



## The so-called “Temple of Hadrian” at Ephesus

### Temple of Hadrian - Ephesus



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**Patron/Sponsor:** Unknown

**Original Location/Place:**

Ephesus

**Actual Location (Collection/Museum):**

In loco; Ephesus Museum

**Date:** 117 CE to 137 CE

**Material:**

Marble

**Building Typology:**

Temple

**Description:**

The so-called "Temple of Hadrian" at Ephesus is located on the street connecting the library of Celsus with the upper part of the city which is commonly known as the Street of the Curetes. Ephesus was the capital of the province, and the thriving Ionian city had taken the place of Pergamum as the seat of the Roman government during the rule of Augustus. The façade of the temple is characterized by a Corinthian distylos in antis. The two central columns are set between two pillars, located at the corners. The colonnade is topped by a characteristic curved arch, the Syrian Gable. Its main characteristic is that the architrave and frieze turn in a central arch, which supports the triangular pediment. The top of the arch is decorated with a relief depicting the bust of the local city goddess, or Tychê. The head of the goddess is topped by the turreted crown. The inner frieze, which can be seen through the pediment's archway, depicts the head of Medusa, surrounded by acanthus leaves. Four reliefs decorating the frieze of the pronaos, portray the legendary foundation of Ephesus. The first frieze depicts Androclus killing a boar with his spear. Androclus was the son of Codrus, the king of Athens. Once sent by his father to conquer Ionia, he defeated and chased away the local populations of the Leleges and the Carians, who dwelt in the area where Ephesus was founded. According to an oracle, Androclus founded the city in a spot which was revealed by two animals, a fish and a boar. Hence the depiction of the hunt also reported by Pausanias, *Description of Greece* VII.2.7-9; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* VIII.361 c-e. The other two friezes depict the procession of Dionysus, and an Amazonomachy. The topic of the fourth frieze is unclear, but once more it ought to be related to Androclus. The hero is depicted together with Heracles, as well as Apollo and Athena. The plan of the temple is quite simple, and it consists of the *pronaos*, onto which opens the cultic cella. It seems that the Temple of Hadrian was still in use in Late Antiquity. A central location in the city, it seems to have lodged statues of the four Tetrarchs between 293 and 305 CE, namely Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius Chlorus, and Galerius. Only the monumental inscribed pediments have been discovered, while the statues are still lacking.

**Commentary:**

The imperial cult in Ephesus officially began under Augustus when the ruler authorised the Romans to dedicate a temple to both Julius Caesar and himself, while the Greeks built one in Pergamum (Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LI.20.7-9). Smyrna was also granted the right under Tiberius ([Tacitus, \*Annals\*, IV.55-56](#) [12]) and the corresponding title of *neokoros* became a sign of distinction among communities competing for regional pre-eminence (see Heller, *Les bêtises*). Ephesus, however, had to wait until Domitian to get its neocorate status approved when a new temple was completed under his reign (see [Aphrodisias and the imperial temple of Ephesus under Domitian](#) [13]; see Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*). For the following years, Ephesus again lagged behind its rivals Pergamum and Smyrna as both cities were granted additional *neokoriai* before 129 CE when this title is attested for the second time in inscriptions and coins of the Asian capital (see [Pergamum, Trajan, and Games in honour of Rome](#) [14]; see



Burrell, *Neokoroi*, p. 66-70). This period coincided with the second visit of Hadrian to Ephesus in which the emperor was profusely honoured for having provided numerous benefits to the city (<http://judaism-and-rome.cnrs.fr/council-and-people-ephesus-thank-hadrian>). The building of this temple had tentatively been dated to this period, but this theory has more recently been discredited, making the general interpretation of the complex problematic.

An inscription of the the *evergetes* P. Quintilius Valens Varus, records that he was high-priest of two temples of the imperial cult, one of which was consecrated by Hadrian (I.Eph. 428). The problem is that during the excavations of the area in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a new inscription was found in-situ by which the building was allegedly dedicated not only to Hadrian, but also to Artemis when the city was still once *neokoros* in 119 CE (I.Eph. 429). Consequently, it seems that the temple cannot be connected to Hadrian's presence in the city in 129 or 124 CE when new titles were also bestowed (see [Hadrian listens to Hymns in the Theatre of Ephesus](#) [15]; [Hadrian and Erastus's Admission to the Ephesian Council](#) [16]). Likewise, it appears that the identification of this building with the Olympeion reported by Pausanias (VII.2.9) should also be dismissed.

The temple, at any rate, remains a good example showing that the depiction of local motifs was not interrupted in the capital of Asia during the reign of an emperor who particularly favoured Greek culture and cults. Ephesus, exactly as when the Salutaris foundation was set up, remained a city in which a local building could be simultaneously dedicated to Artemis and a Roman emperor. Furthermore, this monumentalisation of the urban centre could be ready to impress a favourable ruler such as Hadrian that decided to honour the provincial capital with frequent grants and visits.

Thematic keywords:

- [Hadrian](#) [17]
- [imperial cult](#) [18]
- [Ephesus](#) [19]
- [temple](#) [20]
- [benevolence](#) [21]
- [evergetism](#) [22]

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**Other sources connected with this document:** Text

## [Tacitus, Annals IV.55-56](#) [12]

Tiberius grants Smyrna the right to build a temple dedicated to him

- [Read more about Tacitus, Annals IV.55-56](#) [12]

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