen 1993, 62.

²⁸ Scherrer 2008, 37.

²⁹ Ladstätter 2011, 8.

³⁰ See already Keil 1919, 17-18.

few places, has been interpreted as a cistern.³¹ In fact, a rectangular water reservoir, strengthened with pillars and dating to the Byzantine period, is found in nearby Ayasoluk. The cistern in Ayasoluk, however, was fed by the aqueduct that ran past it, and served to provide water for baths located at a lower level.³² What purpose, then, would a cistern located on the temple plateau have, in such an isolated location, with no connection to supply pipes, and no large-scale roofed area? What could have been supplied by it? Based on similar building forms used for Byzantine towers, the possibility of a structure of defensive nature should be considered, perhaps in connection with the Byzantine city wall, especially since the Terrace of Domitian provides outstanding visibility of the hinterland to the east, as well as the densely developed and fortified lower city, and the plain of the harbor to the west.³³ The functions of such solitary towers, which have numerous parallels in the Byzantine world, are manifold. They served as watch-towers, landmarks, and also as storage buildings. Often a water reservoir would be located on the lowest level, so that the entrance to the tower was frequently situated at a higher level.³⁴

The Altar

According to the survey work by M. Theuer, the 6.6 x 6.6 m altar was located 12.7 m to the east of the temple, and was aligned precisely with its axis.³⁵ It was reconstructed as a U-shaped altar with a stepped approach from the west. Whereas during the excavations relief plaques from the southern boundary were discovered *in situ*, other architectonic elements were discovered in secondary use, yet very tastefully, as a fountain barrier in the lower city of Ephesos (fig. 1.5).³⁶ Based on these very specific circumstances of preservation, it follows that parts of the altar were integrated into the late antique construction in the temenos, while others were removed and re-erected at other locations. The photograph taken during the excavations (fig. 1.6) certainly does not correspond to the actual circumstances of discovery *in situ*; it instead depicts a re-erection. The architectural and functional context of the relief plaques in late antiquity can thus no longer be determined. It is likely that they were secondarily reused as a facing for a fountain.

Fig. 1.5. Ephesos. Plaques From the Altar Secondarily Built into a Byzantine Fountain. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

Fig. 1.6. Temple of Domitian. Altar after Its Exposure in 1930. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI-Archive.

³¹ Keil 1932a, 54; Friesen 1993, 63.

³² Wiplinger 2011, 119.

³³ Ladstätter 2011, 15-16, fig. 16.

³⁴ Bakirtzis 2010, 354.

³⁵ Keil 1932a, 55 fig. 37.

³⁶ Landskron 2016, 251-52.

The reliefs depict a frieze of weapons extending over a number of slabs, as well as a sacrifice scene on the short sides that makes direct reference to the altar's function. The dating of the reliefs and therefore also of the altar itself is controversial, extending from the mid-2nd century³⁷ up to the early 3rd century.³⁸ Recently, however, a date contemporary with the temple, that is, to the Flavian era, has also been proposed.³⁹

The geophysical survey of the temenos in 2010 produced surprising results regarding the location of the altar (fig. 1.7). Clearly visible is an electromagnetic anomaly with the exact dimensions of the altar, yet displaced approximately 3.10 m to the west. The excavations confirmed the survey results, in that although no traces of the architecture were discovered due to the massive late antique spoliation, nevertheless the location of the altar was visible in the mortar bed. A survey error in the 1930s, on the one hand, might explain the apparent displacement; on the other hand the displaced location might also indicate a renovation or a rebuilding of the altar. It also should not be ruled out that elements of the altar may not have been reused precisely *in situ* in late antiquity, but were slightly dislocated when they were integrated into the building complex. In any case it can nevertheless be accepted that the contemporary imperial altar stood further to the west and at a distance of 9.1 m from the temple (fig. 1.1c).

Fig. 1.7. Temple of Domitian. Geophysical Image of the Temple Terrace. Image ZAMG-S. Seren.

Dating and Cult Occupant

J. Keil had already associated the architectonic evidence and the sculptural finds with thirteen inscriptions that attest the existence of an imperial sanctuary in Ephesos.⁴⁰ The bearers of the inscriptions are statue bases dedicated by a number of cities in Asia Minor in the sanctuary and erected at the cost of the entire province. With the bestowal of the neokorate, either in 81/82 CE or 84 CE, and the commencement of religious activity about five years later, Ephesos assumed the responsibility for the maintenance of the temple area and the implementation of numerous festivals.⁴¹ The first person to be appointed archiereus was none other than Tiberius Claudius Aristion.⁴² Although their findspots, widely dispersed in Ephesos and its surroundings, allow no conclusions regarding the original site of installation of these inscriptions, nevertheless the temenos with its extensive

³⁷ Alzinger 1980, 820.

³⁸ Keil 1932a, 58.

³⁹ Landskron 2016, 258.

⁴⁰ Keil 1919, 119; Scherrer 1997, 101; Engelmann 1998a, 307-8; Witulski 2007, 53-54.

⁴¹ Scherrer 1997, 111.

⁴² Scherrer 1997, 115-17; Burrell 2004, 66; for the person of Aristion, see recently Quatember 2011, 50-52.

colonnades is a likely candidate.⁴³ The inscriptions, dated between 88 and 91 CE, were originally addressed to Emperor Domitian, and after his *damnatio memoriae* in 96 CE, to his father Vespasian.⁴⁴ Even when he represented the central figure of the cult,⁴⁵ the epigraphic evidence as well as the existence of more than one cult statue suggest a dedication to the Sebastoi, in which S. Friesen would like to recognise the Flavian imperial house.⁴⁶ For an extension of the imperial dedication to include the Julio-Claudian imperial house, as proposed by P. Scherrer, there is neither substantive historical nor archaeological evidence.⁴⁷

Recently, however, the dating of the temple terrace has been put into question, and its construction has been connected instead to the awarding of a neokorate to Ephesos under Nero, a circumstance attested by numismatic evidence.⁴⁸ Ultimately, the archaeological evidence is not unambiguous: the substructures were built on top of accumulations of soil that in the 1960s, based on the state of research at the time, were dated to the early imperial period; however, the material has been lost in the intervening years and can therefore no longer be examined.⁴⁹ The temple area was so fundamentally robbed out that no secure statements are possible on the basis of the architectural decoration, the sculptural installations, or the epigraphic evidence.

The Temenos

The temple and its altar lie in a plaza paved with marble slabs and surrounded on all four sides by an 11.2 m wide, two-aisled colonnade (fig. 1.1c). The cryptoporticus beneath the porticoes provides a good indication of the width of the aisles of the colonnade, which uniformly measure 4.2 m. It is certain that the west and south sides of the colonnade had closed rear walls. On the west, a street running north-south is directly adjacent to the temenos, while on the south tabernae that are attached to the wall open up on the south onto a street that comes from the Upper Agora and runs to the west. It is highly probable that the colonnade on the east side opens up to the Agora and the colonnade on the north onto the Plaza of Domitian.

As is the case with the temple itself, practically nothing of the upper elements of the colonnades is preserved. The architectural elements discovered during excavations in 2011 in the locations where they had fallen are an important

⁴³ Friesen 1993, 29-49; Scherrer 1997, 101; Knibbe 1998, 132-33; Burrell 2004, 61; Scherrer 2008, 39.

⁴⁴ Keil 1919, 119; Friesen 1993, 37 and, for the dating: 44; Knibbe 1998, 131; Maier 2006; Burrell 2004, 61; Witulski 2007, 59; Fischer 2012, 150.

⁴⁵ Fischer 2012, 150.

⁴⁶ Friesen 1993, 36.

⁴⁷ Scherrer 1997, 101-6.

⁴⁸ Information kindly provided by R. Posamentir, whose new reading of the inscriptions and the resulting interpretations with regard to the Temple of Domitian are in press. For questions regarding a first neokorate, see also: Burrell 2004, 61-62; Fischer 2012, 149-50. For the coins associated with it: Karwiese 2012, 23.

⁴⁹ Veters 1972-75b, 324.

exception; these should be interpreted as parts of the northern portico (fig. 1.8). The main entrance to the temenos was similarly located on the north, where a two-flight staircase, surmounting a difference in ground level of 10.5 m, led from the Plaza of Domitian to the temple. A secondary entrance can be extrapolated in the southeast, where a flight of stairs, later walled up, led from the cryptoporticus to the temple terrace.

Fig. 1.8. Temple of Domitian. Architectural Elements of the Northern Colonnade in Collapsed Position. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/S. Ladstätter.

The temple terrace conforms to the Roman street grid and takes up the southern half of two insulae.⁵⁰ Streets that border it on the west, south and east are evident, as well as a narrow alley that comes from the Plaza of Domitian and runs to the west along the north façade of the terrace. The terrace architecture communicates with the Plaza of Domitian situated to its north, from which it was also accessible.⁵¹ The Plaza of Domitian nevertheless takes up only the eastern half of the terrace. The western half, in contrast, seems to have been structurally detached from the plaza already in the Roman imperial period. The design of the north façade of the temple terrace also took this arrangement into consideration.

Substructures and North Façade

During the 1st century CE a surface area of 5550 m² must have been levelled, older structures razed, and levelling material filled in.⁵² On top of this, massive substructures were erected, accommodating a three-winged cryptoporticus with a total length of 175 m and a width of 3.9 m (fig. 1.1b).⁵³ A total of 119 side niches, at a distance of 1.2 - 1.35 m, as well as windows that opened on to the temple terrace, articulated the corridor (fig. 1.9). Two entrances are evident: one in the southeast opposite the nymphaeum of Laecanius Bassus and an additional one in the northwest leading into a colonnade placed in front of it (fig. 1.10). These also formed the second storey of the north façade (fig. 1.1b). In the northeast the situation is a little less clear, although the preserved architectonic evidence speaks in favour of an entrance configured analogously to the west side. The walled up surface observed here must date to a later period, since a window opening to the temple terrace is still preserved right on the northeast corner (Fig. 1.11).

Fig. 1.9. Temple of Domitian. View into the Cryptoporticus. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

Fig. 1.10. Temple of Domitian. Doric Colonnade in the West of the Temple Terrace. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

⁵⁰ Groh 2006, fig. 20, Insulae 620-621.

⁵¹ Lang-Auinger 2014, 230.

⁵² Vetters 1972-75b, 323.

⁵³ Vetters 1972-75b, 319-21; see, summarising, Luschin 2002, 140-41.

Fig. 1.11. Temple of Domitian. North-eastern Termination of the Cryptoporticus with Window Opening onto the Temple Area. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

In the current state of preservation the walls of the cryptoporticus are coated with white plaster, yet this could represent a late antique phase of decoration. This hypothesis is supported by a fresco of Demeter that was covered with white plaster, found in the eastern ambulatory in the 1960s (fig. 1.12).⁵⁴ It therefore cannot be ruled out that additional frescoes are concealed beneath the white plaster.

Fig. 1.12. Temple of Domitian. Fresco of Demeter from the Cryptoporticus. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

The conscious use of a cryptoporticus can probably be traced back to western influence.⁵⁵ The passage was planned as a promenade, and it is unusual in the eastern Roman empire both due to its date as well as its function; a parallel can rather be found in Rome in the Neronian palace on the Palatine. But the manner of construction of the Temple of Zeus at Aizanoi should also not be left out of consideration: here, a barrel-vaulted substructure was erected to create the plateau for the temple, which was dedicated in 92 CE and is therefore chronologically comparable. In addition, the temenos was bordered by porticoes.⁵⁶ The cryptoporticus in Ephesos communicates directly with the temple area via the regularly placed window openings, and its numerous niches also reveal a decorative arrangement. Moreover, the north façade of the temple terrace could also be accessed from the vaulted passage. This architectural solution suggests a direct association with religious activities such as processions. This hypothesis is supported by the rich evidence of finds from the cryptoporticus. In particular, numerous lamps from the high imperial period are chronologically relevant; in contrast the late antique lamp types are only sporadically attested.⁵⁷

On the north and east, on the street sides, square rooms were built into the substructures; these can be identified as workshops or tabernae due to their form as well as their specific inventory (fig. 1.1a).⁵⁸ On the north side, the flight of steps is flanked on both sides by four rooms each, of which the one in the northeast corner can be identified as a public lavatory. Nine tabernae can be reconstructed in the western half of the terrace. In the east were also a total of nine tabernae and the entrance to the cryptoporticus. Numerous alterations and adaptations are evidence of the long period of usage of these streetside shops, extending far into late antiquity and, in the final phase, causing a narrowing of the street.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Vettters 1972-75b, 314; Zimmermann and Ladstätter 2011, 128 fig. 231.

⁵⁵ Luschin 2002, 141; Scherrer 2008, 39.

⁵⁶ Schulz 2010, 97.

⁵⁷ Tek 1972, Abb. 1-3.

⁵⁸ Eichler 1961, 73; Vettters 1972-75b, 314.

⁵⁹ Vettters, 1972-75b, 316-17.

Particular attention was paid to the configuration of the northern end of the temple terrace. Whereas the eastern half, oriented towards the plaza of Domitian, was articulated with a façade, the western half must be understood as a closed building (fig. 1.1). The walls are preserved here up to the second floor and therefore allow a secure reconstruction. At ground level the already mentioned nine tabernae are evident; in the second floor was the Doric colonnade, which was closed off to the north, from which the cryptoporticus was accessible. Precisely here, built into a Byzantine wall in secondary usage, were found not only the fragments of the colossal statue, but also the head from a statue of Hekate as well as three marble heads, namely, a late Republican portrait, and the portraits of Claudius and Trajan, as well as other sculpture fragments.⁶⁰

The articulation of the eastern façade terminates at the Plaza of Domitian, frames the entrance to the sanctuary, and emphasizes it architectonically (fig. 1.13). A reconstruction of the façade is not currently possible based on the evidence. This is due, on the one hand, to the fact that the area was strongly altered by late antique rebuilding. Some examples of these are a row of columns in the place of the imperial façade, as well as a decrease in size and a compartmentalization of the Plaza of Domitian. On the other hand, the intensive stone robbing means that very little of the original architecture and equipment remained *in situ*. For example, the two Doric half-columns, as well as the pilaster figures rebuilt and visible on site today in an architectural trial restoration, were found in the area of the Lower Agora.⁶¹ Their attribution to the façade of the temple terrace occurred merely on the grounds of strong similarities to the architectural ornamentation of other buildings located around the Plaza of Domitian.⁶² Additionally, the interpretation of the existing evidence appears to be extremely hypothetical: on the basis of only two pilaster figures—a male oriental barbarian and a female figure in the form of a caryatid—it has been concluded that an entire gallery of barbarian figures once decorated the length of the north façade.⁶³ The lack of research of the architectural history represents the greatest problem, making it practically impossible to arrive at secure statements. But it is obvious that the western half of the northern façade has to be understood as a closed stoa, while the eastern half was open to the square in front of it. A three-storeyed arrangement of the façade, with Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders, can be postulated, with the uppermost storey constituting at the same time the northern portico of the temenos.⁶⁴ A first storey of eight Doric half-columns on each side of the staircase can be reconstructed with certainty due to the still-visible traces of their positions. Behind this runs a row of tabernae. The second storey can be reconstructed above this, to which the supportive pilasters with human figures are assigned, for which there is indeed no secure evidence based on finds, although

⁶⁰ Türkoğlu and Meriç 1972; Aurenhammer 2011, 109.

⁶¹ Vettters 1972, 8; Landskron 2005, 187.

⁶² Bammer 1978-80, 88; Landskron 2005, 195; Strocka 2010, 47-48.

⁶³ Thür 1985, 184; Landskron 2005, 195.

⁶⁴ Vettters 1972-75b, 391 fig. 7; Bammer 1978-80, 81-83; Friesen 1993, 70-71; Scherrer 2008, 39.

there are parallels for this at other sites.⁶⁵ The third storey may have formed a portico extending over the entire length of the temenos, from which architectural elements were discovered during excavations (see above). The façade architecture, which seems to have been oriented towards western prototypes,⁶⁶ chiefly served to accentuate the entrance to the imperial precinct. The originally vaulted approach over a staircase, located in the middle of the façade, consists of a 4.3 m wide flight of stairs leading to a forecourt, paved with marble slabs and with a fountain niche, at the south (fig. 1.14). From here the staircases branch out to either side and lead to the plateau.⁶⁷

Fig. 1.13. Temple of Domitian. Façade Articulation in the East of the Temple Terrace, Including Architectural Collage. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

Fig. 1.14. Temple of Domitian. Flight of Stairs to the Temenos. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

The Late Antique Usage of the Temenos

Research in the years 2009-2011 mainly focused on the late antique fate of the imperial cult sanctuary.⁶⁸ The poor state of preservation, due to severe destruction as well as intensive stone-robbing activities, has already been mentioned. Many architectural elements were found in the lower city and along the Kouretes Street,⁶⁹ while some of the dedicatory inscriptions were even discovered built into Ottoman bridges in the Caystros valley.⁷⁰ Moreover, the excavations of 2011 revealed that, indeed, large amounts of spolia dating to the imperial period were employed in the late antique buildings on the temenos, whereby the original surfaces were also almost completely worked away. This is particularly evident in the carefully erased inscriptions which were built into the wall systems as ashlar blocks. The latest interventions occurred in the 20th century, when the Upper Agora and presumably also the temple area were levelled for tobacco cultivation, and the stones were removed. This agricultural usage can be shown to have continued until 1962.

Turning to the process of the destruction of the imperial cult temple, one can note that, whereas the building materials from the temple and altar were already completely demolished, reworked or reused already in antiquity, the *in situ* marble slabs of the courtyard paving or—where these were lacking, the mortar substructure—are partly preserved. Over these lay a 15-20 cm thick burned layer, in which numerous parts of the temple architecture, broken into small pieces, as

⁶⁵ Corinth: Strocka 2010, 50-51; Rome: Scherrer 2008, 39.

⁶⁶ Thür 1985, 184.

⁶⁷ Vettors 1972-75b, 315-16.

⁶⁸ This work took place in the context of the focussed program "Byzantine Ephesos": on this, see an overview in Ladstätter 2017.

⁶⁹ Bammer 1978-80, 81.

⁷⁰ Maier 2006, 117-18.

well as statue fragments survived (fig. 1.15). Particularly worthy of mention are architectural elements from the northern colonnade, which collapsed directly onto the courtyard paving. Coins and pottery date the destruction of the temple and its colonnades to the early 5th century CE. At this point in time, the temple was indeed destroyed. It was completely demolished, and the building material was removed, used secondarily, or reworked at the site, but the colonnades were nevertheless left in place. In addition, the courtyard paving was removed.

Fig. 1.15. Temple of Domitian. Destruction Level on the Temple Forecourt. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/S. Ladstätter.

In order to clarify the question of how this prominently located area was used in late antiquity, geophysical investigations were carried out in 2010, revealing an intensive development of 395 m² in the east of the temenos. In addition, the western termination could be detected. In 2011, the survey results were then verified and modified by means of focused archaeological excavations. The trenches were oriented toward the traces of walls visible in the ground-penetrating radar (GPR); the crowns of the walls were already 30-40 cm beneath the surface. It was possible to ascertain that a complex late antique structure existed here, one which was impressive not only due to its size but also due to its elaborate features (fig. 1.16).

Fig. 1.16. Overview of the Late Antique Buildings in the Temenos. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

A courtyard area was also excavated, paved with marble slabs and originally displaying monumental marble architecture, of which columns, half-columns and capitals were preserved. The architectural elements lay in a massive collapsed layer, up to 1.2 m thick, of bricks and tiles, broken stone, and mortar. The eastern border of the courtyard was formed by the inner row of columns of a colonnade of late antique date. To the north of the court a room with a wooden roof was added. The room itself could be entered from the west, and featured a poorly preserved floor of marble slabs. In the middle stood four column bases put together out of spolia, and on which dowel holes and pouring channels from the late antique phase survive. The columns that were originally placed here have not survived. In order to reach the western termination of the courtyard, the excavation was extended to the west, where an entrance was also identified in the 60 cm thick, north-south running boundary wall. In addition, a small latrine was discovered in the southwest of the courtyard.

In the south lay a rectangular room oriented east-west, with a surface area of 50 m², of which approximately one quarter could be excavated. The floor was extensively laid with a polychrome floor mosaic, which can be counted amongst the

most beautiful and best-preserved late antique mosaics from Ephesos (Fig. 1.17).⁷¹ The figural field was framed by a repeated pattern of ivy leaves, which was partially destroyed in the east by the construction of the entrance and by the marble plaques that were laid at the time of construction. The almost square, 1 m² large fields alternate between meanders and figural motifs. In the pictorial fields, only sea creatures are depicted, including a variety of types of fish as well as a mythical creature consisting of a lion's head and paws, wings, and a fish tail.

Fig. 1.17. Mosaic Floor in the Late Antique Building. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

To the south of this area a civic nymphaeum was discovered (fig. 1.18). This was a three-part fountain with a central apsidal niche and rectangular niches placed at the sides. Basins and niches were faced with marble slabs, and broken pieces of these were found *in situ*. The scoop mechanisms were located to the east, where the fountain was also fenced off with decorated marble plaques. Although only the impressions and the lead dowelling of the wide central and southern plaques could be found, the northern plaque could be salvaged. This displays a sculpturally worked rosette enframed by a lozenge. Water was drained from the nymphaeum by a system of channels to the east, where the main channel was also located. The mechanisms for water management were located in a side room with a paved floor, located to the west of the nymphaeum. The area also served as a storage space, as here numerous amphoras were found, which can be reconstructed as complete vessels. Aside from the architectonic evidence, the portable pieces of equipment may also be mentioned. Exemplary are two bronze door knockers (Fig. 1.19), a butcher's knife and a steelyard (fig. 1.20).

Fig. 1.18. Late Antique Nymphaeum. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

Fig. 1.19: Door knockers. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

Fig. 1.19. Butcher's Knife and Steelyard. Photo ÖAW-ÖAI/N. Gail.

The structure was probably laid out already in the first half of the 5th century, that is, shortly after the destruction of the temple. A preliminary review of the ceramic material as well as the evaluation of the coin spectrum leads to the conclusion that the building was already abandoned by the end of the 6th century. There are no finds from the 7th century so a period of usage in the mid- or even late Byzantine era can be ruled out. The Late Antique evidence from the Terrace of Domitian therefore is clearly differentiated from that of the lower city of Ephesos, where there is a secure continuity at least until the mid-7th century CE.⁷² It does

⁷¹ Scheibelreiter-Gail 2016, 346-47.

⁷² On the phenomenon of the gradual relocation of the settlement, see Ladstätter 2011, 9.

correspond, however, to the discoveries made at the Upper Agora, where a fundamental transformation of the plaza and its surrounding buildings was already introduced in the early 6th century.⁷³

The excavations at the Temple of Domitian have enabled the identification of the precise time of destruction of the temple; in addition it became clear that although the temple itself was demolished down to its foundations, the colonnades at the side and also the revetment plaques of the altar remained in use. The *damnatio* was so thorough that even in the late antique building erected in the area immediately after the destruction of the temple, no clearly assignable spolia have been found. On the contrary, inscriptions were carefully erased before the stone blocks were reused. It was also not possible to ascribe secondarily reused building elements to the temple architecture with any certainty, as their destruction was simply too great. The persistency with which the demolition work was carried out indicates an intentional procedure. The colonnade structures were retained and integrated into later building measures, while the central area was transformed into a building site. In the case of the Temple of Domitian, the plaza area was built over already by the early 5th century. Furthermore, the new buildings represented secular architecture, precisely structures of a prestigious, mercantile character. And last, it is clear that the temple itself was not transformed into a church.

⁷³ Schindel and Ladstätter 2016, 390.