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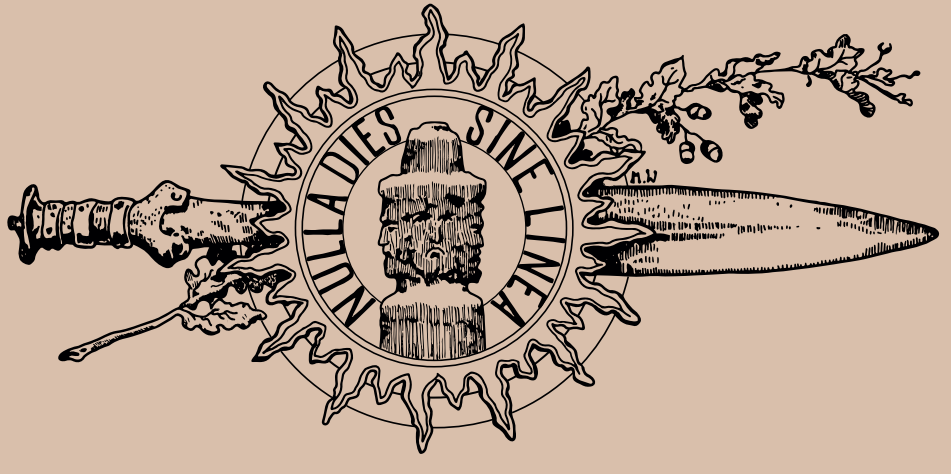


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HOUSES AND THEIR DECORATION IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT
DOMY I ICH DEKORACJA W KONTEKŚCIE SPOŁECZNYM

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# Contents

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# Introduction to Volume LVIII of the *Światowit* Journal: *Houses and Their Decoration in the Social Context*

The present volume was inspired by a panel session organised September 5–8 2018 within the frame of the annual conference of the European Association of Archaeologists in Barcelona. The session ***You See a Man's Home, You See the Man… Houses and Their Decoration in the Eastern Mediterranean*** was prepared jointly by the undersigned, Prof. Patrizio Pensabene (La Sapienza, Università di Roma), Eleonora Gasparini, PhD (independent researcher), and Aleksandra Brzozowska-Jawornicka, EngD (University of Science and Technology, Wrocław). As indicated in the title, the conference was dedicated to researchers interested in the residential architecture and provided them with a chance to exchange ideas and undertake discussion on private dwellings in the post-Ptolemaic provinces against the broader backdrop of the other provinces of the Roman Empire. Thus, the organisers' scope of interest was focused on housing in the Eastern Mediterranean, with special emphasis placed on, but by no means limited to, Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus (and the Alexandrian influences in these regions).

The study of the Graeco-Roman residential architecture has its own substantial history. However, for a long time, the houses were subjected solely to formal analyses in which their plans and decoration were examined separately. In these studies, the layout of the houses was interpreted through the lens of written sources, mainly the work of Vitruvius. Hence, where interior design was discussed, the main accent was placed on mosaics and paintings with their iconography, while the architectural decoration remained almost completely overlooked. Meanwhile, the architectural decoration can be a good indicator of uses and meanings of spaces and, in the broader context of the complex interior décor, one of the core elements reflecting the taste of their owners. At the same time, it serves as an expression of their cultural, religious, and even political identity.

Only recently, studies of the residential architecture in different regions have shown that it is a very complex and many-sided question, which can be and ought to be analysed not only on the stylistic level but also on the socio-historical grounds. To achieve this goal, the houses' layouts and architectural features as well as their complex decoration have to be studied as a whole.

The organisers intended to initiate a discussion on residential buildings in this social context, assuming that the houses of both the richer and poorer inhabitants of the Roman Empire, whether living in urban centres or in the countryside, were their 'showcases'. The contributions to the present issue touch upon some important problems concerning transformation of dwellings, global and local aspects of the residential architecture, as well as ways in which the owners of the houses used them for self-presentation. The studies offer some robust, well-grounded conclusions, while at the same time leaving other questions open.

The structure of this volume follows the structure of the session, albeit with a few exceptions. Unfortunately, for various reasons, not all of the speakers could contribute their papers. Moreover, a few additional articles presenting different aspects of the residential architecture within the Mediterranean were included. Thereby, the research results discussed in the collected articles cover a large area stretching from *Magna Graecia* through Cyrenaica, Alexandria, and Cyprus to the coast of Syro-Palestine. The authors deal with different types of dwellings and a wide chronological spectrum – from lavishly decorated residences in provincial capitals to the modest houses in villages and from the Republican Period to late Antiquity. The contributors used diverse research methodologies and approaches. Some of them looked for global phenomena in the post-Hellenistic world, while others dedicated themselves to meticulous studies on specific archaeological sites.

The volume opens with a paper of crucial importance for understanding the relationship between Alexandria and the architectural traditions of Cyrenaica and Cyprus. **Patrizio Pensabene** (*Alexandria, Cyrenaica, Cyprus: Ptolemaic Heritage in Imperial Residential Architecture*) traces features shared between the Cyrenaican and Cypriote architecture and that of Alexandria, presenting evidence for the latter's strong impact on architectural decoration persisting until late Antiquity. The author quotes, *inter alia*, the residences in Marina el-Alamein (Egypt), *Nea Paphos* (Cyprus), and *Ptolemais* (Cyrenaica)

as points of reference for studies on this phenomenon. His research elucidates some trends which, although not entirely uniform, can be traced globally.

The phenomenon of globalisation manifesting itself in a local context is the subject of the paper presented by **Matthias Grawehr** (*A Process of Glocalisation? Roman Marble Imports and the Rise of Blocked-Out Capitals in Local Stone*). The author analyses new aesthetic preference for white marble which emerged in the Augustan Period and exerted important influence on the development of local architecture. In his narration, the Corinthian capital serves as a vantage point for reflecting on different attitudes adopted by local craftsmen in response to the new fashion – one of the results of this response was the development of a blocked-out capital.

A 'new' type of the Roman *domus* which appeared in the towns of *Magna Graecia* already in the Republican Period takes centre stage in the study by **Ada Cortés Vicente** (*The Republican Houses of the Roman Colonies in Ancient* Magna Graecia. *Cultural Exchange from a Western Perspective***)**. Within the broader framework of the 'Tetrastylon project', she performs an analysis of a hybrid architectural scheme which drew inspiration from both the Greek and the Roman concepts of the residential architecture. The referential backdrop for her research consists of 'the tetrastyle courtyard houses' from *Velia-Elea*, *Crotone*, *Paestum*, and *Heraclea*.

The next paper shifts the perspective eastwards, to Marina el-Alamein, a small town situated *c*. 100 km to the west of Alexandria, which has developed from the 2nd century BC. **Krzysztof Jakubiak** analyses the urban layout and plan of the settlement in the early and middle Imperial Period (*Marina el-Alamein (Egypt): A Topographical Study and the Functioning of an Ancient Provincial Town on the Mediterranean Coast*). The form of the town and its street grid depended on the natural geographical conditions, and thus the urban space was divided into three zones situated along natural terraces between the seashore and the desert. The author examines, *inter alia*, the central part occupied by well-developed residential units. He convincingly shows that most of the houses were built already in the Ptolemaic Period, and during the Roman rule they were subjected to layout modifications and important transformations of their decoration.

**Grażyna Bąkowska-Czerner** and **Rafał Czerner** focused their research on one of such houses, conventionally named H9 (*House H9 from Marina el-Alamein – a Research Summary*). The authors aimed to trace the alterations of the house diachronically, especially given the distinction between the traditions of the Hellenistic architecture and the innovation brought by the Romans. Thus, one of the largest and earliest residences on the site was analysed in a very complex and meticulous manner – in terms of its plan, interior decoration, and domestic cults.

**Aleksandra Brzozowska-Jawornicka** presents three residences at *Nea Paphos* (Maloutena district) which differ from each other in chronology, size, and lavishness of decoration. Despite these differences, the 'Hellenistic' House, the Villa of Theseus, and the House of Aion form the basis for an analysis of the three main elements of the official spaces identified as such because of their accessibility to the public (*Architecture of the Official Spaces of Selected Residences in* Nea Paphos*, Cyprus*). According to the author, it was the arrangement of the rooms in the specific sequence of entrance–main courtyard–reception room and their decoration that reflect the status of the master of the house.

**Monika Rekowska** wonders about the Romanity as seen through the houses. The paper investigates the residential units dated to the middle Imperial Period and located in two towns in Cyrenaica and Cyprus (*How Roman are Roman Houses in the Eastern Mediterranean? The House of Leukaktios (*Ptolemais, *Cyrenaica) and the House of Orpheus (*Nea Paphos, *Cyprus) as Case Studies*). Both discussed houses reveal different attitudes towards Romanisation from the perspective of an individual as reflected by particular dwellings.

In his article (*Edilizia residenziale nel paesaggio urbanistico di Tolemaide in Cirenaica*), **Jerzy Żelazowski** presents several private houses in *Ptolemais*, Cyrenaica, within the historical framework of the town's spatial development from the 2nd century BC until the middle of the 7th century AD. According to the author, the construction and transformation of private houses emerged from an interplay of various cultural influences associated with the arrival of new residents at different times.

**Eleonora Gasparini** limits her interest to late Antiquity. She takes a closer look at some aspects of the design of fixed and moveable luxury furnishings in Egyptian, Cypriot, and Cyrenaican residences (*Floors, Architectural Elevations, and Statuary in Late Antique Residences from Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus: Some Remarks*) in order to show common forms of self-presentation of the urban elites across the Eastern Mediterranean between the 4th and 6th centuries AD. Recognising the residences as a 'building-block' of late antique identity, she seeks a global view on the social life in the world in transition. The basis for her analysis are houses with extensive decoration inspired, on the one hand, by Christianity as well as, on the other, by deep pagan roots of the aristocratic *paideia.*

The next contribution, by **Tomasz Waliszewski** and **Julia Burdajewicz**, deals with Roman houses in rural settlements northwards from Sidon (*Unearthing Houses in* Porphyreon *and Chhim. Structure, Spatial Development,*

*and Decoration of Domestic Spaces in Late Antique* Phoenicia). The spatial arrangement, social structure, and decoration of the houses in *Porphyreon* (Jiyeh/Nebi Younis) and Chhim are discussed; however, the authors' main interest is focused on the polychrome decoration found in several houses in *Porphyreon*. The study of the iconography of the wall paintings reveals an important inspiration originating from the urban residences, such as the one in *Berytus*. On the other hand, motifs related to Christianity are borrowed from the nearby churches.

The volume is closed by a presentation of an ongoing project (*A New Project in Progress:* Residence as Self-Presentation of Urban Elites. Architecture and Decoration of the House of Orpheus in *Nea Paphos*, the Ancient Capital of Cyprus. *Potentials and Prospects*). The project is directed by **Monika Rekowska** in cooperation with **Demetrios Michaelides**, **Patrizio Pensabene**, and **Eleonora Gasparini**. Their objective is to reinterpret the residence explored under the supervision of Demetrios Michaelides in the 1980s and 1990s. Until now, the house has only been subjected to but a partial study. The new documentation made *in situ* as well as a re-analysis of the former one leads to a redefinition of the house's spaces in regard to both its layout and rich interior décor: mosaics and paintings with special emphasis on architectural decoration.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the colleagues and friends who helped organise the session, as well as to all participants and authors who submitted their contributions.

I wish to express my sincere and warm feelings for all the peer-reviewers who kindly advised on the submitted papers and contributed their time and knowledge to improve the entire publication. These include, in the alphabetic order: Paolo Bonini (Accademia di Belle Arti Brescia 'Santa Giulia'), Serena Ensoli (Università degli Studi della Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli'), Michał Gawlikowski (Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw), Elżbieta Jastrzębowska (Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw), Jacek Kościuk (University of Science and Technology, Wrocław), Grzegorz Majcherek (Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw), and Demetrios Michaelides (University of Cyprus, Nicosia).

I am also indebted to the director of the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Warsaw, Krzysztof Jakubiak, who kindly agreed to publish this monographic volume as an issue of the *Światowit* journal and provided all the necessary funding for this publication.

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# Alexandria, Cyrenaica, Cyprus: Ptolemaic Heritage in Imperial Residential Architecture

Abstract

The relationship between Alexandria and the architectural traditions of Cyrenaica and Cyprus is currently becoming an important research topic. Beside the clear historical and geographical links, many comparisons specifically between the Cyrenaican and Cypriote architecture and that of Alexandria evidence a strong influence of the latter on both lands. The Alexandrian impact on architecture dates back to the Ptolemaic Period and continued under the Romans until late Antiquity.

**Keywords:** Alexandria, Cyrenaica, Cyprus, residential architecture, architectural decoration

## Introduction

The relationship between Alexandria and the architectural traditions of Cyrenaica and Cyprus is becoming a central research topic since the recent excavations of residential buildings at Alexandria, *Cyrene*, *Ptolemais* in Cyrenaica, and at *Nea Paphos* in Cyprus. But, beside the clear historical and geographical links, many comparisons specifically between Cyrenaican and Cypriot architecture and that of Alexandria provide evidence for the influences exerted on both lands by the Egyptian metropolis.

Naturally, we have to juxtapose the residential buildings with what happened in the Hellenistic and early Imperial periods in the eastern Mediterranean housing, when we can certainly speak of a *koiné*. It was characterised by houses with peristyles surrounded by main rooms.[1] Another recurring layout was a smaller court which had to be considered as the lighting area of the private nucleus of a dwelling. We should also mention the entrance hall, which often appeared monumental due to stone gateways.[2]

At Alexandria, a new fruitful season of archaeological excavations has started with the Polish discoveries at Kom el-Dikka. They integrated the archaeological finds exhibited in the Graeco-Roman Museum of the town, which for a long time have represented the principal means through which personalities like Botti, Breccia, and Adriani[3] carried out their researches, organising and expanding the knowledge about the ancient town.[4]

[1] In particular, on the one side there are the reception rooms, while on the opposite side we find other relevant rooms, equally bestowed with representational characteristics. However, important rooms were built also along the other sides.

[2] We can even find small *propylaea* built against the latter as in the House of the Propylaeum at *Cyrene* (Pensabene, Gasparini 2014).

[3] Adriani 1939. We shall recall the words of the late Nicola Bonacasa spoken during the Study Days at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Rome (May 26, 2008) on the occasion of the first anniversary of Tomasz Mikocki's death: 'due to the lack of sufficient evidence of civil and palatial architecture of Alexandria and with the only chance to look at it provided by the monumental façades of tombs, a return to some of Hans Lauter's pages would be recommended in order to get an idea of how the building process flowed in the town of the Lagids and then of the emperors. So, by turning the attention to the *Palazzo delle Colonne*, like by looking into a mirror, many questions could find an answer' (oral communication).

[4] One of them, Evaristo Breccia, worked at *Cyrene* from 1934 to 1936 after having directed the Museum of Alexandria from 1904 to 1931. In the *Excavation Report of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Cyrene* (1934), it is declared that, beside the excavations, Breccia was especially concerned with the topic of the archaeological relationship between *Cyrene* and Alexandria. Thanks to the creation of the Museum of Alexandria, he could truly specialise in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. His aim was to elaborate this relationship and the ideas that had grown during his stay in *Cyrene*. He wanted to publish them in an article in *L'Africa Italiana*, but we now know that this publication never saw the light. However, it is within the framework of this heritage that we are now discussing Alexandria and Cyrenaica.

In several cases, the elevations of the residential buildings of the *Pentapolis* in Cyrenaica and of *Paphos*, *Kourion*, and *Salamina* in Cyprus followed Alexandrian formulas. The elevation of one of those buildings became the starting (and reference) point that has been used to craft narratives about Alexandria: we are referring to the *Palazzo delle Colonne* at *Ptolemais*.

It is true that already in 1907/1912, R. Delbrück, as well as H. Von Hesberg much later (1978 and 1980),[5] described the characteristics of Alexandrian entablatures, but, as a matter of fact, Hans Lauter was the one who, in 1971, traced a general frame of the Alexandrian architecture – nowadays a commonly followed research trajectory. He located the features of the *Palazzo delle Colonne* within the canons of the Alexandrian Hellenism and, at the same time, was able to separate more ancient elements from the ones that formed a part of a monumental reconstruction of the building between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD.[6]

More recently, on the other hand, three events shed new light on the topic of the ancient architecture of Alexandria, Cyprus, and Cyrenaica. We are referring to the unearthing of urban housing at Marina el-Alamein, to the unearthing and study of the 'Hellenistic' House at *Nea Paphos*, and to the excavations of a previously unknown residential complex by insula E 21 at *Ptolemais*, that is the House of Leukaktios. But we have to add also the publications on housing in the oasis of Fayum and Dakhla,[7] thanks to which we can follow the continuity and transformation of Egyptian traditions and the degree to which the new trends that grew under the Ptolemies and the Roman rule were accepted. It is sufficient to mention the recently published excavations at Medineth Mahdi (*Narmounthis*),[8] which revealed buildings along the *dromos* of a temple transformed into houses in the Roman Period, as well as big Ptolemaic porticoes around the square behind the temple. The same phenomenon, but with more modest houses, occurred at Luxor.[9]

These data have turned out to be fundamental for a new analysis of the continuity and change in the architecture of the above mentioned centres, especially in regard to the Egyptian and Ptolemaic traditions in Alexandria and the connections of Cyprus and Cyrenaica with the Egyptian metropolis during the Hellenistic Period and throughout its Imperial and late Imperial history.

At the end of this introduction, we shall focus on something that, in our opinion, still remains a goal to be achieved in this research field. It consists in the graphic reconstruction of the elevations which takes the remains of the architectural decoration as a vantage point. On that score, we have the work of Pesce and the sketches of Catanuso on the *Palazzo delle Colonne*,[10] the contributions of Aleksandra Brzozowska-Jawornicka on the 'Hellenistic' House at *Paphos*,[11] and of Monika Rekowska and others on the House of Leukaktios at *Ptolemais*.[12] These are the only global attempts at reconstructing a number of forms which proved to be typical in the residential architecture of Hellenism and of the Hellenistic tradition in the Roman Period. We are referring to the Rhodian peristyle, the *oecus Corinthius*, the *oecus Aegyptius*, and the walls organised with pseudo-colonnades, just to mention a few.[13]

As a consequence of an inadequate development of the premises stated by the study of Pesce on the *Palazzo delle Colonne*, the majority of the existing reconstructions are focused on the peristyles, while less attention is dedicated to the organisation of the façades erected at their sides. As we will see later, relevant information can be inferred from single fragments of the entablature provided that they are angular (that is with two moulded sides) or projecting (with three moulded sides).

## Egypt

Starting with Egypt, when we look at the housing in the Roman and Byzantine periods, it is easy to recognise a strong continuity from the Ptolemaic Period. At that moment, two currents become established: one following the Pharaonic tradition and enriched by compact housing with reduced accesses to light, the tower-houses, the use of mud bricks, and so forth. The second one, derived from the Hellenistic tradition, is characterised by the peristyle or pseudo-peristyle plan, the related issue

[5] Delbrück 1907; 1912; Hesberg 1978; 1980.

[6] The history of studies, which includes the works of Wright on *Ptolemais* (Wright 1962), *Apollonia* (Wright 1976), and *Balagrae* (Wright 1992), of Sear on Sidi Khrebish (Sear 1977), Stucchi's monumental *Architettura Cirenaica* (Stucchi 1975), as well as contributions of the Polish Mission at *Paphos*, is now remarkably richer. On the other hand, we know more about Alexandria thanks to the urban investigations at Kom el-Dikka and in some other crucial points of the town centre (Rodziewicz 1988b; Kołątaj *et al*. 2007). To them, a systematic study of the Museum's and Kom el-Dikka's architectural materials can be added (Pensabene 1993; Tkaczow 2010).

[7] Davoli 1998; Boozer 2005; Criobiore 2015.

[8] Bresciani, Giammarusti 2015. See also Jouguet 1901.

[9] Kościuk 2010.

[10] Pesce 1950, pls I–II, IV–XIII.

[11] Brzozowska 2016; Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2018; 2019.

[12] Rekowska 2012; 2013; Żelazowski 2012.

[13] The painted architectural representations are another element we should look at when dealing with this study approach, whether it has to be intended eventually as echoes of stage scenography or of perspective views of royal palaces (Mulliez 2014, 17–21).

of perspective and false perspective of the façades of the rooms opened on porticoes of the peristyle or directly on the pseudo-peristyle, as well as by the lack of the atrium.

It is quite clear that this continuity, called the Egyptian 'airless immobility', did not have to be intended as a copying process drawing from more ancient models, but rather as a vivifying lifeblood which brought, especially in regard to residential housing, new interpretations, transformations, and inventions. The consequences of this process are also visible in Christian architecture, for instance in monasteries, where many decorative solutions were derived from residential housing. In fact, in Christian buildings the peristyle scheme with its specific features such as angular pillars and wall niches was reproduced until late Antiquity.

It is precisely the high Imperial residential quarter at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria[14] where the first examples we shall point out come from. Thus, they evidence parallel developments rather than simple derivations in Egyptian, Cypriot, and Cyrenaican housing plans and elevations.

At Kom el-Dikka, the type of the peristyle house is well-attested, especially in the form of pseudo-peristyles. It has been rightly observed how this phenomenon points towards the choice of preserving the central courtyard despite the small space available because of the intense urbanisation. These pseudo-peristyles present colonnades covered with stucco, with simplified bases and Doric capitals, thus showing a continuity with more ancient models attested in several *necropoleis* of the town (and Moustapha Pasha is a good case in point[15]).

Among the discovered elements, most of which were made of Mex limestone (stuccoed and coloured),[16] we can quote those of House Alpha,[17] where a *triclinium*

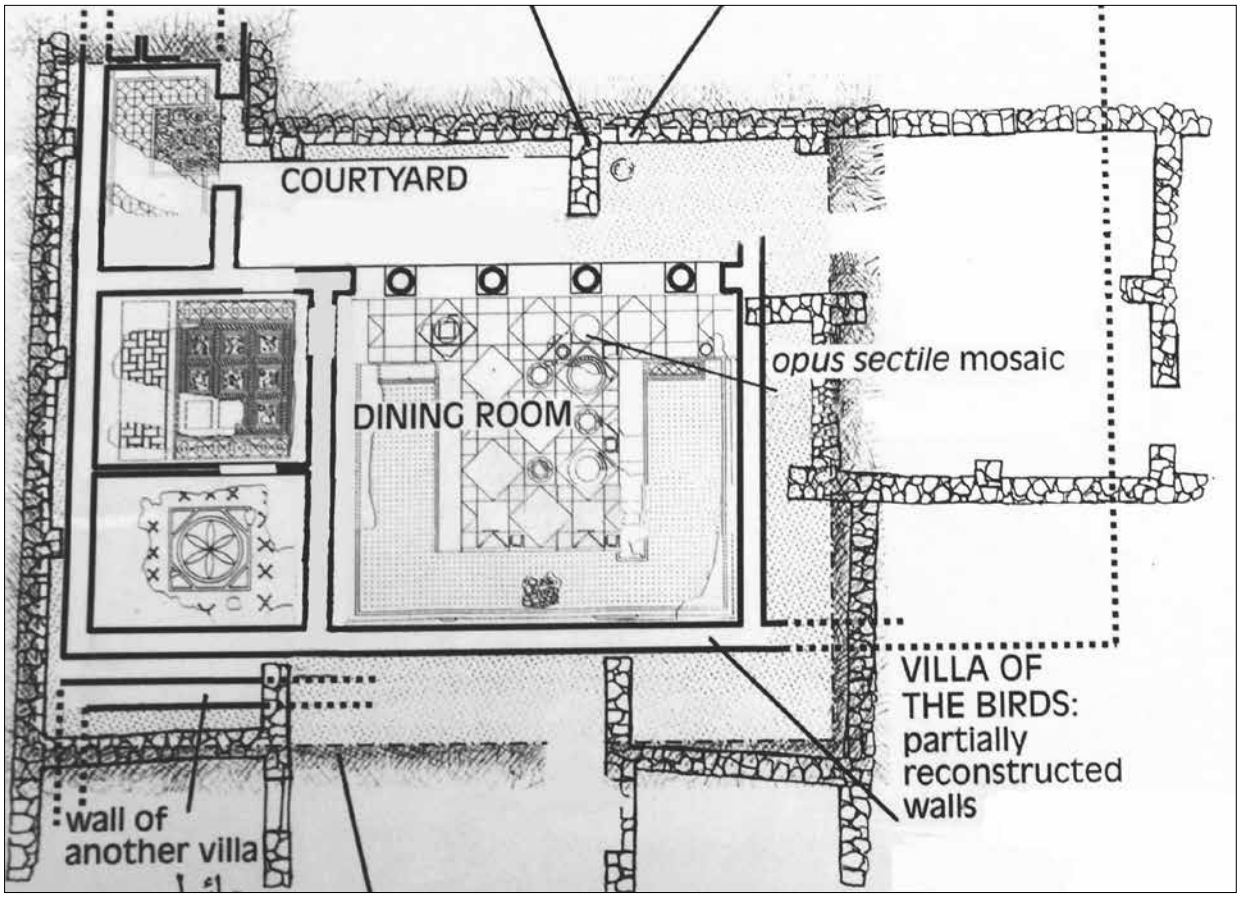


Fig. 1. Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka, House Alpha (after Kołątaj *et al.* 2007, 17, fig. 12).

[14] Rodziewicz 1976, 170–220; Majcherek 2010, 75–89.
[15] Adriani 1939; 1966, 130, nn. 84–86, pls 48–57.
[16] Many of such elements were reused in the walls of the later houses and were left *in situ* (for a list of the elements reused in the walls, see Tkaczow 2010, 78).
[17] Kołątaj *et al.* 2007, 18.

Fig. 2. Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka, House Alpha, cornice (after Majcherek 2010).

Fig. 3. Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka, House Alpha, Corinthian half-capital (photo by P. Pensabene).

with four columns on the front overlooks the courtyard (Fig. 1). However, such a courtyard looked like a pseudo-peristyle from the other sides, as shown by the north-eastern corner occupied by a room with mosaics (and not by an *ambulacrum*), therefore attesting to the adoption of mixed solutions based on contexts and spaces. The same room attests to the importance of *triclinia* in the Roman residential housing in Alexandria, whose monumentality is enhanced by marble floors, mosaics,[18] and the height of the rooms. In other cases, *triclinia* had tripartite entrances with two columns, generally made of limestone, although in some cases also consisting of monolithic shafts of Assuan granite.

In House Alpha, on the top of the above-mentioned independent columns between the *triclinium* and the courtyard, an entablature was set with which we may associate a cornice found inside the house, with a ceiling decorated by *travicello* modillions and *pseudo-mutuli* and with a Doric frieze (Fig. 2). In consequence, it is an example of a coincidence of the pseudo-colonnade and the architectonic façade of the rooms. Corinthian capitals of different proportions coming from the backfills above the building bear witness to façades combining at least two orders (Fig. 3).[19]

Besides these elements, there are other from Kom el-Dikka that can help to fill the gap between the Palazzo delle Colonne and the lost architecture of Alexandria. As a matter of fact, they bear witness to the presence of façades with a false perspective, organised in projecting and recessing elements with triangular or arched tympana, broken pediments, and cornices, both angular and crafted on three sides (Fig. 4). The façades were supported by half-columns (Fig. 5) according to the decorative forms which remained in use during the Imperial Period and persisted even in the Coptic art. These buildings offer an opportunity to better understand the architectural choices in Egyptian residential housing and also to reconstruct the original setting of many architectural elements found either during those excavations or at other sites (nowadays kept in the former Graeco-Roman Museum).

Moreover, the two groups of cornices found fragmented in various deposits should be put in relationship with the rooms adjacent to the porticoes of the peristyle. One can hypothesise that they belonged to the two-storey façade of the bottom wall of the southern side of the peristyle. The first group shows narrow, high modillions with the oblique corner ones following the Ptolemaic *travicello* types. The second group has flat grooved modillions and square hollow modillions (resembling the *mutuli* but without *guttae*) and a rosette in the corner (Fig. 6). It is evident that here we are dealing with the Alexandrian types[20] present also in the *Palazzo delle Colonne* in *Ptolemais*.

[18] Shenuda 1973, 193–206; Guimier-Sorbets 1998, 115–139.

[19] The drawings published by Tkaczow in her catalogue are very useful, even if simplified, since they can be put in scale and compared with the existing documentation of some specimens kept in the Graeco-Roman Museum (see Tkaczow 2010).

[20] Pesce 1950, pl. VIII C; Pensabene 1993; Haggag 2018.

Fig. 4. Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka, House Alpha, cornice with flat grooved modillions (photo by P. Pensabene).

Fig. 5. Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka, House Alpha, Corinthian half-capitals (photo by P. Pensabene).

A geographical and ideal linking point between what we observe at Alexandria and *Ptolemais* in Cyrenaica is represented by the ancient town discovered at Marina el-Alamein in Egypt.[21] With regard to their size, articulated plans, and richness of the decoration, the houses of the town can be placed among the best known examples of ancient housing in Egypt. If the town's harbour was part of a network along the coast of the Mediterranean between Alexandria and *Africa Proconsularis*, it is likely that the position of the ancient site had favoured the establishment of traders of Alexandrian origin, or at least

Fig. 6. Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka, ancient depot of architectonical elements (after Tkaczow 2010, 75, pl. XIII.1).

Hellenised. In fact, their origin could explain their particular architectural choices.

The houses of Marina reflect some characteristics of an irregular urban plan, well known from Fayum, as indicated by the fact that they developed against each other within the same insula, or through the unification of different units in order to create a larger residence (Fig. 7).[22]

In Marina, the elements explicitly illustrating the prestige of the owner were found in the public spaces of the residences, such as the entrance hall, the courtyard, and the reception rooms. Firstly, these elements provide information on the relationship with the residential architecture of Alexandria and its influences. Finally, they reveal a widely-spread architectural language which could be recognised all across the Mediterranean and which was based on the peristyle plan with large *oeci* opening on them.

The analysis of the architectural elements employed at Marina and in nearby settlements, not necessarily linked to it,[23] offers an opportunity to recognise workshops, probably itinerant, connected to Alexandria. They were operating along the western coast of Egypt, without

[21] Czerner 2009.

[22] We would like to highlight the difference between two planning solutions. The first is characterised by horizontal development, such as, supposedly, in the case of the Kom el-Dikka examples, as well as all the tall buildings in Cyrenaica. The second solution contemplates the frequent use of tower-houses, or multiple-storey houses, according to the Egyptian domestic architecture testified by the sources in Alexandria, especially regarding the poorer strata of the population of Egyptian origin, and by the archaeological evidence from Fayum (see Pensabene 2018, 407–409, and the literature cited therein).

[23] Such as the funerary 'kiosk' in the desert, 10 km to the south-east from the town, with Alexandrian-Corinthian capitals, as well as Doric frieze and architrave (Czerner 2009, 13, fig. 33).

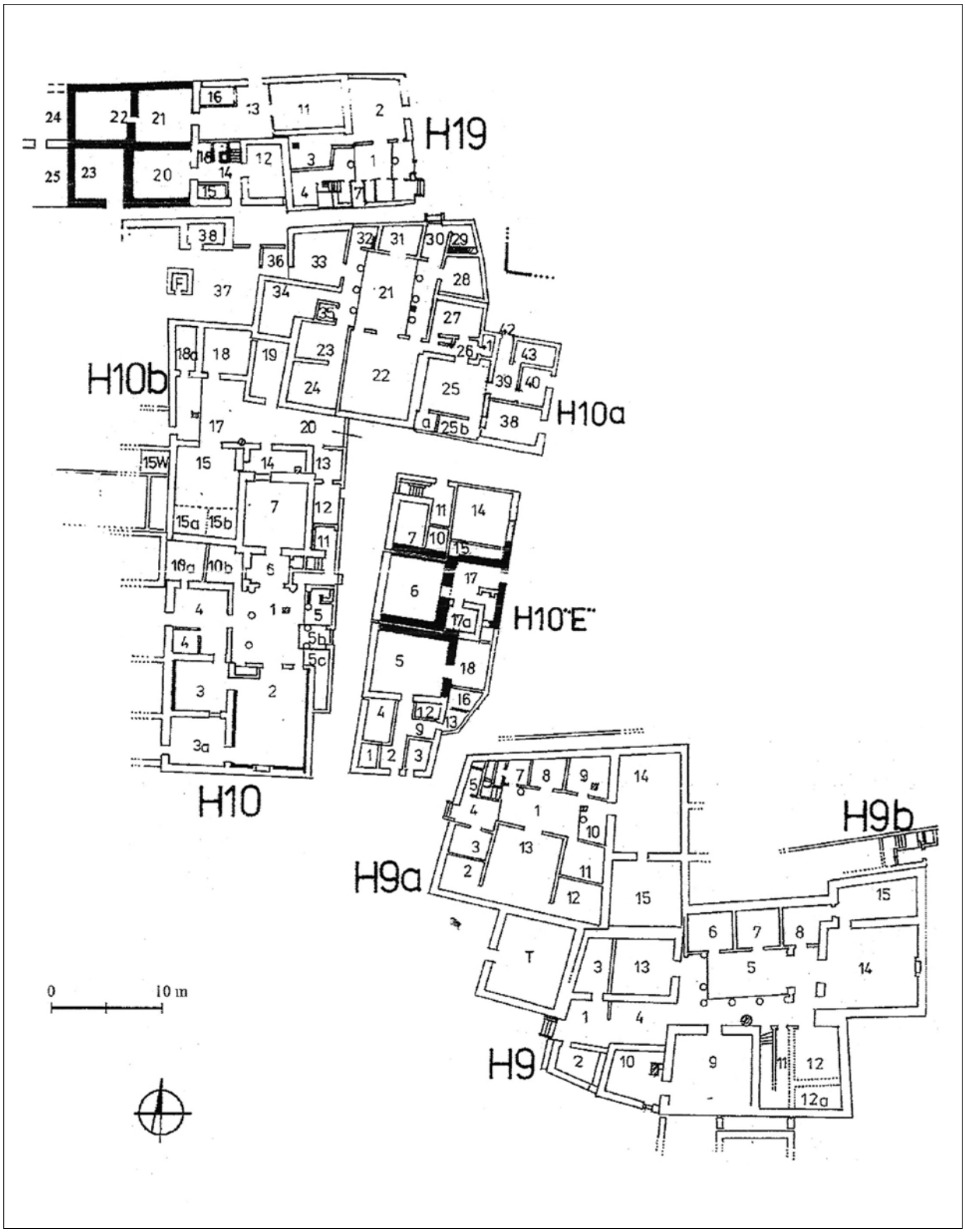


Fig. 7. Marina el-Alamein: a. Houses in the southern area of the town; b. H9, H9a (after Medeksza *et al.* 2004, 110, fig. 2).

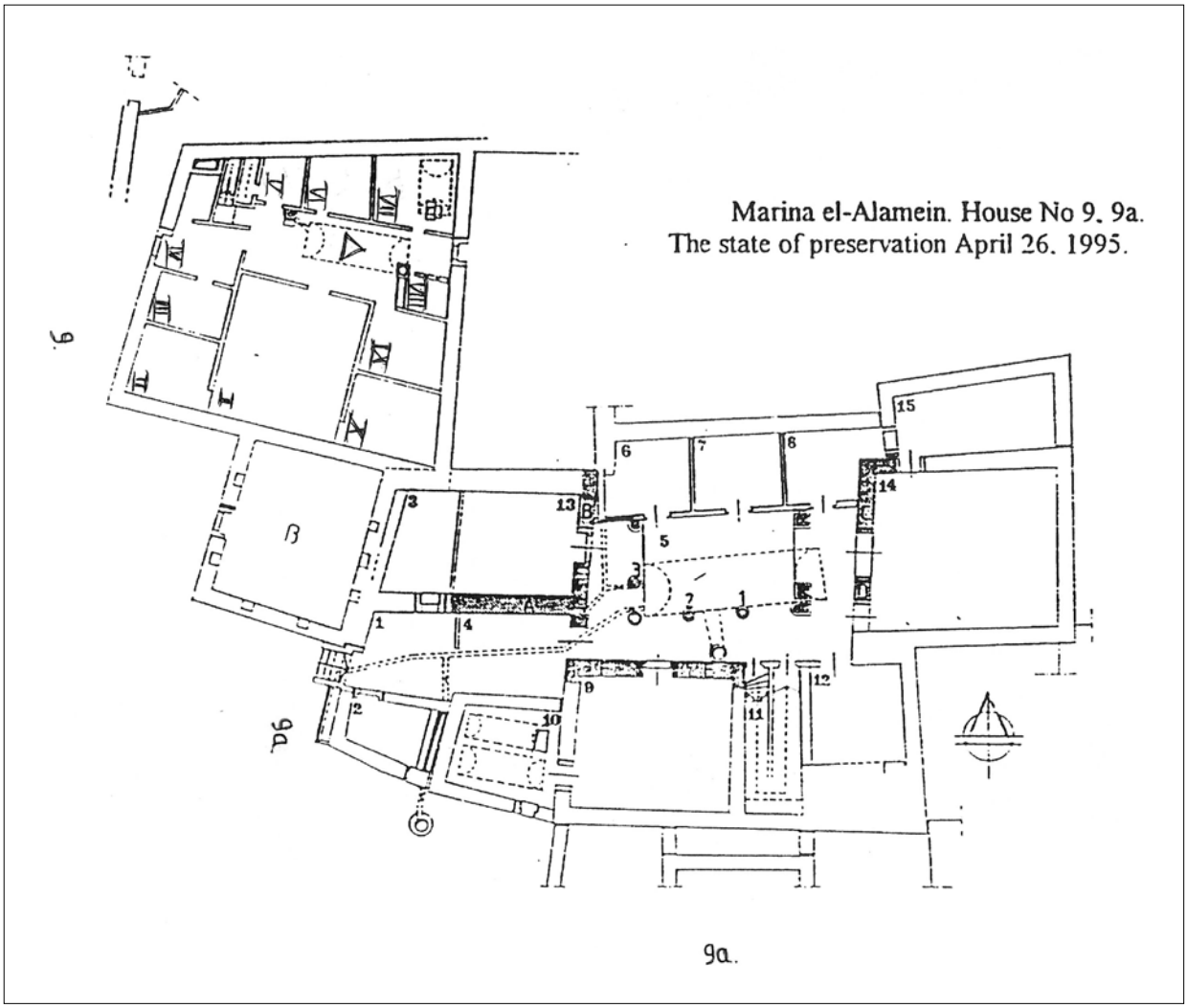


Fig. 8. Marina el-Alamein, houses in the southern area of the town (H17c) (after Medeksza *et al.* 2004, 110, fig. 3).

losing their contacts with the capital. This is a well-attested phenomenon in Imperial Egypt until the 2nd century AD, to which we can attribute numerous architectural elements showing continuity of the Alexandrian traditions: the *nymphaeum* at Dendera and the *Serapeia* near the quarries of *Mons Claudianus* and of *Mons Porphyrites* are cases in point.[24]

Inside the houses of the town of Marina (H9, H10, and H21N) we can find niches and, supposedly, some particular façades of walls facing the porticoes. They featured small interrupted pediments, arched pediments, heart-shaped pillars, articulated cornices (Figs 8–10), mixed orders, and 'dwarf' architectural orders on the upper storey.[25] All these elements attest to the use of architectural illusionism.

It has already been observed that simplified capitals with smooth leaves, defined as pseudo-Corinthian, were largely used in private buildings. Contrary to this, the evidence of the use of Asiatic-like Corinthian capitals with thorny acanthus is rather scarce within the houses. As a consequence, we can infer that the architectural decoration more significantly influenced by the Hellenistic-Alexandrian traditions at Marina was mainly employed within the private sphere.

Findings from other towns, such as those from Tell Atrib (*Athribis*), allow us to notice that architectural

[24] *Età traianea-primo adrianea* (Pensabene 1993, 328–331).

[25] Czerner 2009; Pensabene 2010. See also Bąkowska-Czerner, Czerner in this volume.

Fig. 9. Marina el-Alamein, houses in the southern area of the town, cornice with flat grooved (*a travicello*) modillions and a smooth frieze (photo by P. Pensabene).

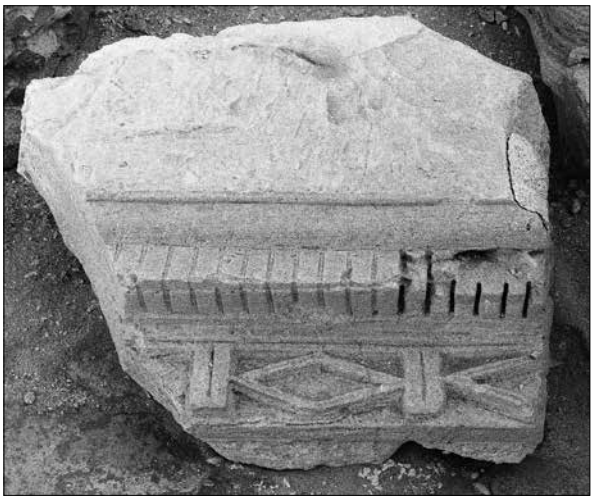

Fig. 10. Marina el-Alamein, houses in the southern area of the town, cornice with dentils and flat grooved (*a travicello*) modillions alternated with rhombuses (photo by P. Pensabene).

elements of a certain size can come from temples as well as large houses. Among the architectural material, one can find returned cornices with *mutuli* and *guttae* attributed to a temple, and a cornice with high modillions with oblique corners following one of the Ptolemaic *travicello* types alternating with *pseudo-mutuli* and with thick, rectangular, and elongated dentils in the inferior part (Fig. 11).[26] The last one was found in a Byzantine deposit, but not far from the remains of a Ptolemaic villa with a T+U *triclinium* room opening on a small courtyard

Fig. 11. Tell Atrib (*Atrhribis*), 'Ptolemaic Villa', cornice with dentils and prismatic grooved (*travicello*) modillions alternated with *pseudo-mutuli* and square hollow spaces (after Myśliwiec, Abdel Haq Rageb 1992, 409, fig. 10d).

through a tripartite entrance composed of two pillars (Fig. 12).[27] From the same context (probably from the tripartite entrance to a *triclinium* hall) comes a 'normal' Corinthian capital of a pillar made of local stone (Fig. 13). Due to the use of thorny acanthus, it is very similar to a capital from Medinet Madi which I have recently discussed.[28] This comparison illustrates another decorative Egyptian trend during the middle and late Roman Imperial Period (Fig. 14).

In Egypt, the continuity of the Alexandrian traditions manifested itself especially in the plans of the elite houses, and it is traceable through the arrangement of the main halls and open courts – the peristyle or pseudo-peristyle. We can see a reflection of this tradition in the funerary monuments of the Theodosian age at Bagawat in the western deserts.[29] It is also attested by the elements of the trabeations, but not so much by the capitals which reflect influences from *Asia Minor* marble architecture.

The example of Roman housing at Marina el-Alamein emphasises the great impact and the continuity of the peristyle plan, but even more significant in this respect is its recurrence in the Byzantine Period in several residential buildings in the Mareotic region.[30]

[26] Myśliwiec *et al*. 1992, 407, fig. 10d.
[27] Myśliwiec *et al*. 1992, 407, fig. 12.
[28] Pensabene 2018, 418, fig. 31 (*capitello della piazza porticata a nord del complesso templare, da propileo di ingresso al tempio B*).
[29] Pensabene 1999, 85–104.
[30] Pichot 2012, 81–104.

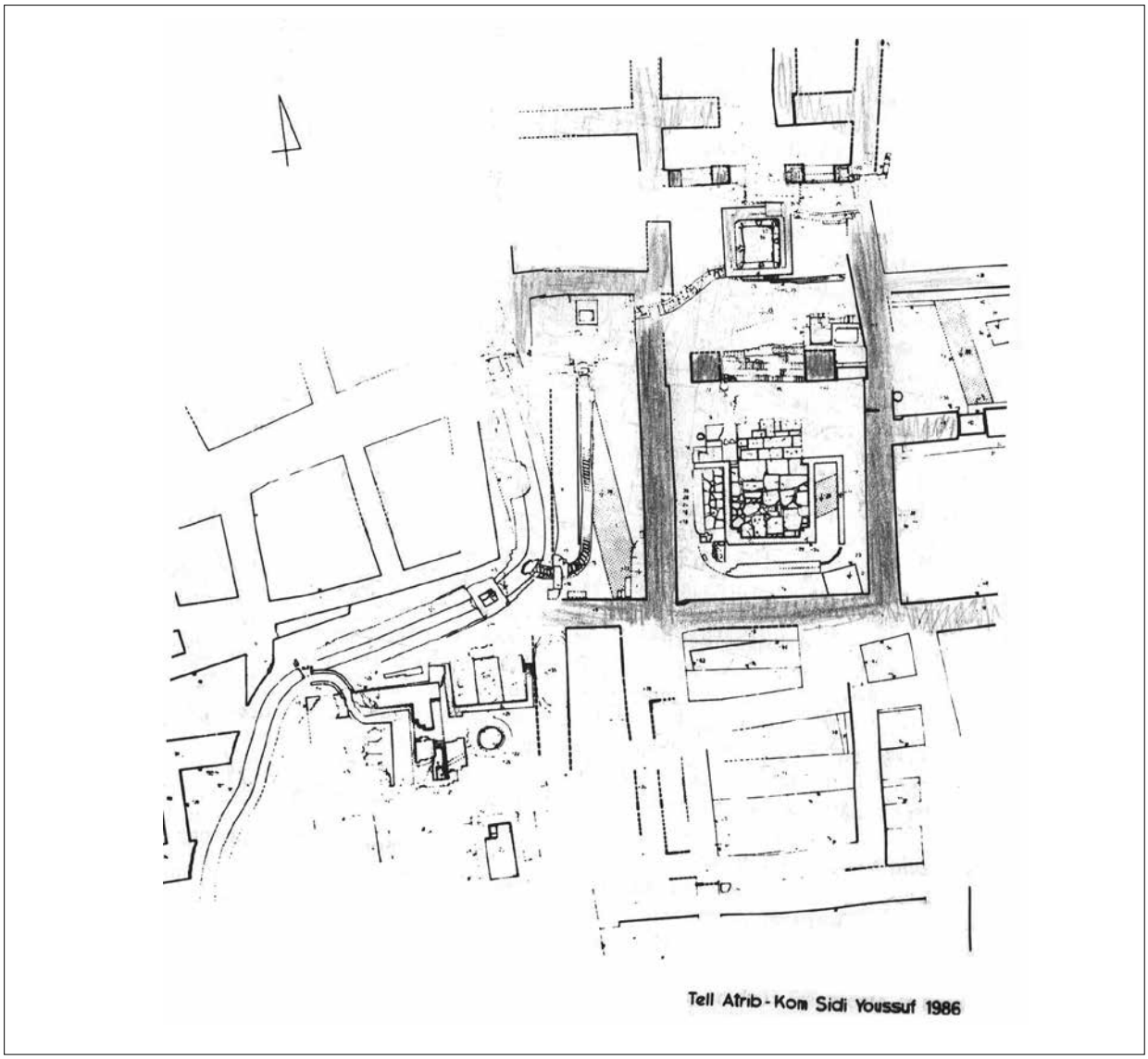


Fig. 12. Tell Atrib (*Atrhribis*), 'Ptolemaic Villa', plan (after Myśliwiec, Abdel Haq Rageb 1992, 412, fig. 12).

Fig. 13. Tell Atrib (*Atrhribis*), 'Ptolemaic Villa', Corinthian capital (after Myśliwiec, Abdel Haq Rageb 1992, 409, fig. 10c).

Fig. 14. Medinet Madi (*Narmounthis*), colonnade square to the north of the temple complex, entrance to Temple B, Corinthian capital (photo by P. Pensabene).

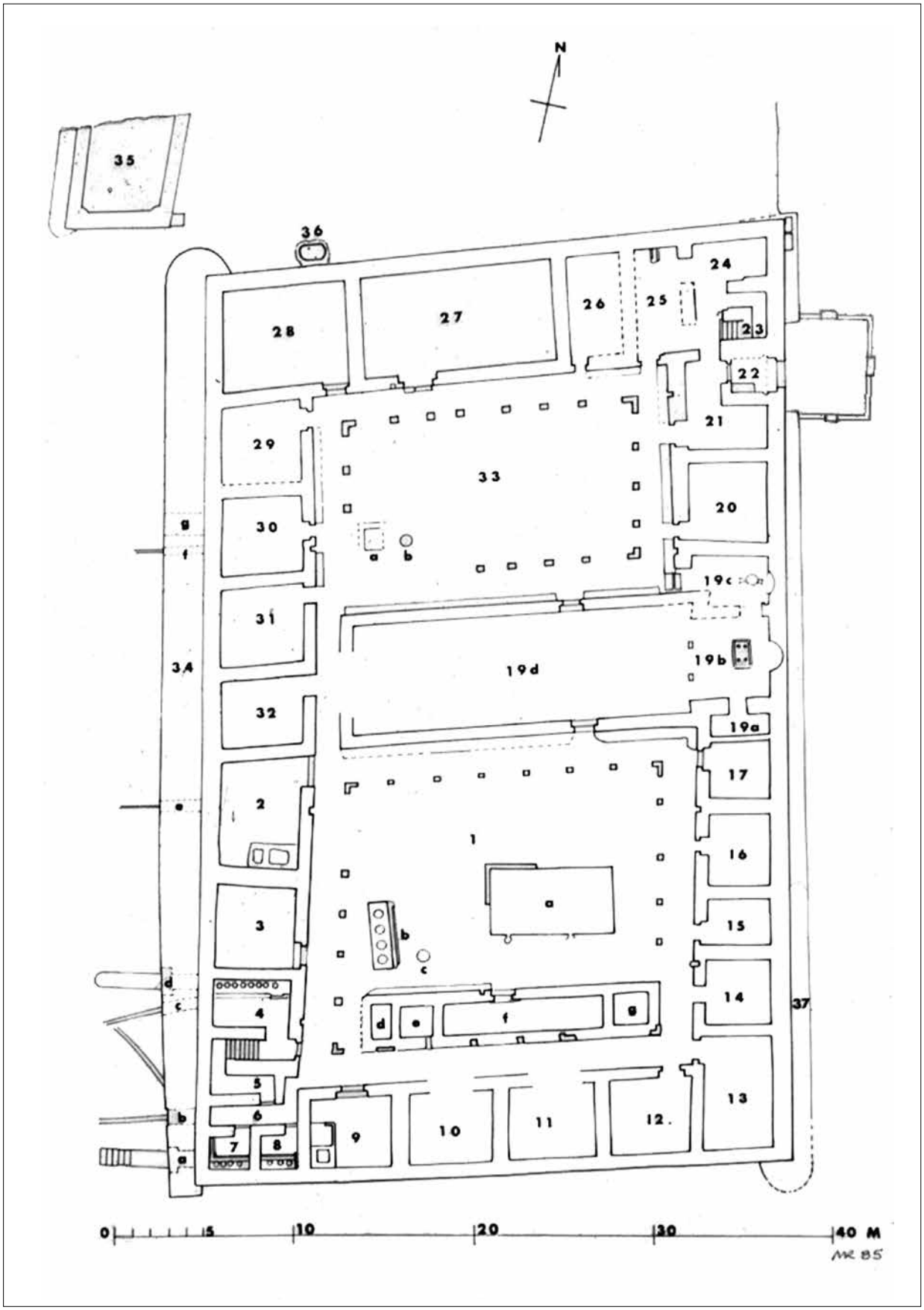


Fig. 15. Hawariyah, plan of the 'Byzantine complex' (after Rodziewicz 1988a, 274, fig. 2).

Fig. 16. Hawariyah, 'Byzantine complex', corner of the northern peristyle, detail (photo by P. Pensabene).

We shall look at just one of them – a rural villa located in the vicinity of today's village of Hawariyah, 2 km from the lake shore. This building occupies an area of 1500 $m^2$ and shows an arrangement based on a double peristyle with a long church in the space between the courts (Fig. 15).[31] Its architectural decoration in a local stone must have been stuccoed and painted, but apparently nothing of it remains at present (Fig. 16).

## Cyrenaica

If we move to Cyrenaica, this complex frame stands out immediately. There, since the late Hellenistic and early Imperial periods until late Antiquity, we observe the recurrence of the peristyle, even if some new architectural fashions appeared over time.[32]

Particular attention should be paid to the so-called Rhodian peristyle due to its frequent use in Cyrenaican houses from the late Hellenistic until the mid-Imperial Period. We can calculate 11 peristyles of such type out of the total number of 30 peristyles to be found in 46 buildings. It represents an efficient solution in the search for variations not only between one part of the house and the other but also in the same space, where several architectural solutions could co-exist.

Vitruvius initially gives this name to peristyles with higher columns on the southern side, but later on he refers to peristyles with just one higher *porticus*.[33] Therefore, the description shows some ambiguity, since it is unclear whether the definition refers only to peristyles with bigger columns on one side or includes also spaces with a larger dimension of one side resulting from two superimposed orders. Even if rarely attested in Cyrenaica, this layout looks plausible as well. One should wonder also if a third mixed solution, that would include the former two, could be contemplated by the Roman architect.

[31] Rodziewicz 1991, 208, fig. 3.

[32] It was already John Lloyd's opinion that one of the most important questions regarding the domestic architecture in the region is the origin and chronology of the wealthy peristyle houses, especially their colonnades, in which heart-shaped corner pillars were often used (Lloyd 1989, 151–163). See also Pensabene, Gasparini 2017, 655–663.

[33] Vitruvius (*De Arch*. VI, 7.3) first mentions the solution in which 'porticus quae ad meridiem spectate excelsioribus columnis constituitur', but concludes that 'id autem peristylium quod unam altiorem habet porticum, Rhodiacum dicitur', which refers to the height of the portico and not strictly of its columns. See Gros' comment on the Vitruvian text in Gros 1997, 990, n. 240; see also other considerations in Pesando 2017, 344. Moreover, the question of the primary relation of the name (*peristylium Rhodiacum*) with the island of Rhodes remains somehow obscure or still in need of deeper investigation.

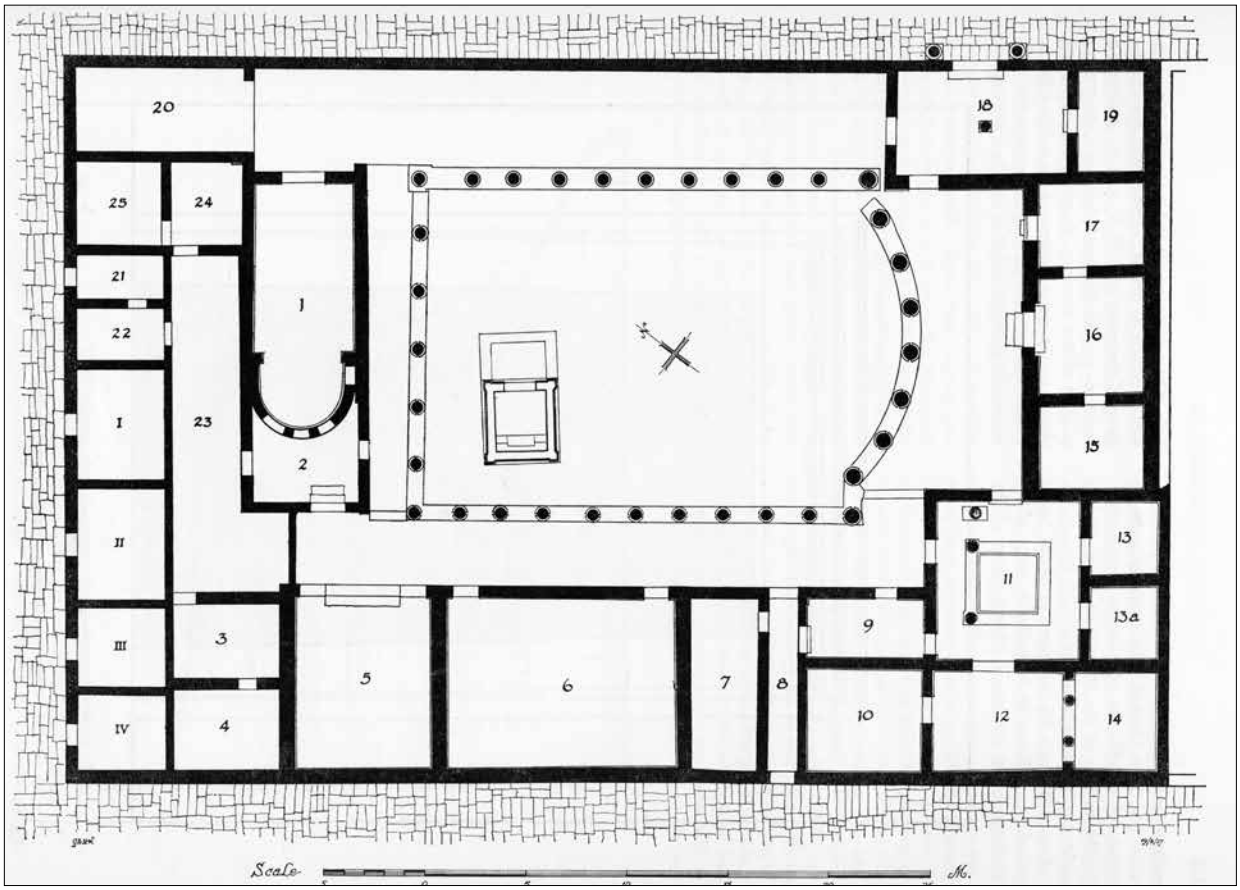


Fig. 17. *Ptolemais*, 'Roman Villa', plan (after Kraeling 1962, 121, fig. 43).

But Vitruvius does not give any exemplification that could enlarge the field of possibilities. It is very probable that there were many varieties of this kind of peristyle.[34]

Until now, the issues discussed point to a ubiquitous Hellenistic tradition in Cyrenaican houses.[35] However, if we closely observe the architectural elements, we can detect a specific Alexandrian origin. In the *Palazzo delle Colonne* in *Ptolemais*, in its late Hellenistic and first Imperial phases, it is difficult to perceive any difference from the architectural elements in the Alexandria Museum.[36]

At the same time, we must stress that we find elements of this tradition not only in the *Palazzo delle Colonne* but also in the majority of the peristyle houses discovered in *Ptolemais*. For example, in the 'Roman Villa' (Fig. 17) and in the House of Paulus[37] (Fig. 18.a, b) we notice the presence of cornices of the same type – with flat meander modillions and *travicello* modillions (Fig. 19). Moreover, fragmentary pediments testify to the existence of aedicule façades. The combination of such elements should shape the complex organisation

[34] These issues are the subject of my current investigation undertaken together with Eleonora Gasparini. Our objective is to develop a typology of the layouts and a quantification of their recurrence not only on the basis of data from Cyrenaica but looking also at other regions that show the influence of Hellenistic architecture in housing, such as, first of all, Pompeii. As it has been already noted, the existing parallel with the architecture reproduced in the second-style Pompeian paintings is one of the proofs that we are dealing with a phenomenon which is not limited to Egypt, Cyprus, and Cyrenaica. It is present in the late Hellenistic Period, therefore also in Rome, the Campanian towns, and elsewhere between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD.

[35] Pensabene, Gasparini 2014, 211–240.

[36] The architectural schemes of the front on the southern side of the peristyle show interrupted pediments, with the difference being a niche in the middle and with a lack of a *tholos* typical for the well-attested forms in architectural fragments held by the Alexandria Museum. Besides, in the Palace there are present cornices with brackets and capitals fully analogous to the Alexandrian ones as attested also in Cyprus, even if by a rather small number of Corinthian capitals as well as by cornices.

[37] For both, see Kraeling 1962.

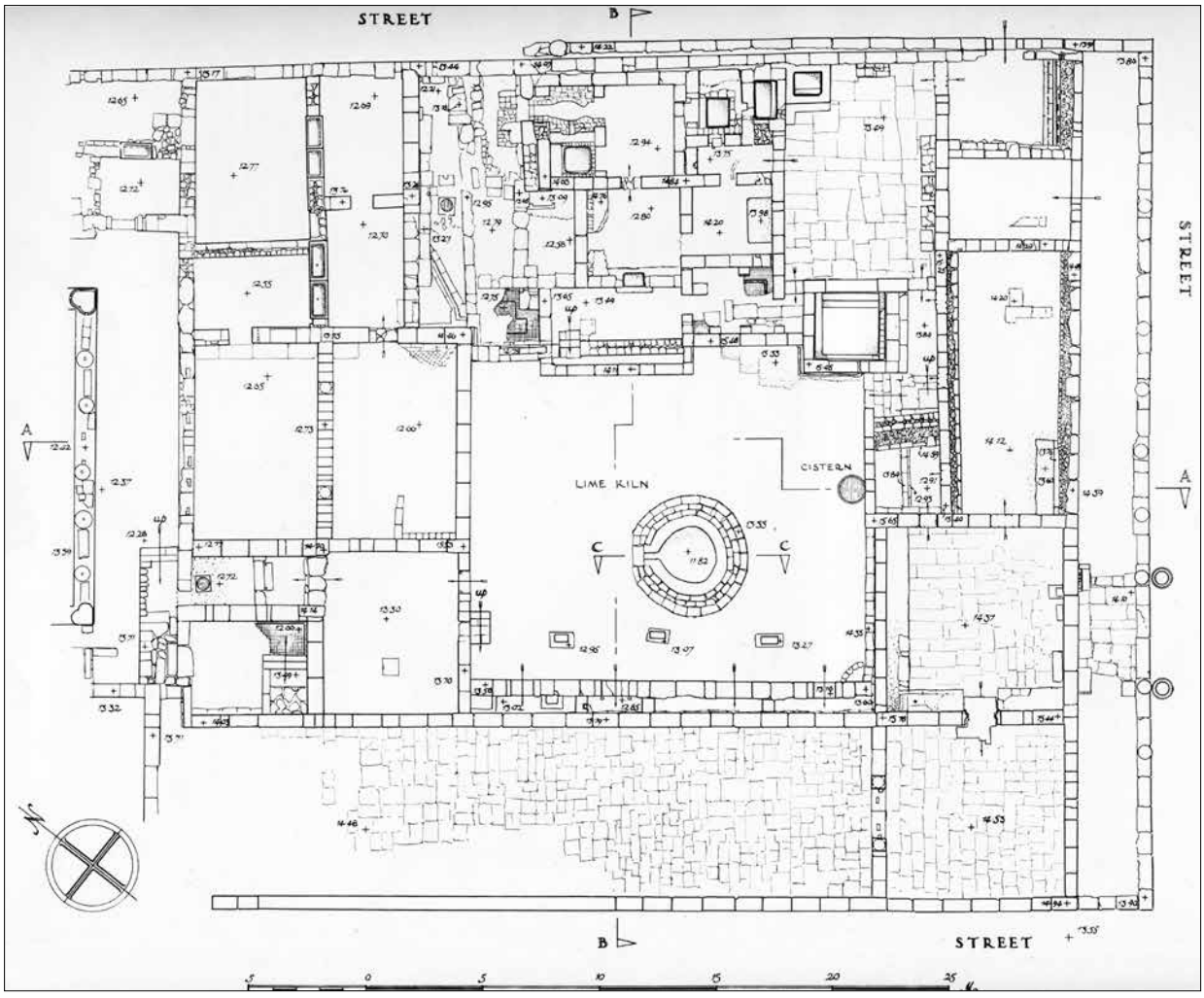


Fig. 18.a. *Ptolemais*, House of Paulus, plan (after Kraeling 1962, plan XVI).

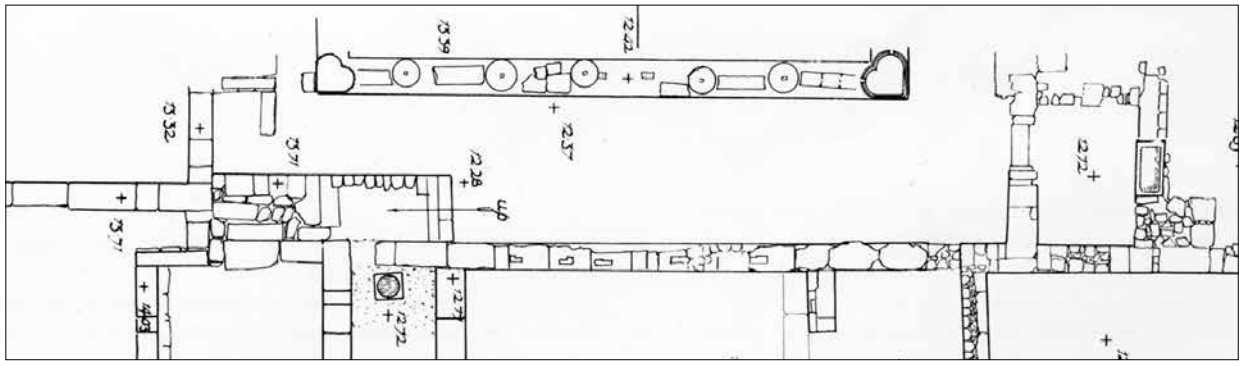

Fig. 18.b. *Ptolemais*, House of Paulus, northern side: detail of the plan (after Kraeling 1962, plan XVI).

of the upper sectors. They would include also half-columns, such as the Ionic ones, protruding from pillars or walls, which in some cases could replicate the rhythm of lower colonnades. Last but not least, there is a block coming from the same context which was a part of the moulded upright part of an arch. This Cyrenaican element recurs at *Ptolemais* also in House G and in Building L1 at *Berenice* and is characterised by a reel motif and several incised lines reproducing isodomic blocks.

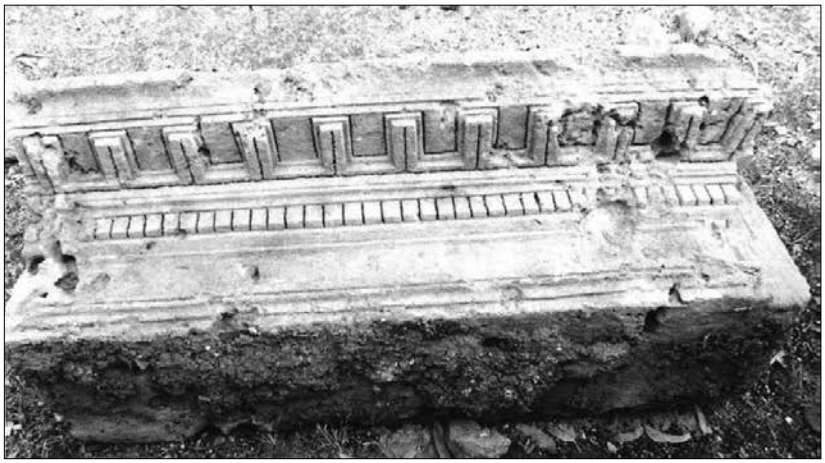

Fig. 19. *Ptolemais*, House of Paulus, cornice with dentils, flat grooved (*a travicello*) modillions, and a smooth frieze (after Kraeling 1962, pl. XXVII.A).

We must mention the House of Jason Magnus (Fig. 20) – the largest residential complex of *Cyrene* and one of the best examples of a wealthy residence.[38] In a large Rhodian peristyle, the architectural order chosen for its main, southern, side is the Corinthian order (Fig. 21.a, b) enriched by figural capitals (of which three are still preserved) with theatre masks and portraits linking the royal dynasty of *Cyrene* to the emperors.[39] This principal colonnade was composed of a single, yet bigger order, reaching the height of 8.51 m, while the others showed a two-storey superimposition. The lower order was the Doric one following the late Hellenistic tradition commonly adopted in the Imperial Period in the residential context – with *torus* bases and capitals with a single *anulus* under the *echinus*. The upper storey consisted of half-columns protruding from pillars and quarter columns in the corners, bearing an entablature with a plain frieze and a double band architrave.

The analysis of the collapsed elements in the central courtyard undertaken by Mingazzini allowed him to reconstruct one of the sides of the upper storey with Corinthian half-capitals and at the same time to argue for the presence of Ionic elements on the other sides.[40] This reconstruction, however, proved to be more difficult, due to the scarce evidence provided by the excavations. Nevertheless, it is possible to estimate the height, which, if added to that of the lower order, matches with the 8.51 m of the main peristyle side. Therefore, in this case we are dealing with a Rhodian peristyle, which we can deduce on the basis of the bigger dimensions of one colonnade, but one that did not show higher elevation on any of the sides.

We want to highlight that the Cyrenaican residential housing is characterised by a dichotomy between the continuity of the Hellenistic elevations belonging to the Alexandrian tradition (heart pillars, bent side in the peristyles, Rhodian peristyles, double architectural orders in the peristyles, and cornices with *travicello* modillions) throughout the main part of the Imperial Period and the creation of a regional language of decoration since the 1st century AD. The eclectic shapes of the Corinthian capitals, in which traditional architectural patterns and new forms related to the Imperial architecture coexisted, appeared at that time.[41] Moreover, we have not registered the simplified type of the so-called Nabataean capitals[42] in the Cyrenaican architectural decoration despite the frequent contacts with Egypt and particularly, we believe, with Marina. We have attributed this puzzling absence to the favourable economic situation of the elites, who did not need to use simplified and thus more economical architectural elements.

## Cyprus

Finally, we should conclude with Cyprus. The excavations performed at the 'Hellenistic' House at *Nea Paphos* (Fig. 22) by the Polish Mission have provided us with a preserved example of the residential architecture of the island, which enriches the history of housing

[38] Mingazzini 1966.

[39] They suggest a political and ideal continuity between past and present strengthened by some portrait-statues of members of the Antonine dynasty found within the complex.

[40] Mingazzini 1966, 54–60.

[41] Pensabene, Gasparini 2017, 670.

[42] See Laroche-Traunecker 2009, 210 figs 2C–F; Brzozowska 2016, 62 fig. 14; Grawehr 2017, 105.

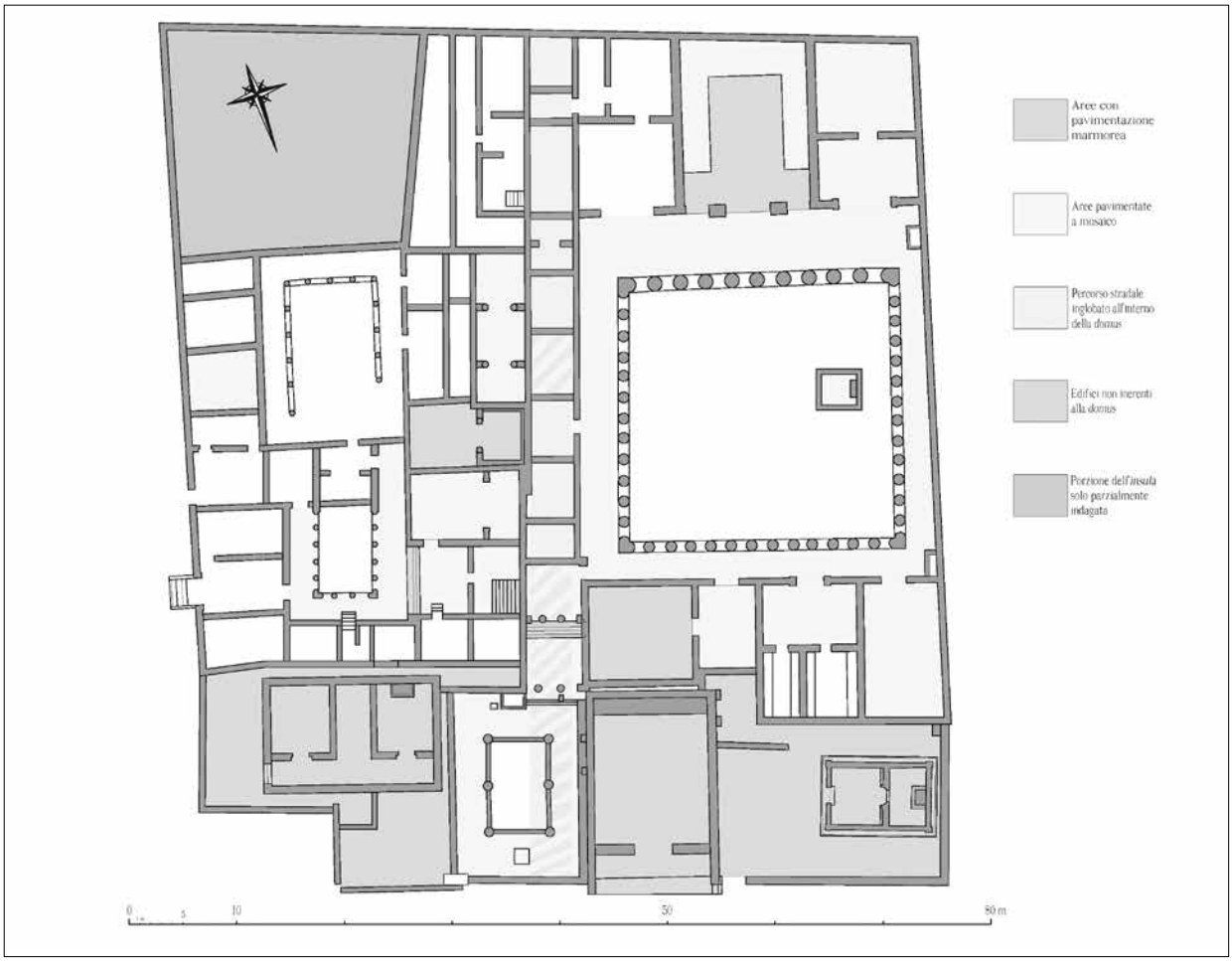


Fig. 20. *Cyrene*, House of Jason Magnus (after Pensabene, Gasparini 2014, fig. 6).

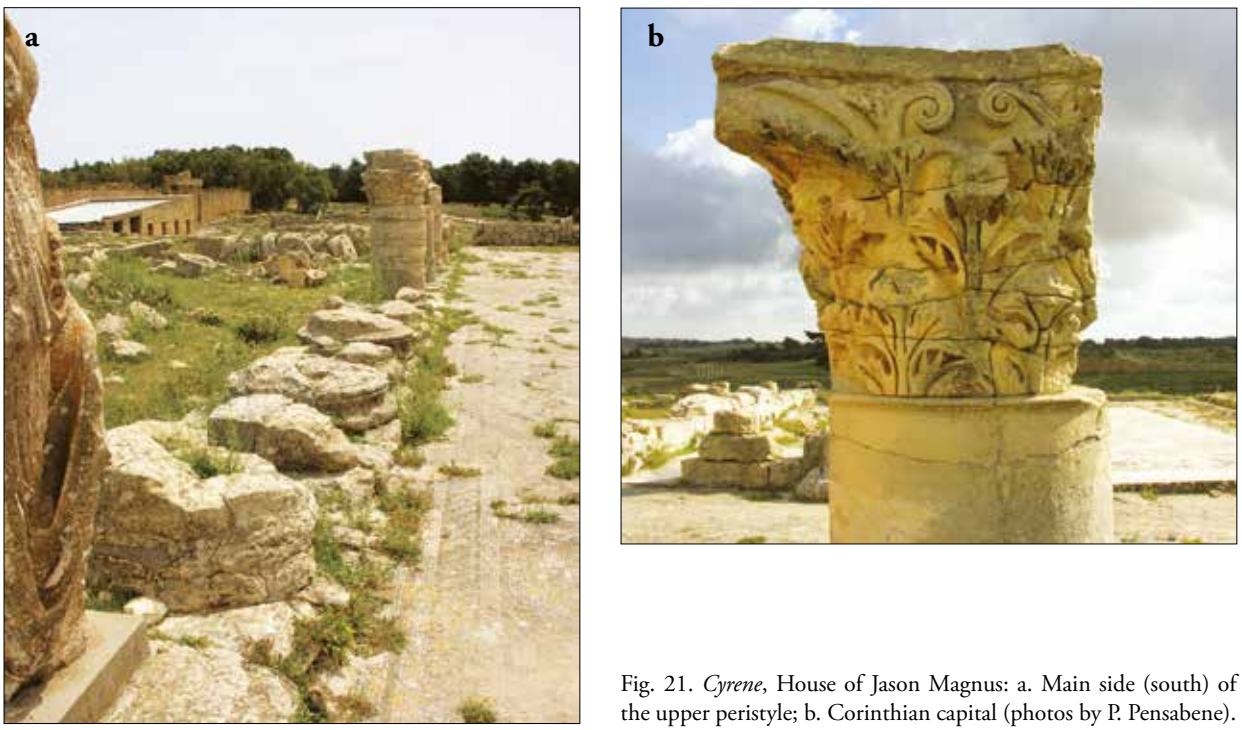


Fig. 21. *Cyrene*, House of Jason Magnus: a. Main side (south) of the upper peristyle; b. Corinthian capital (photos by P. Pensabene).

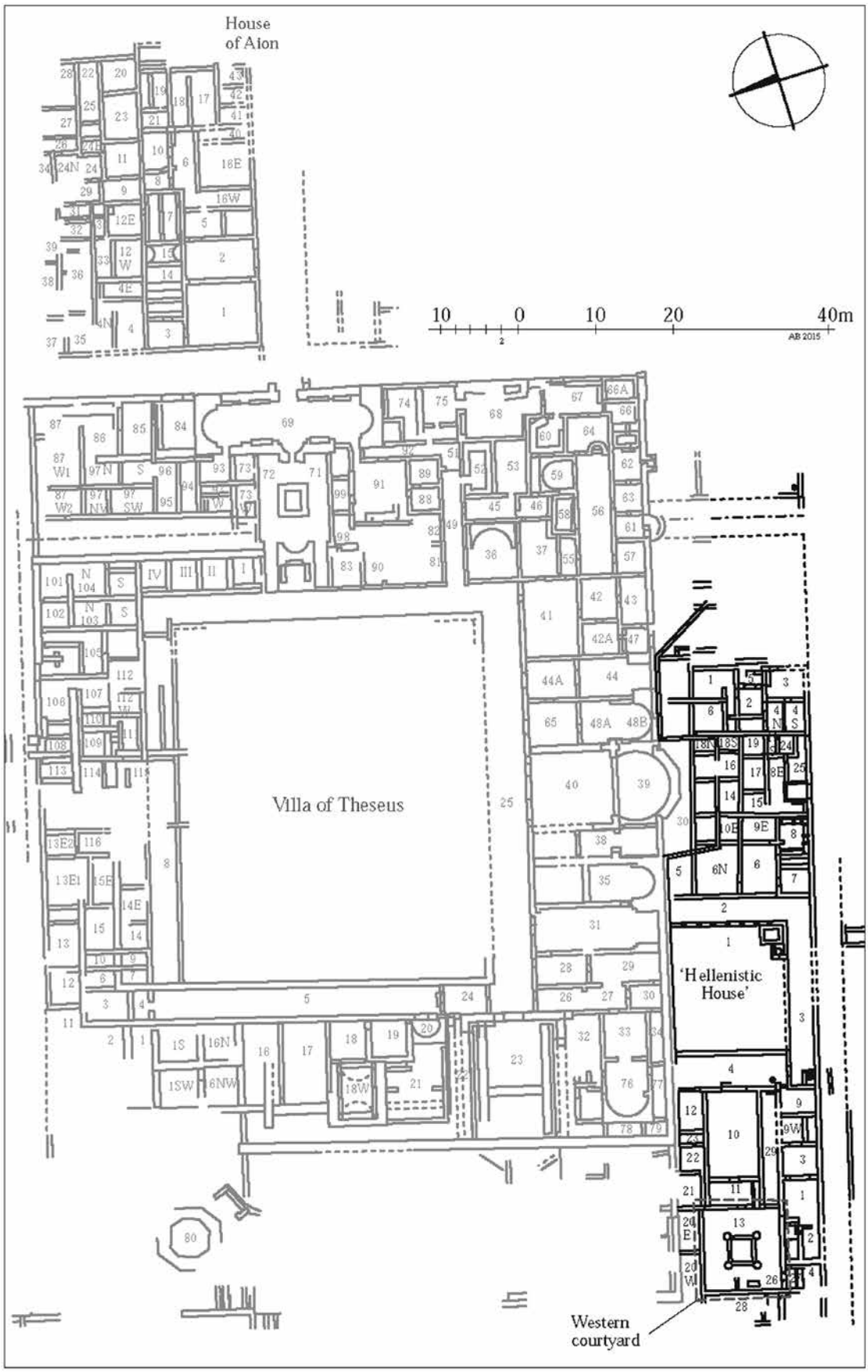


Fig. 22. *Nea Paphos*, 'Hellenistic' House (after Brzozowska 2016, fig. 2).


Fig. 23. *Nea Paphos*, 'Hellenistic' House, peristyle, Corinthian capitals: a. Column capital; b. Pilaster capital (photos by P. Pensabene).



Fig. 24. *Nea Paphos*, 'Hellenistic' House, peristyle: a. Ionic colonnade; b. Ionic capital (photos by P. Pensabene).

from the late Hellenistic and first Imperial periods in the Mediterranean. Well-known and of particular importance is the early Roman phase to which belongs a four-sided peristyle with architectural elevations differing in order and height, as well as a *tetrastylum* inserted in a small courtyard in the eastern sector of the house. In the wing of the portico facing the main reception room, we have been able to identify a conscious choice of the Corinthian order, with re-used elements coming probably from the first phase of the same house (Fig. 23.a, b). On this side, the columns are higher, thus mirroring the higher height of the reception hall as compared to the other rooms. Equally high are the columns of the northern wing, which with its adjacent rooms actually separated the peristyle from the street to the north of the house. In this northern wing, the columns would have been Corinthian, but with capitals of the so-called Nabataean type. In the other two sides of the peristyle, the shafts were shorter, perhaps because of the second floor which could have been on top of them. The chosen orders – the Doric and Ionic capitals (Fig. 24.a, b) – may perhaps convince us to propose a new reconstruction of the peristyle after the earthquake in 70 AD. What is certain, beyond the difficulty to define the phases of the construction of the house, is the fact that the expression of the owners' prestige is still entrusted to the architectural orders, although the ease with which different orders are combined together indicates a long tradition of eclecticism predating even the Ptolemaic domination.

We must point out also a difference in the use of the Alexandrian architectural forms. In fact, in Cyprus, *travicello* cornices continued to be employed with the Y motif and a flatter form (as shown by the examples from the 1st century and the beginning of the 2nd century AD in the Apollo Sanctuary at *Kourion*,[43] in the *Salamis* tomb no. 50,[44] and the tetrastyle court of the 'Hellenistic' House). On the other hand, we observe that with the end of the 1st century the prevailing capitals turn toward

Fig. 25. *Kourion*, 'Christian House', *oecus Corinthius* (photo by P. Pensabene).

[43] Scranton 1967, 3.

[44] Wright 1992, fig. 313; Fuduli 2015, 74.

[45] We were unable to find acanthus leaves with small eyes among the lobs, which characterise the more ancient Corinthian capitals of Alexandria and which we constantly find in Cyprus of the previous periods in the Corinthian capitals of the Alexandria type, such as those of the 'Hellenistic' House.

Fig. 26. *Kourion*, 'Christian House', *oecus Corinthius*, upper part of a simplified Corinthian capital (photo by P. Pensabene).

the so-called Nabataean type, that is to a simplified type of the Ionic and Corinthian capitals. Therefore, they did not produce Alexandrian Ionic or Corinthian capitals on the island at that time, when workshops able to carve capitals according to the Ptolemaic tradition would presumably not be arriving from Alexandria anymore.[45]

In Cyprus during the Imperial Period, we find houses with *oeci Corinthii* (for instance in the so-called 'Christian House' in *Kourion*, Fig. 25), in which simplified Corinthian capitals were used (Fig. 26) together with Doric ones of the type developed by the local workshops of the island.

Finally, in Cyprus, like in Egypt and in Cyrenaica, from the Hadrian Period throughout the whole Severian Period, we observe the phenomenon of importation of raw marble and marble architectonical artefacts for public architecture. These 'new' architectonical elements strongly influenced the local workshops which worked for private residential buildings and continued to use the stones quarried locally. In consequence, in three provinces mentioned above there are local stone capitals with thorny acanthus which had a separate story in each region.

In this context, different motifs of different origins became part of the repertoire of the same workshop, coexisting therefore in the same space and with the same architectural functions.

The adoption of local stones is extremely important here, since it is usually associated also with the continuous use of older forms rather than with transformations – the *travicello* cornices are a good example in this context. Anyway, this is another story deserving a separate study.

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# A Process of Glocalisation? Roman Marble Imports and the Rise of Blocked-Out Capitals in Local Stone

Abstract

In the Augustan Age, a new aesthetic preference was propagated in the Roman Empire – the surface of white marble was valued as it symbolised the strength and superiority of the 'new age'. Soon, an immense trade in high quality marble over land and sea developed to meet the emergent demand. While the development and scale of this trade is well studied, the repercussions that the new aesthetic preference had on the local architectural traditions in areas where no marble was close at hand is not commonly considered. In this contribution, two developments are traced, taking the Corinthian capital as the leitmotif. First, in the short period between *c.* 40 and 10 BC, patrons would choose imitation of marble in plaster to meet up with the demands of the new standard and to demonstrate their adherence to the Empire. In the second line of development, a different path was taken – a conscious use of local materials which went hand in hand with the development of a new type of capital, the so-called 'Nabataean blocked-out' capital. This combination turned into a new vernacular tradition across large parts of the eastern Mediterranean. Both developments were local responses to a new 'global' trend and can therefore be viewed as a phenomenon of glocalisation in the Roman Period.

**Keywords:** materiality, eastern Mediterranean architecture, Corinthian capitals, 'Nabataean' capitals, vernacular building traditions, plaster

## Introduction

The scholarly interest in the marble trade in the Mediterranean began, or at least increased considerably, with the publication of a seminal article by John Ward-Perkins in 1951 and was later conceptualised by the same author.[1] In a meticulous and at the same time extensive collection of epigraphical and archaeological evidence, he provided a model capable of explaining how the trade in marbles was shaped by commercial, social, and economic factors and how the spread of certain styles was tied to this material basis. First of all, the marble trade did concern the public building sector, but its impact was of great importance for the domestic architecture as well.

On the following pages, I will sketch some developments which went hand in hand with the spread of a new aesthetic preference for marble when, in the aftermath of the battle of *Actium*, the whole Mediterranean coast was effectively integrated into the Roman Empire. I will especially investigate the reverberations of the newly propagated marble style in the provinces and the local reactions to it. The Corinthian capitals will serve as the leitmotif of this survey.

## Building materials and regionalism in Hellenistic architecture

Travelling back in time to some date in the late Hellenistic Period, a visitor to different regions and towns of the Mediterranean would hardly ever have encountered two buildings with the same ornamental apparatus. From the perspective of architectural decoration, the age of Hellenism was a heterogeneous world. The strongly marked differences between regions are mirrored in the specialised terminology – historians of architecture speak of Rhodian, Pergamene, or Ptolemaic console cornices, to name an example. Even within one and the same region, a large variety of models were available, as indicated, for instance, by the choice of the French terms '*hétérodoxe*'

[1] Ward-Perkins 1951; 1980.

or '*libre*' by Daniel Schlumberger to characterise the pre-Roman production of the Corinthian capitals in the wider Syrian region.[2] This stands in stark contrast to the developments in the Roman Period. An exemplary case is the occurrence of the 'normal' Corinthian capital, a standard design common to all parts of the ancient world.[3]

In the Hellenistic times, there was not only a plurality of forms but also of building materials. As a logical choice, architectural ornaments were carved from the stones quarried nearby. In Greece and Asia Minor, marble and limestone of good quality was often available, but in some places within this area and in other regions hard volcanic rocks, for instance in Pergamon or in parts of Egypt, or soft sandstones or calcarenites, like in large parts of the Peloponnese, Northern Africa, Cyprus, and the Levant, had to be mastered to carve such fine details as the acanthus leaves of the Corinthian order. Surviving traces of paint demonstrate the varied palette of colours applied on the capitals (Fig. 1).[4] Where no stones were available at all, like in the megalopolis Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, baked brick was used.[5] There seems to have been no super-regional predilection for certain styles or materials, or at least it did not lead to a long-distance trade in architectural blocks or stones on a larger scale.[6] Differently so in the Roman Period, where we are confronted with the most unlikely of all cases, that is the shipping of bulky freight, such as marble, over distances of hundreds of kilometres by sea and by land on a large scale.[7]

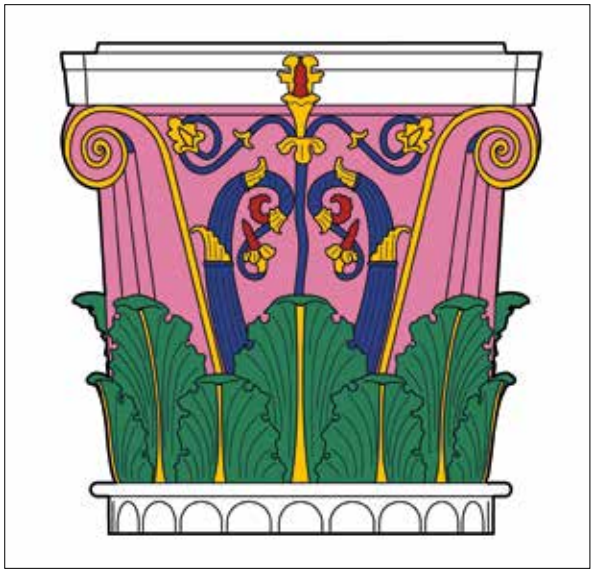

Fig. 1. Corinthian capital from *Hermoupolis Magna*, reconstruction of the colour scheme (drawing by M. Grawehr; after Baranski 2004, pl. 28).

## The Roman marble trade: a global trend

Globalisation, the connectedness of the entire world, is a phenomenon of the modern age. But if one allows the term to be used for interrelations across the entire *known* world, then it can easily be applied to the Roman Period as well. In fact, the encomium on Rome by the orator Aelius Aristides, delivered in 155 AD, can be explicitly read as a manifesto of globalisation. Aristides describes Rome as a city extending without end, covering the earth like snow,[8] with a circuit of walls encompassing not only the city of Rome but the whole Roman Empire. He continues that these walls were not 'built of bitumen or baked brick, nor gleaming with stucco' but were 'fitted with stones'.[9] Aristides notes how people not only from Rome itself but from all over the Empire enjoyed common citizenship,[10] and he understands the city of Rome as the centre of a globalised economy, 'like a factory common to the whole earth'.[11] Furthermore, for Aristides there was one visual language, one 'corporate design' common to all places within the Roman Empire: 'The whole inhabited world […] has laid aside its old dress, […] and has turned […] to adornments and all kinds of pleasures. […] Everything is full of gymnasiums, fountains, gateways, temples, handicrafts, and schools. […] Indeed, the cities shine with radiance and grace'.[12]

[2] Schlumberger 1933, 287–302.

[3] Heilmeyer 1970.

[4] See for example: Mausoleum at Belevi, *c.* 290–270 BC (Praschniker, Theuer 1979, 61–65, figs 29 a, 49, 49 a); *Hermoupolis Magna*, end of the 3rd century BC (Wace *et al.* 1959, pl. 1; Baranski 2004).

[5] Invernizzi 1994.

[6] A sporadic and project-based trade in high-quality marbles for architecture is attested at least since the 6th century BC, is especially present in the 4th century BC, but becomes much less pronounced in the Hellenistic Period; see Russell 2013, 12–13; Stucky 2016.

[7] Russell 2013, 142.

[8] Aristid. *Or.* 26, 7.

[9] Aristid. *Or.* 26, 83: 'τὰ δὲ οὐκ ἀσφάλτῳ οὐδὲ πλίνθῳ ὀπτῇ δέδμηται, οὐδὲ κόνει στιλπνὰ ἔστηκεν […] καὶ τοῖς λίθοις […] πυκνῶς ἅμα καὶ ἀκριβῶς ἡρμοσμένα' (translation based on Behr 1981, 90).

[10] Aristid. *Or.* 26, 63.

[11] Aristid. *Or.* 26, 11: 'ὥστ' ἐοικέναι τὴν πόλιν κοινῷ τινι τῆς γῆς ἐργαστηρίῳ' (translation: Behr 1981, 75).

[12] Aristid. *Or.* 26, 97–99: 'πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη τὸ μὲν παλαιὸν φόρημα […] κατέθετο, εἰς δὲ κόσμον καὶ πάσας εὐφροσύνας τέτραπται σὺν ἐξουσίᾳ. […] πάντα δὲ μεστὰ γυμνασίων, κρηνῶν, προπυλαίων, νεῶν, δημιουργιῶν, διδασκάλων […]. πόλεις τε οὖν δή που λάμπουσιν αἴγλῃ καὶ χάριτι' (translation based on Behr 1981, 94–95).

The materials (stone *vs* brick and stucco) that Aristides describes in his speech remind one of the famous remark of Augustus, purportedly issued on his deathbed, as an allegory for the new strength of the Empire: 'I leave to you of marble, what I found of brick'.[13] Backed up by such sources, it is not daring to state that in the Roman world the use of shining white stone (occasionally with a golden tint[14]) had not only become a new aesthetic standard for public architecture but that it also symbolised the Empire's strength and the superiority of the new Roman order.[15]

Between 50 BC and 150 AD, an immense machinery was set in action to fulfil the vision of the material appearance of the Empire.[16] The marble quarries at *Luna*, *Proconnesos*, *Docimium*, and elsewhere were put under imperial control and produced mountain-loads of white or very light grey marble, in a literal sense. First, roughed-out blocks (accompanied or not by stonemasons) and then, to an increasing degree, also finished products were loaded on carts and ships, and transported to distant regions. While most of the evidence for these processes starts in the Augustan Age, the development did not affect all the provinces at the same pace. In the Gaulish and Spanish provinces as well as in the capital of the client kingdom of *Mauretania* and in *Africa Proconsularis* the available evidence points to a relatively early impact of white imported marble. An Augustan dating was proposed for a monument in the Federal sanctuary at Lyon, Augustan capitals are documented from Autun, and in *Tarraco* the temple of Augustus was being erected in *Luna* marble from 15 AD onwards, to mention just a few examples.[17] In Cherchel and around Carthage, *Luna* marble capitals appeared in the Augustan period as well.[18] In the German provinces, on the other hand, imports of marble capitals are recorded from the Flavian Period onwards.[19] Further east, in North Africa from *Mauretania* to Egypt, in the Levant, and in Cyprus, besides very few earlier pieces,[20] a large scale import of marble occurs relatively late, in the Hadrianic Period.[21]

In addition to the import of white marble of well-established quality, the new preference for whitish stone of high quality is also elucidated by the parallel exploration of new quarries to supply the local markets with local marbles or similar marble-like stones.[22]

## Marble import *vs* local stone

The immense efforts that were put into the procurement of shining white or very light grey stones during the Roman Period leave little doubt that these materials were prestigious and sought-after for building. Some of the written sources corroborating this fact have already been mentioned. In addition, reference could be made to the well-known *Testament du Lingon*, who in the 2nd century AD expressively ordered oversea-marble and marble from *Luna* to be used for his grave monument and urn, documenting his refined taste.[23] In the light of such evidence, it is understandable, though inappropriate, that archaeologists have taken over this attitude when describing the qualities of decorations in different stones – local and imported. Too often, the products made from local stones are described as being inferior, while the imported marble ornaments are regarded as superior. Naïdé Ferchiou, for example, when describing the Corinthian capitals from *Africa Proconsularis* made in local stones, speaks of 'products of inferior quality, issued from handicraft shops rather than from proper ateliers' and of the 'clumsiness of the executors'.[24] Instead of emphasising the perfect adaptation of the shape of the capitals to the properties of the local stone, resulting often in a lower depth of the relief,[25] she discredits the makers.

[13] Suet. *Aug.* 28, 3: 'sit marmoream se relinquere, quam latericiam accepisset'. *Cf.* Cass. Dio 56, 30, 3–4: 'ἔφη ὅτι "τὴν Ῥώμην γηίνην παραλαβὼν λιθίνην ὑμῖν καταλείπω." τοῦτο μὲν οὖν οὐ πρὸς τὸ τῶν οἰκοδομημάτων αὐτῆς ἀκριβὲς ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἰσχυρὸν ἐνεδείξατο' ['He said: "I found Rome of clay; I leave it to you of stone". By this he did not refer literally to the appearance of its buildings, but rather to the strength of the empire'].

[14] Zink, Piening 2009.

[15] For marble as an expression of imperial ideology, see Rodá 2004, 413; Fejfer 2013, 192–194.

[16] Russell 2013, 38–52, 184–200.

[17] Pensabene 2004, 428–429; Bartette 2017; Maligorne 2017, 213–214. See now for Lyon: Fellague *et al.* 2015, 129; for Autun: Brunet-Gaston 2010, 493; for *Tarraco*: Pensabene, Mar 2010.

[18] Pensabene 1982, esp. 69–72; 1986, 297; Ferchiou 1989, 223–226.

[19] Blin 2017, 260.

[20] For example Fischer 1990, 27–30.

[21] Mauretania: Pensabene 1982, 73; Mugnai 2017, 365–367; 2018, 176–177; *Africa Proconsularis:* Pensabene 1986, 297; Ferchiou 1989, 230–231; Egypt: Pensabene 1993, 153–156; Levant: Fischer 1990, 21–55; Cyprus: Kiessel 2013.

[22] Well-known cases are, for example, the establishment of the quarries of Estremoz in Portugal in the first half of the 1st century AD (Mañas Romero 2008, 490–496), at Keddel in Tunisia in the beginning of the 2nd century AD (Ferchiou 1976), or the employment of the 'marble of Neuchâtel' for the Cigognier-sanctuary at Avenches in Switzerland under Vespasian (Bourgeois 1909; Hufschmid 2017, 181–182).

[23] CIL XIII 5708, 1. 3, 5, 8–10: *ex lapide transmarino* and *ex lapide Lunensi*.

[24] Ferchiou 1989, 211.

[25] For such an evaluation, see for example Pensabene 1982, 56, no. 160.

In the following section, I will sketch two local reactions to the new standards set by the propagation of marble as a superior material and by the emerging marble trade: at first, we encounter imitations of marble in plaster, and as a second strategy we witness the rise of a vernacular tradition with a reduced ornamental apparatus.

## Local reaction I: imitating marble in plaster

In a very short period between *c*. 40 and 10 BC, in different regions of the Mediterranean, solutions were sought to imitate the colouristic and plastic qualities of shining white or light grey marble by adding the ornamental details of the Ionic and Corinthian capitals in plaster over a rough core made from local stone. The related evidence will be quickly reviewed below, proceeding from the West to the East.

For the Spanish provinces, a paradigmatic case is the 'temple of Diana' in *Augusta Emerita* (modern Mérida in south-western Spain). Being the main temple of *Emerita*, it was a part of the urbanistic starting kit of the Roman colony, founded in 25 BC, and its architecture relied entirely on the local granite, on which a plaster finish was applied (Fig. 2).[26] The same technique was used for the Ionic capitals of the theatre in *Augusta Emerita* (16 BC)[27] and for the similar Ionic and Corinthian capitals from the theatre in Lisbon, of which only the calcarenite cores are preserved.[28] In *Augusta Emerita*, from the mid-1st century AD onwards, the newly available imported marble from the quarries of Estremoz did put an end to this practice.

One of the stylistically earliest capitals from Carthage, re-founded in 29 BC, with no reported findspot within the city, has a core made of soft sandstone and all the ornamental details added in plaster.[29] A similar date of 30–20 BC has been proposed for a Corinthian capital with an added plaster finish from the so-called 'House of Lucius Verus' in *Thysdrus*, a sumptuous mansion next to the town's Forum.[30] Certainly more famous are the eponymous capitals of the 'House of the figural capitals' from *Utica*, dated to *c*. 40/30 BC, with their acanthus leaves and figural busts meticulously modelled from plaster (Fig. 3).[31] The state of preservation of these capitals illustrates the coarse grained surface of the sandstone core and informs us that already in Antiquity no paint altered the white appearance of the stucco, as exclusively the eyes of the figures were emphasised by painting.

Fig. 2. Corinthian capital of the 'temple of Diana' at *Augusta Emerita*/Mérida in Spain (photo by M. Grawehr).

Fig. 3. Figure capital from the 'House of the Figured Capitals' at *Utica* in Tunisia (photo by A. Lézine; http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/marbilder/713888, accessed 15.04.2020).

From early Roman Egypt, to my knowledge, only column shafts and cornices with a thick layer of plaster finish are known, for example from an early Roman house in Alexandria[32] or from secondary contexts in the temple precinct at *Hermoupolis Magna*.[33] The technique is documented more frequently in the palaces of King Herod.

[26] De la Barrera 2000, 135–167; Álvarez Martinez, Nogales Basarrate 2003; Trillmich 2004, 322.
[27] Hauschild 1990, pl. 38 b.
[28] Hauschild 1990, 378–380, pl. 35 e–g.
[29] Ferchiou 1989, 217–218, no. IX.I.A.2.3, pl. 56 c.
[30] Ferchiou 1989, 215–216, no. IX.I.A.2.1, pl. 56 a, b. For the 'House of Lucius Verus', see Slim 1990a; 1990b, 190–192, fig. 8.
[31] Lézine 1956, 8–22; Ferchiou 1989, 249–251, n. IX.III.B.1, pl. 66 b, c. Further examples are noted by Lézine 1956, 12–13.
[32] Kołątaj *et al.* 2007, 18, fig. 13.
[33] Pensabene 1993, 326–327, nos. 65–69, pl. 10.

In the Western palace on *Masada*, *c*. 35 BC, a Ionic capital from a distyle entrance to a reception room was formed in plaster over a sandstone core that closely resembles a coarsely-shaped Doric capital.[34] In the courtyard peristyle of the palace at *Machaerus*, the sandstone core of a Ionic plaster capital of the same date already prefigures the Ionic forms (Fig. 4).[35] Entirely or in large parts cast(?) in plaster are the Ionic capitals from the Western Courtyard of Herod's Third Palace at Jericho, *c*. 15 BC. They topped columns with a diameter of 0.42 m built of small, brick-shaped sandstone blocks and equipped with plaster bases and flutings.[36] In the same casting technique may have been made the Corinthian pilaster capitals, dated to *c*. 25 BC and of a considerable height amounting to *c.* 0.4 m, from the *caldarium* of the bathhouse on *Masada* framing the room's northern apse.[37] Finally, three more Corinthian capitals with plaster finish modelled over a coarsely worked core have come to light at Petra, the capital of the Nabataean kingdom, but they cannot be dated more precisely.[38]

It is most curious to note that this mere dozen of examples, to the best of our knowledge, can be dated to a very short period of time of approximately 30 years between 40 and 10 BC.[39] Apparently, it was not the introduction of new shapes that led to the use of plaster, as intricate ornaments, such as the acanthus leaves, had already been carved in the local stone material of these regions for a long time before, but it must have been the emergence of a new preference for the imperial aesthetics of shining white or very light grey marble. One of the cases detailed above is especially illuminating – the Third Palace in Jericho itself is a statement of the pro-imperial policy of 'King Herod, friend of the Romans'.[40] After the battle of *Actium*, Herod vowed his loyalty to Octavian, toured the East with him, inaugurated 'Isactian' games on Octavian's birthday, introduced gladiatorial combats, built temples in his honour at *Paneas* and *Samaria*, renamed the latter to *Sebaste* and Straton's tower to *Caesarea*, and entertained close relations with the emperor and his court.[41] In the storerooms on *Masada*, Herod did hold a collection of supreme Italian wines sent to him in a special shipment in 19 BC and on other occasions.[42] Moreover, on the basis of the use of the *opus reticulatum* at *Paneas* and in the Third Palace at Jericho, many have argued that Herod employed workmen from the Italian peninsula for these projects. The same has been said about the wall paintings in this palace and in the newly-discovered Royal Room at *Herodium*. Finally, Roman engineering skills and pozzolanic ash were imported to create the new harbour of *Caesarea*.[43] To find plaster imitations of white marble capitals in this environment certainly comes as no surprise.

Fig. 4. Corinthian capital of the peristyle in the Herodian palace at *Machaerus* in Jordan (photo by M. Grawehr).

## Local reaction II: the birth of a vernacular tradition

While the imitation of marble in plaster was a short-lived option made obsolete by the rapid growth of the Roman marble trade, there was a second, very different way of counter-reacting to the new aesthetic standards. It found its expression in the continuous use of local stone materials, even for prestigious building projects, in combination with the use of a new type of capital. In my view, at the beginning of this development lies a careful re-evaluation of the properties of local stones in the context of the new choices available. A competent advisor on the deficiencies and virtues of different local

[34] Foerster 1995, 46–50.

[35] Vörös 2013, 299, 327.

[36] Peleg, Rozenberg 2008, 485–491; see also Netzer 2001, 240–244. I suggest that the pieces were cast, because their surface (in contrast to the surface of the bases, flutings, and cornices) exhibits many small cavities that may represent air bubbles forming on the walls of the moulds during the casting process.

[37] Foerster 1995, 44–46.

[38] Zayadine 1987, 139, fig. 18; McKenzie 1990, 117, pl. 49 d; Fiema *et al.* 2001, 177, fig. 58.

[39] There are also a few later examples, *e.g.* Czerner 2009, 91, AA 002–004.

[40] IG$^2$ II 3440: βασιλέα Ἡρώδην Φιλορώμαιον.

[41] For summaries of the evidence in Flavius Josephus and elsewhere, see Curran 2013; 2014. See also Jacobson, Kokkinos 2009.

[42] Cotton, Geiger 1989, 140–158.

[43] For summaries, see Schmid 2009, 351–352; Rozenberg 2013, 188–195.

Fig. 5. 'Nabataean blocked-out' capital of the 'ed-Deir' at Petra in Jordan (photo by the Aerial Photographic Archive of Archaeology in the Middle East, APAAME, APAAMEG_20081014_DLK-0039, photographer: David Kennedy, courtesy of APAAME).

Fig. 6. 'Nabataean blocked-out' capital from Alexandria (photo courtesy of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, W. Jerke).

stones is Vitruvius (*De arch.* 2, 7). Among his criteria are hardness, workability, and resistance to fire and weathering, and in his view the best building stones are found near *Ferentinum* in Lazio, 'because [in this stone] they [the Ferentini] have large statues, finely made, and small sculpture, even flowers and acanthus elegantly sculpted, which, even if old, appear as fresh as if they were just made'.[44] In the eastern Mediterranean, common stones are soft and friable sandstones or calcarenites, just the opposite of what Vitruvius would have liked. And it is exactly in the second half of the 1st century BC that a new type of capital emerged, which was perfectly adapted to the properties of this material – the so-called 'Nabataean' capital (Fig. 5).[45] At Petra, the type is clearly a blocked-out version of the Corinthian floral capital, and different subtypes exist which refer to different finished versions, even the Ionic ones. The standard type is characterised by the lower part being shaped as an inverted bell, corresponding to the two rows of acanthus leaves, and the upper part with marked corners, sometimes described as 'horns' and corresponding to the corner volutes. Different than what is sometimes assumed, these capitals were neither refined with plastic additions in plaster nor with an accurate drawing which would substitute the left-out details of the ornamentation.[46] If painted, either an unmodulated colour scheme was applied (Fig. 6),[47] or the veining of precious stones like alabaster was imitated.[48] The deliberate choice of the blocked-out shape in the rock-cut architecture of Petra, since around 50 BC,[49] can be easily explained by the wish to adapt the shape specifically to the friable nature of the rock and to avoid the unpleasant sight of badly weathered ornamental details. The same is valid for the occurrence of the type in other locations within similar geological settings, such as Marina el-Alamein on the Egyptian coast, 100 km west of Alexandria,[50] or *Nea Paphos* on the western coast of Cyprus.[51] It is sometimes thought that the 'Nabataean' capitals in the different regions of the eastern Mediterranean depended on a single prototype

[44] Vitr. *De arch.* 2, 7, 4: 'Namque habent et statuas amplas factas egregie et minora sigilla floresque et acanthos eleganter scalptos; quae, cum sint vetusta, sic apparent recentia, uti si sint modo facta' (translation based on Granger 1950, 109).

[45] Schlumberger 1933, 289, note 10; Fischer 1990, 26; McKenzie 1990, 116–117, 190, diagram 14; Patrich 1996; Laroche-Traunecker 2000; Netzer 2003, 162–164, fig. 222; Czerner 2009, 5–12, 36–37; Grawehr, Brzozowska-Jawornicka forthcoming.

[46] Grawehr, Brzozowska-Jawornicka forthcoming.

[47] Tkaczow 2010, 99–100, 128, no. 38, pls 25, A.

[48] Grawehr 2017, 106, fig. 3.

[49] At Petra, the earliest dated façades using the 'Nabataean blocked-out' capitals come from *c.* 50 BC; see Farajat, Nawafleh 2005.

[50] Daszewski 1990; Czerner 2009, 36–37, 100–102, pls 6–7.

[51] Brzozowska-Jawornicka forthcoming.

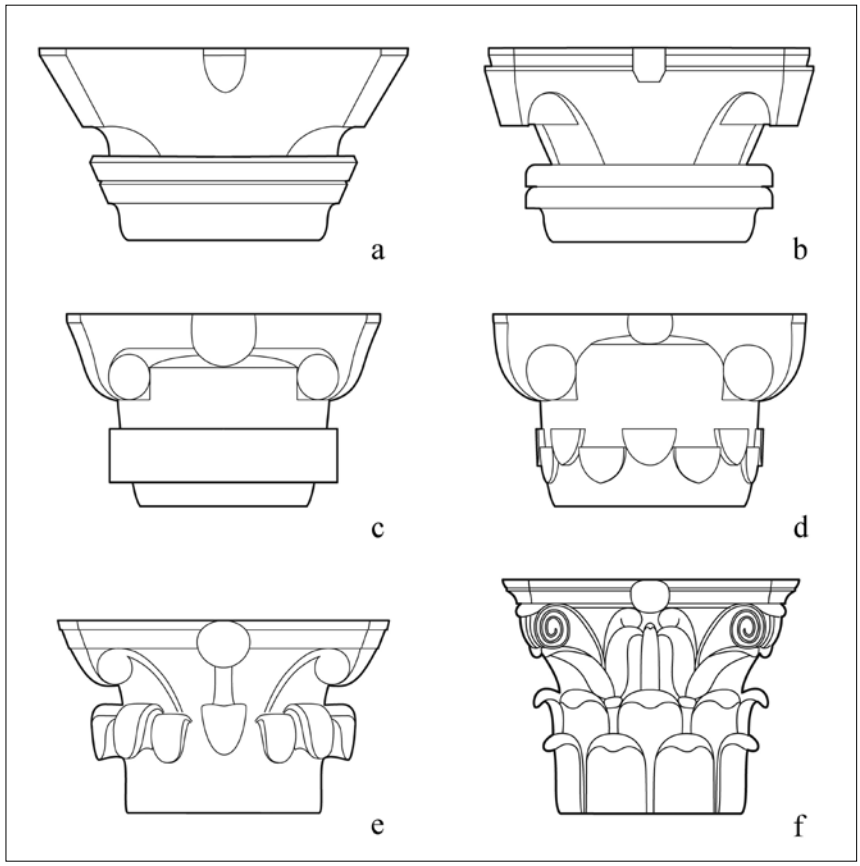


Fig. 7. Various variants of the 'blocked-out' capitals from Petra (a), *Salamis* (b), Marina el-Alamein (c, d), Jerash (e), and Baalbek (f) (drawings by M. Grawehr).

from Alexandria,[52] but in fact the type is not as much defined by the specific shape but rather by the practice of using the capital in its blocked-out state, which can take different forms according to different traditions and models of local stonemasons (Fig. 7).

If the marble style contained an imperial note, as argued above, what ideology stood behind this new local style? When evaluating the choice of materials for statuary on Cyprus – bronze and limestone *vs* marble – Jane Fejfer has recently argued for an emphasis on the local tradition which convinced patrons to favour the local materials even when other options were at hand.[53] In want of detailed written sources, the validity of the same explanation for the use of the 'Nabataean blocked-out' capital and the local materials in architecture will remain open. The new style was certainly not only used in low-profile domestic architecture but also for prestigious temples of the age-old traditional local gods: in Baalbek blocked-out capitals appear on the earliest temple in the newly-founded colony (15 BC) in the area of Santa Barbara,[54] at Qala'at Faqra in Lebanon in the temple of Zeus Belgalasos (*c.* 40–60 AD),[55] at *Kourion* in the temple of Apollo Hylates[56] and of Aphrodite at *Amathous*[57] on Cyprus (both *c.* 70–100 AD), as well as at Sabratha in the temples of Isis and Liber Pater (both *c.* 70/80 AD).[58] But we find it also in the 'imperial' temple of Augustus at *Philae* in Upper Egypt (13/12 BC)[59] or in the Herodian North Palace on *Masada* (*c.* 25 BC),[60] and the case is not

[52] See Grawehr, Brzozowska-Jawornicka forthcoming, note 17; but see also Börker 1971, 54, note 139; C. Börker in Hesberg 1978, 143.

[53] Fejfer 2013.

[54] Wienholz 2008, 273–274, fig. 3; Hoebel 2014, 85–86, fig. 102.

[55] Krencker, Zschietzschmann 1938, 41, fig. 60. The date is given here based on an analogy to the neighbouring structures, which are dated epigraphically; for two other opinions, see Rey-Coquais 1999; Kropp 2009, 113.

[56] Scranton 1967, 22–25, fig. 16 c; Sinos 1990, 145–156, 227–229, fig. 250.

[57] Aupert 1977, 808–809, figs 53, 54; Aupert, Hermary 1982, 748–749, figs 5–7; Hermary, Schmid 1985; Schmid 1988, 144, fig. 2.

[58] Di Vita 2017.

[59] Lyons 1896, 29–30, pls 20, 21, 47; Borchardt 1903; McKenzie 2007, 166–168; Fauerbach, Sählhof 2012.

[60] Foerster 1995, 114–119.

as straightforward as one might wish. Leaving the connotation that consciously emphasised the local tradition open to question, it is clear that we witness the birth of a vernacular tradition that was not a short-lived fashion, but endured and developed.

One development that the 'Nabataean blocked-out' capitals underwent was the addition of a central ornament to the surface of the capital, often a palmette, flower, or fruit (Fig. 8), with examples from Hegra and Tayma in Saudi-Arabia, Egyptian Fayyum, Umm el-Jimal in Jordan, or Jerusalem,[61] to name just a few. Also relatively early, in the 1st century AD, the new style was transferred to regions where the local stone was generally better suited for carving fine details, such as Cilicia or other limestone areas in the Levant.[62] As a second development stage, starting in the 1st century AD and continuing well into late Antiquity, the shape of the originally blocked-out capitals became more and more detached from the finished versions (Fig. 9).[63] At the end of this process often stand the ubiquitous leaf capitals of the early Islamic Period (Fig. 10).

The austere appearance of the 'Nabataean' capital has by some been considered to be conditioned by the supposed aesthetic predilection of the desert-dwelling population for simple shapes[64] or to stem from the lack of competent stonemasons in this remote region on the edge of the Roman world.[65] Instead of this deterministic model, I favour an explanation which sees the preference for the blocked-out shapes as a counter-reaction to the rising interconnectedness of the ancient world after the battle of *Actium* and to the propagation of the new imperial marble style in the Augustan Age. The new vernacular style is not a product of a cultural backwater but a result of the new wave of globalisation in the ancient world. It is based on local and relatively easy-to-use materials, as the capital's production is simplified by the eschewal of ornamentation. It therefore turns into a vernacular tradition. Regional styles have been detected in other areas of the Roman Empire,[66] and they make up for the plurality once again growing in the Roman Empire on its way to late Antiquity.

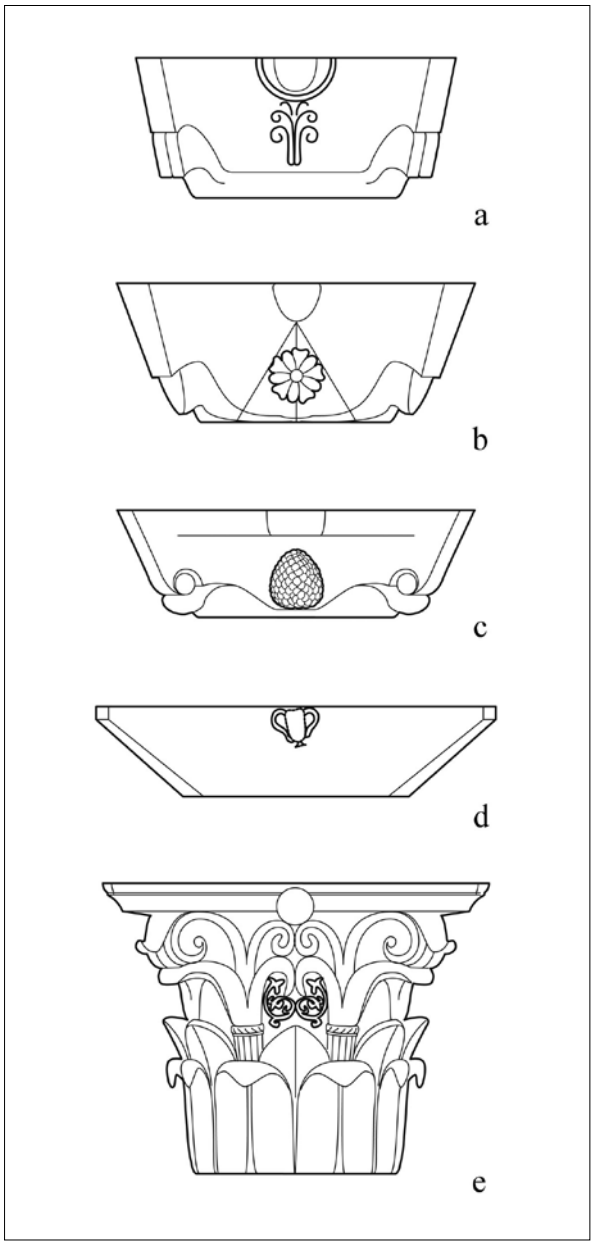


Fig. 8. 'Blocked-out' capitals with the addition of a central ornament from Hegra (a), Tayma (b), Medinet Madi (c), Umm el-Jimal (d), and Jerusalem (e) (drawings by M. Grawehr).

[61] From Hegra: Dentzer-Feydy 2015, 293 figs 5.63, 5.65, 294 fig. 5.77, 295 figs 5.79, 5.86, 296 figs 5.91, 5.93, 5.94, 297 fig. 5.95, 301; from Tayma: Hausleiter 2010, 236, fig. 12; from the Fayyum: Rubensohn 1905, 6–7, fig. 9 left; Bresciani 1968, 40–41, pls 24, 25; Pensabene 1993, 390, no. 370; from Umm el-Jimal: Butler 1913, 156, fig. 132; from Jerusalem: Fischer 1990, 25–26, no. 39, pl. 7, 8.

[62] For Cilicia: Equini Schneider 1999, 268–273; 2003, 141 fig. 123, 365–366, 399, 628–631; Berns 2003, 86 note 213, 89–95; Borgia 2010, 295–296, fig. 15 a, b; Spanu 2011, 56; Kaplan 2014; for Lebanon: see above note 54; for Jerash: Detweiler 1938, 119–122, pls 22, 23, plan 19.

[63] For example from Si'a: Butler 1919, 391–395; from the Negev area in southern Israel: Negev 1974; Rosenthal-Hegginbottom 1982, 132–133; Negev 1988, 75–94; from *Kourion* on Cyprus: Karageorghis 1974, 894, fig. 80; Sinos 1990, 227–228, fig. 250; from Akoris in Egypt: Palaeological Association of Japan 1995, 208 pls 123, 7, 124, 4.

[64] Jaussen, Savignac 1909, 397; Patrich 1996, 206.

[65] McKenzie 1990, 117.

[66] Quatember 2016; Hufschmid 2017.

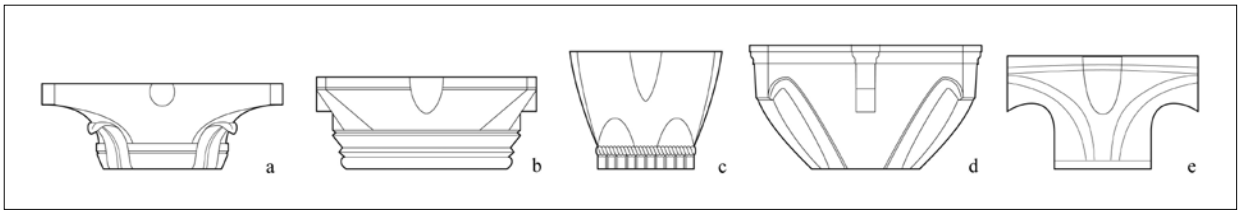


Fig. 9. 'Blocked-out' capitals illustrating developments within this class between the 1st and 6th centuries AD, from Si'a (a), *Mampsis* (b), *Elusa* (c), *Kourion* (d), and *Akoris* (e) (drawings by M. Grawehr).

## Conclusion

The model proposed here, namely that the propagation of the new marble aesthetics after the battle of *Actium* with its imperial connotations led to a number of local reactions in a process of glocalisation, is one that credits the material world with agency. People reacted to the new emphasis that was given to marble and to its visual effects of brightness and radiance. Prior to the arrival of marble imports on a larger scale at nearby ports, some opted for imitating marble in plaster. The applied stucco surface masked the 'deficiencies' of local stones which had previously been thought good enough to sculpt detailed ornament, and the new whiteness substituted the broader colour palette of the local stones which, in addition, had often been painted in vivid colours. Others, on the other hand, turned deliberately to the local materials and developed a new style by omitting all the detailed ornamentation, continuing the use of coloured stones, and occasionally applying colours on them. In short, ideas in art not only did spread in the Roman Empire in ways demonstrated by Ward-Perkins but their spread also gave rise to new ideas on the local level.

Fig. 10. Leaf capital in the National Museum at Damascus (photo by M. Grawehr).

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# The Republican Houses of the Roman Colonies in Ancient *Magna Graecia*. Cultural Exchange from a Western Perspective

Abstract

This article presents an analysis that is being carried out within the framework of the 'Tetrastylon project' (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellowship). This project is designed to create the scientific basis for the identification and definition of a new type of Roman *domus*. This typological item is the result of the hybridisation of a house scheme drawn from the Greek and Roman conceptions of housing. In the recent decades, some studies have found a particular type of Roman house in different parts of the Empire. The structural scheme of this *domus* joins, in the first place, the developmental concept of the Greek dwelling with the use of the Roman atrium as the central distribution area of the house. As a result of this cultural symbiosis, it is possible to observe Roman distribution areas within housing built following Greek structural conceptions and the combination of very different architectural influences between both cultures. The house, tentatively termed 'the tetrastyle courtyard house', has been observed in different Roman cities with a Greek past, but in different geographical contexts and chronologies. This type of house, with its variants, has not been sufficiently analysed in the Roman domestic architecture studies. This article will present different examples of this type of house within the territorial context of ancient *Magna Graecia* under the influence of the Roman dominion. This approach will show the same exchanges between the Greeks and the Romans in the East, but from the western perspective and at an earlier chronological stage.

**Keywords:** Roman architecture, *domus*, cultural exchange, *Magna Graecia*

## Introduction

The present article is focused on a specific Roman house which can be found in the Roman colonies and cities with a Greek background. This type of house is a hybrid concept of the Greek or Hellenistic scheme of a dwelling and a specific Roman courtyard type. It has been observed in different parts of the Roman Empire, but only in settlements with a Greek past. The geographical span of this project, financed by the European Commission,[1] is focused on ancient *Magna Graecia* and Sicily.

In the recent years, as stated above, various studies have identified a type of Roman atrium house[2] which does not match the definition of a common atrium house. In fact, some of these studies define the courtyard of these houses as a reduced peristyle, because the related household scheme shows the Hellenistic concept. This phenomenon is complex and requires a deep analysis. This type of house has been detected in some archaeological sites, but it has not been subjected to a comprehensive comparative study of its different examples. In the absence of an integral compilation of this *domus*, the first step is to create a scholarly foundation for the

[1] This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement nº 747466

[2] Here are some of the bibliographical references to works describing western towns where this kind of house was detected, but some examples have been observed also in the eastern Mediterranean: Di Stefano 1974, 21–27; Tsakirgis 1984; Olsen *et al.* 1995, 209–261; Campagna 1996, 111–122; Giardino 1996, 133–159; 2005, 387–432; Caruso 2003, 153–164; Wolf 2003; Ruga, Spadea 2005, 317–332; Bonini 2006; 2009, 121–162; Cicala 2006, 207–268; Osanna 2006, 35–50; Papaioannou 2007, 351–361; Bragantini *et al.* 2008; De Miro 2009; Cortés 2014a, 123–136; Aiosa 2016, 319–328.

identification and description of the mentioned type of house. This will result in a better understanding of the historical context, its actual influences, and the impact of this domestic structure, tentatively termed 'the tetrastyle courtyard house', on the Roman society.[3]

## The tetrastyle courtyard house

Morphologically speaking, this 'new' type of Roman house represents a hybrid architectural scheme. This *domus* combines, on the one hand, the developmental concept of the Greek or Hellenistic dwelling and, on the other hand, the use of the Roman atrium space as the central distribution area of the house. In other words, this house, which is found in the Roman Period, tends to the centripetal plan of those domestic areas which show little or no symmetry and axiality; however, their central and distribution area is not a peristyle or Greek courtyard but a Roman atrium. Obviously, this analysis is merely structural and in need of a deeper knowledge. However, the identification of the archaeological remains initiated an unsettled discussion. Sometimes it is difficult to correctly identify a Greek or Roman concept of house, and it is even more challenging to differentiate a reduced peristyle from a tetrastyle atrium. For this reason, we shall now expose what we understand as the crucial traits of the Greek or Hellenistic dwelling scheme and the Roman-Etruscan *cauaedium* or atrium house. At the same time, we are going to elaborate on the meanings and characteristics of the circulation space of the atrium. Nevertheless, we are perfectly aware of the difficulty of generalising over a particular household structure. As S. Guidone[4] very rightly states, the houses of *Magna Graecia* and their different characters and forms have only recently been included in the study of Greek private architecture. Therefore, the Greek house in the Eastern Mediterranean is evidently not the same as the Greek house in the western Mediterranean. For example, in Sicily after the Doric Period the island had a marginal position, and it showed a delay in both private and public models.[5] However, we will try to describe a trend in the development of Greek house features in order to be able to compare it with the tendencies seen in the Roman house. Such approach seems justified, because it is very important to identify the different spaces of the house correctly in order not to deny one of the two influences and its consequences for the social life.

The first topic to be addressed in this paper is the 'Trend of the Greek house structure in the Hellenistic era'. The courtyard or peristyle house in this era had a courtyard or peristyle as the central distribution and circulation space. We could summarise, following A. Zaccaria,[6] that this space is the articulator of the rest of the areas and rooms, which are arranged in a centripetal way. In her broad study, L. Nevett[7] observed that in the late 4th to early 3rd centuries BC, the tendency of the houses with a single open court in Greece and the Aegean continued to develop into a centripetal pattern of organisation around an open court as in previous centuries. Another important element in the Greek house is that, despite different house categories (*pastas*, *prostas*, and single courtyard house), it shows various common features.[8] Except for the smallest examples, the access to the house was set apart from the domestic areas with enclosed entrances or angled passages. The entrance was indirect or lateral in a lot of cases. M.C. Hellmann[9] agrees with this pattern of entry and points out that an examination of all the houses of the classical times reveals a tendency toward time-stable features. A good example of this time-stability is House 33 of *Priene* – a *prostas* house, which increased its domestic space by adding columns to the courtyard until it became a peristyle in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.[10] But, despite becoming a peristyle house, it maintains the centripetal spatial arrangement. In fact, according to S. Aiosa,[11] many Hellenistic aspects of domestic architecture in Sicily lingered until late Antiquity. L. Nevett[12] had also observed that in southern Italy and Sicily during the 3rd century BC domestic architecture showed important similarities with Greek housing. The house with a double courtyard with separated domestic functions appeared and continued to expand throughout this century. However, at the same time, the characteristic isolation of the private sphere from the outside world became stronger, as can be seen in House 49 and House 19 of *Megara Hyblaia*[13] or the House of the Official of *Morgantina*.[14]

[3] The concept of the 'tetrastyle courtyard' was proposed by Bonini (2006, 56–59) in his study of the houses of Roman Greece in which he morphologically identified the discovered central space as an atrium tetrastyle, but showed that it functioned as a Hellenistic peristyle due to its location and disposition within the house.

[4] Guidone 2017, 250.

[5] Aiosa 2003, 52.

[6] Zaccaria Ruggiu 1995, 291.

[7] Nevett 1999, 123.

[8] Nevett 1999, 123–126.

[9] Hellmann 2010, 46.

[10] Gros 2001, 47, fig. 31; Hellmann 2010, 63.

[11] Aiosa 2003, 55.

[12] Nevett 1999, 150.

[13] Vallet *et al.* 1983, 47.

[14] Tsakirgis 1984.

In the case of the 'Trend of the Roman-Etruscan *cauaedium* or atrium house since the 3rd century BC', we identify the atrium house as an interior and central courtyard house as well. However, it is a house whose origin is not easy to determine. The Republican and late Republican atrium house was the result of a long process of housing development in central Italy with oriental and Greek influences.[15] E. Dwyer[16] already wondered in the nineties of the last century what had been the beginning of the Pompeian atrium house. In the same decade, A. Wallace-Hadrill[17] had an important reflection about these issues. After his studies of the ancient houses of Cosa, *Fregellae* or *Palatium*, and the last excavations of A. Maiuri and Fiorelli[18] in the House of the Surgeon, he came to the conclusion that the origin of the atrium house was a dwelling with an open-roof courtyard. The annexation of the *compluvium* occurred at a time when a new focus of light existed, because the *compluvium* would darken the house. In other words, the *compluvium* appeared when the peristyle sector of the Roman house was created (the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC), and, therefore, the essential part of the atrium house was the *impluvium*. But in the first phase of the House of the Surgeon the *impluvium* did not yet exist. As a result, the elite houses of central Italy were beyond the *compluvium* and *impluvium* binomial, just as V. Jolivet[19] shows in his extensive study of numerous Etrurian and Roman *cauaedium* or atrium houses and their diffusion. All of these examples have some distinguishing traits. Therefore, we can broadly conclude that the structure of these households was articulated around an interior distributor of space that searches some axiality regarding the entrance and the *tablinum*, while symmetry is imposed instead of surrounding the central space, which stands in contrast to the Greek scheme.[20]

Therefore, what was the courtyard of the atrium house like since the 3rd century BC? As we have already seen, the origin of the atrium is debated even today. To quote P.A. Fernández-Vega,[21] this question remains so obscure that it could be the etymological root for the word 'atrium' itself. Either way, throughout the 3rd century BC, the houses in central Italy were laid out following the canonical plan of this central and interior courtyard. It was a space which could show some differences with variants according to each territorial area, but with certain common distinguishing features. The plan was extended in Italy and other provinces at the end of the Republican Period. The recollection of the examples provided by V. Jolivet[22] shows how the concept of atrium was established at the end of the 3rd century BC. Due to some problems with dating the examples, important diffusion of this canonical plan could be traced since the 2nd century BC. The atrium in this century[23] is identified by the central opening in the roof (except for the *testudinatum* variant), and it usually has a limited entry of light compared to other courtyards. This open area would have a roof clearly designed for the collection of water, whereas its uncovered, paved space was comparable to the surface of the *impluvium*. This delimited uncovered space is possibly the most relevant difference between the Hellenistic peristyle or courtyard and the atrium. This is due to the uncovered area, the only one which would accommodate the dimensions of the *compluvium*. Just as mentioned before, this is the main difference between both types of courtyards, because the other characteristics, such as the presence or not of the columns, are more complex. M.C. Hellmann[24] also highlights that another difference between the atrium and the Greek peristyle courtyard is the general absence of columns in the former. That is true for the Tuscan variant; hence, numerous authors wonder whether the colonnaded variant of the atrium is a Greek influence. However, the columns are an element native to both cultures, which is a result of natural evolution and the necessities of many Mediterranean courtyards.[25]

Having distinguished these terms, perhaps we can better appreciate the impact that Roman conquests in southern Italy and Sicily had on the Greek household. If it is generally accepted that the introduction of the Hellenistic peristyle and luxury in the Etrusco-Italian atrium house is a Greek influence evoked as a result of the Roman conquests (even before the expansion of Rome in the east of the Adriatic[26]), we should consider the introduction of the atrium in the Greek and Hellenistic houses in *Magna Graecia* and Sicily as a consequence of the very same cultural and social collision. We will now analyse some examples of this type of hybrid house

[15] For the origin of the canonical plan of the atrium or *cauaedium* house and its evolution, see Jolivet 2011, 36–66. He analyses the archaeological remains in central Italy dated to the 10th century BC and onwards.
[16] Dwyer 1991.
[17] Wallace-Hadrill 1997, 219–240.
[18] Maiuri 1973.
[19] Jolivet 2011.
[20] Cortés 2014b, 72–75.
[21] Fernández-Vega 2003.
[22] Jolivet 2011.
[23] The listed characteristics are a product of the observation of the archaeological remains, because the ancient sources concerning the atrium (Vitr. 6. 3. and Var. *L. L.* 5, 161 ) are later than the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. Although these sources are the best indicator of the characteristics of the atrium, they describe the atrium as it was one and two centuries later.
[24] Hellmann 2010, 97.
[25] Fernández-Vega 2003, 113–116.
[26] Winter 2006, 160.

which we can find in several cities in the south of Italy or *Magna Graecia*.

## House A.I.2 of *Velia-Elea*

*Velia* is a good example of a city in which one can observe this particular kind of atrium house. The city, founded by the Phoeceans and conquered by the Romans, has a perfect background to analyse its domestic residential architecture, for example House A.I.2 (Fig. 1). The house was built in the Hellenistic Period in the lower city (the southern neighbourhood). Simultaneously, there was a documented reorganisation of the city, which destroyed many remains of the classical times. In the Hellenistic era, the city went through a period of economic splendour and maintained vivid relations across the Mediterranean. This bonanza has been fossilised in a new remodelling of the urban layout as well as the public and private architecture of the town's neighbourhoods (Terrazze, Vignale, and the southern ones). The houses of this phase are grouped up to a maximum of three per insula, each insula separated by a small *ambitus*. The preserved housing units occupy about 150 $m^2$, but House A.I.2 is twice as big, measuring 300 $m^2$. This *domus* could have belonged to a merchant of a certain economic status within this emerging social class of *Elea*.[27]

In the first construction phase of the house, the entrance corridor was blocked laterally in the south-eastern corner. The distribution area was also slightly moved toward the easternmost part of the house. This courtyard had an *impluvium* delimited by ashlars with tiled paving. The condition of the remains indicates that the *impluvium* was without columns in the corners. The north-eastern portico was shaped by a body of three rectangular rooms of similar dimensions, but there is no connection between them. In terms of planimetry, the house was divided into two sectors: the central circulation area and the body of three rooms with a big portico (Room 13) in the north. The dwelling shows traces of organisation of the *pastas* house. Room 13 is completely open to the courtyard, without any doorway, which is typical of a peristyle or *pastas* house.[28] In the Imperial Period, the house occupied a part of the *ambitus* and seems to have incorporated House A.I.1. This second phase is dated by the construction technique – the renovation works were performed with reused construction material. According to S. Guidone,[29] the creation of the *impluvium* should also be linked to this phase because of the reclaimed material used for its construction and the central position of the cistern with respect to the rest of the courtyard. The latter could be obtained only through structural modification of the annex to the neighbouring House A.I.1 and the *ambitus*.

Whether the *impluvium* was constructed in the Hellenistic or the Imperial Period, the result is a house functioning in the Roman times with a centripetal arrangement and a courtyard without columns,[30] similar to the Tuscan atrium.

## The house of Area 5000/DR of Capo Colonna

The city of Crotone (near Capo Colonna) is another distinctive example of the residential architecture. The house from Area 5000/DR (Fig. 2) was built in a sector of the city whose population had been growing denser since the second half of the 2nd century BC, after Capo Colonna became a Roman city in the 3rd century BC, during the second Punic war. At that time, the domestic structure had a rectangular perimeter and was organised in two sectors. One of them was characterised by being distributed around an almost square atrium (5.0 × 5.5 m) (Room 1). The second sector also included a courtyard (6), but it functioned as a domestic rather than reception area. The two sectors were separated by two unpaved areas. The first area (4) allowed access to both sectors and to the second part, which has been interpreted as a storeroom (5).[31] In the residential sector, the *impluvium* was built from reclaimed construction material and fitted with a pipeline oriented southwards. The room opening toward the atrium, considered a *tablinum* (2), offered access to the *triclinium* (3). This presumed *tablinum* had a broad threshold built with four reused sand blocks framed with a high and wide jamb. This room was paved with an *opus signinum tessellatum*, and it was connected to a square room which has been interpreted as a *triclinium*. In the other sector, we can find the kitchen, another storeroom, and a courtyard. In the north-eastern part of this courtyard (6), there was a circular structure related to the processing of grapes and wine grapes.[32] The south-western area of the house is believed to have had a porch. Throughout the lifespan of the house, only little refurbishments have been observed, such as the construction of a new cistern in the kitchen in the second half of the 1st century BC.

[27] Cicala 2006, 247.
[28] Cicala 2006, 234–248.
[29] Guidone 2017, 251.
[30] The possibility of an *impluvium* with columns has been hypothesised as well; see Guidone 2017, 250.
[31] Ruga 2013, 198.
[32] Ruga 2013, 198.

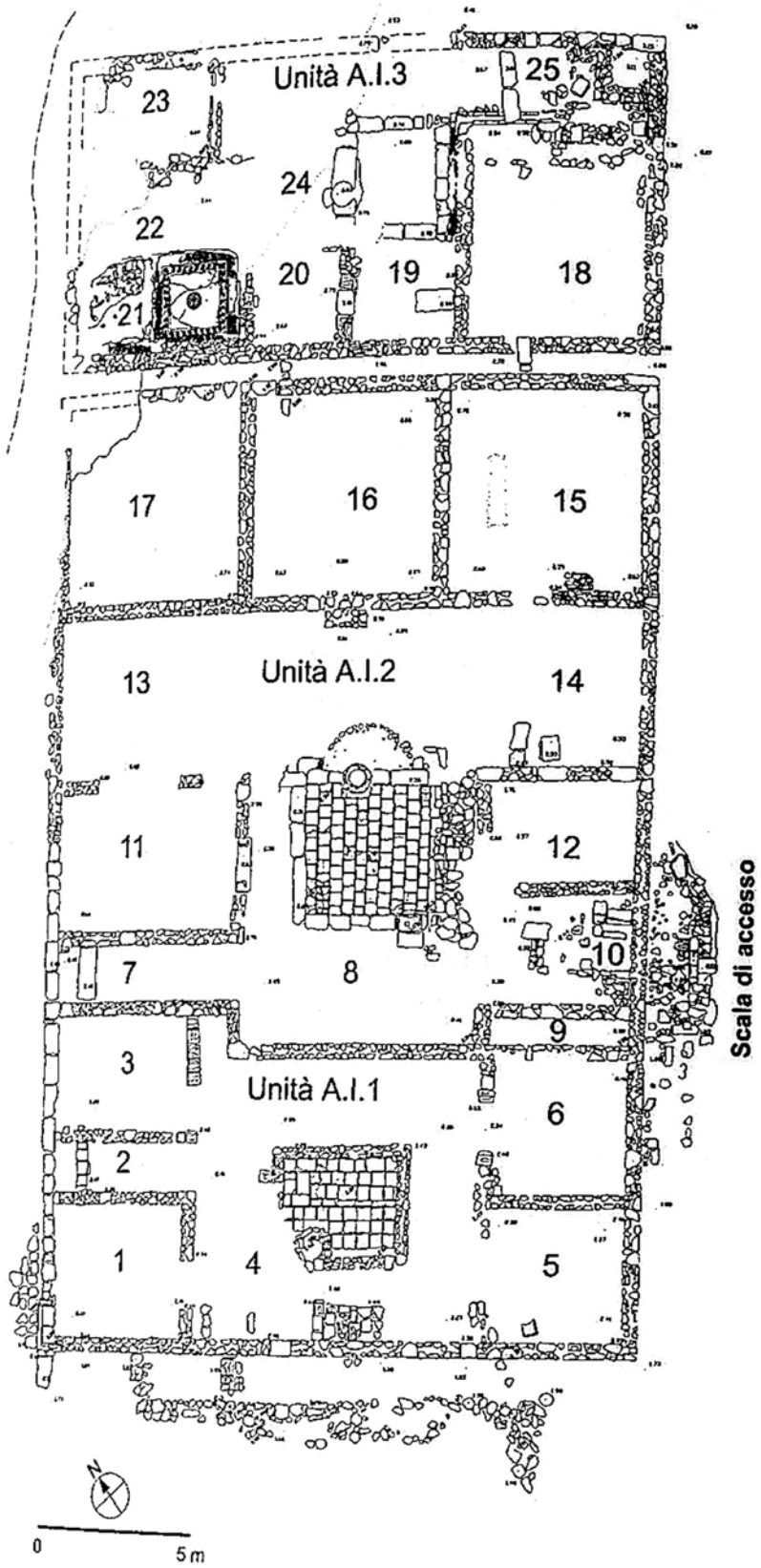


Fig. 1. Plan of House A.I.2, *Velia-Elea* (after Cicala 2006, 238, fig. 10).

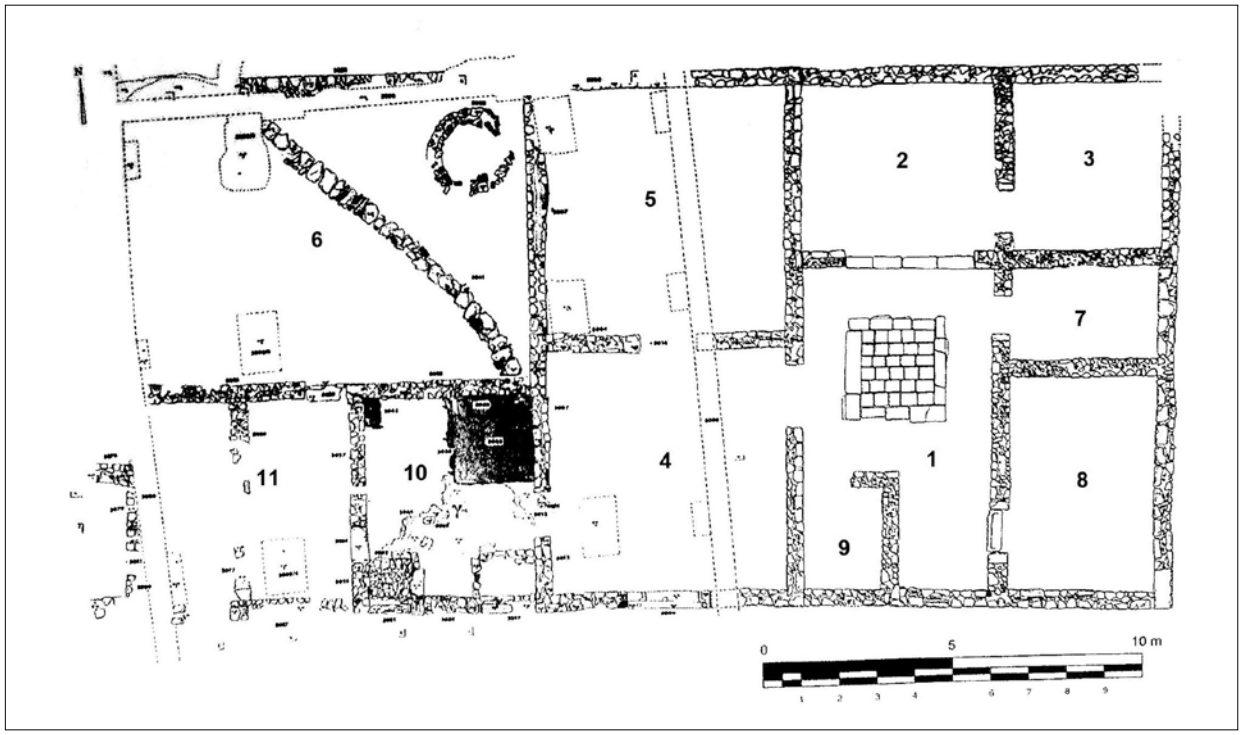


Fig. 2. Plan of the house from Area 5000/DR, Capo Colonna-Crotone (after Ruga, Spadea 2005, 321, fig. 4).

In this case, apparently the presumed atrium was also a Tuscan one without columns and with tiled pavement. This is also a house with a centripetal distribution around the atrium in the residential sector. This example has an interesting internal structure with two sectors separated to develop various functions. This fact implies a more indirect entry into the atrium.

## House CII of *Paestum*

The *Paestum* colony is one of the best examples of Roman cities in which to observe this particular atrium house because of its uninterrupted history since the Sybarite foundation all the way to the Roman Period. House CII (Fig. 3), located in the Northern Insula, is a very good example. The whole northern part of this insula is very complex, and it reflects the convoluted evolution of all of its houses, along with their different phases and unions between them.[33] But one of the most interesting phases of House CII is the period at the end of the 2nd century BC and the beginning of the 1st century BC. The domestic structure around the atrium was organised according to a classic scheme of a central courtyard house. In its final phase, the *domus* with a tetrastyle atrium (9) formed a large private complex which also incorporated House CI with a Tuscan atrium (2). It is also possible that it ended up being a complex of houses A-B-C.[34] Therefore, the plan which reached the present day is a *domus* with a double atrium, which also has a large courtyard in the eastern zone (19), as well as a secondary one (34). Although there seems to be no doubt about the first independent phase of House CII, it is difficult to accurately define the structure of the *domus* at the early stage. Nevertheless, it is comparable to the eastern part of House E and House D of *Paestum*.[35] For comparisons with other *Paestum* houses, the dating of the construction of the *domus* has been established at the beginning of the 2nd century BC, but the annexation of the two other houses should also be dated to the first half of the 2nd century BC. The whole house is very complex and had different attachments throughout its lifespan. But the moment when it was just an atrium tetrastyle house came in the 2nd century BC at the latest.

In this first phase, the main entrance was moved to the right side. However, this space was refurbished in the second phase, when the main doorway became the

[33] Bragantini, De Bonis 2009, 41.
[34] Bragantini *et al.* 2008, 149–153.
[35] Bargantini *et al.* 2008, 111.

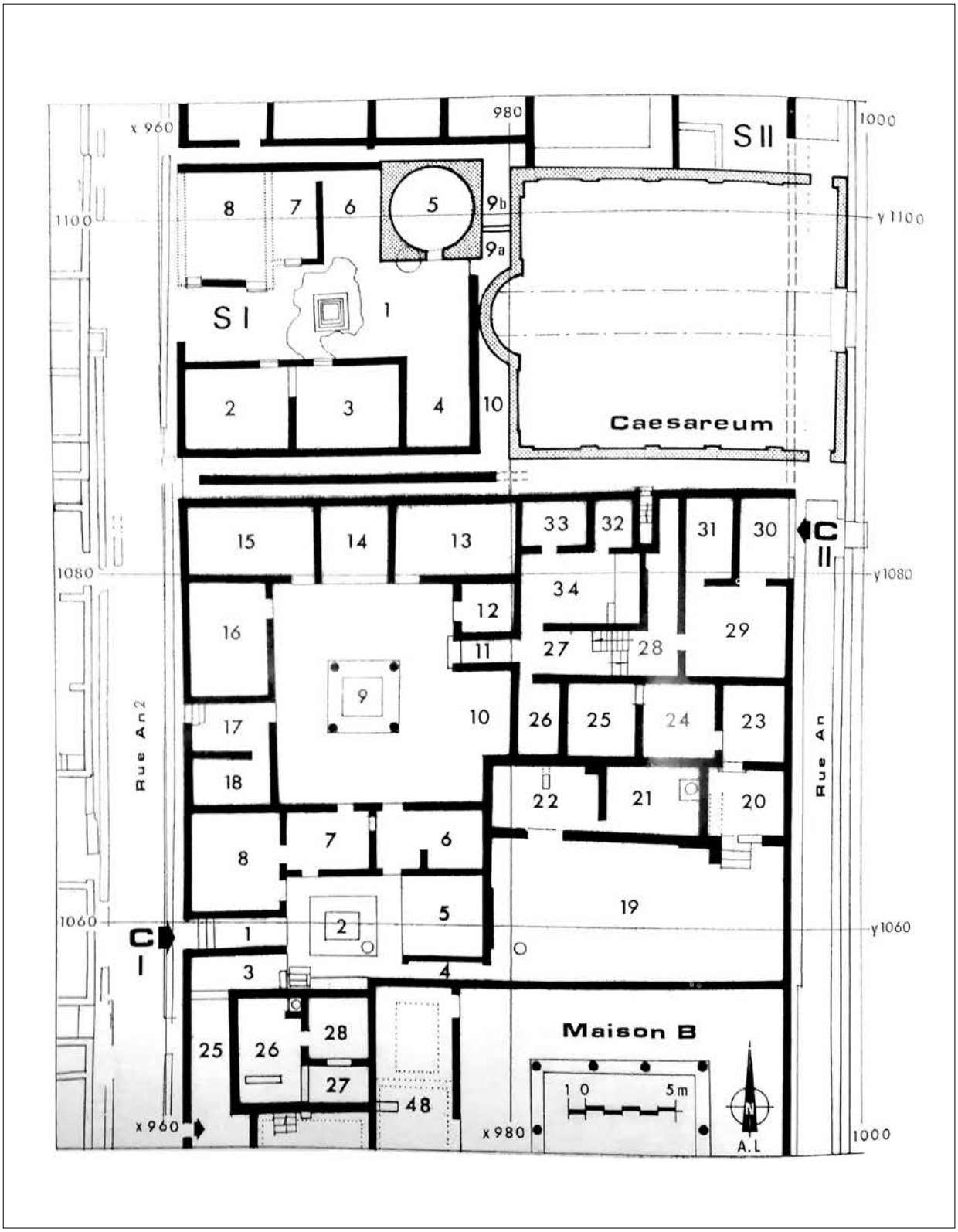


Fig. 3. Plan of House CII, *Paestum* (after Bragantini *et al.* 2008, fig. 6).

entrance of House CI (1). Room 10 has been interpreted as a possible *tablinum* or pseudo-*tablinum* for the rest of the marked *signinum*. Although this entry shows axiality with Room 10 and the atrium, it could rather be interpreted as an *exedra* of a Greek house or an *exedra* of an *ala*,[36] since it does not have a surface big enough for a classical *tablinum*. In addition, the dominant space is the room located orthogonally with respect to entrance 17 (14). This complex has a tripartite arrangement formed by one central room and another two at the sides without any communication between them, much like House A.I.2 of *Velia*. When House CI was added to House CII, it was an attempt to find more axiality. The principal entrance became the entry to House CI, presumably with an axial *tablinum* aligned with the vestibule (5). But rooms 7 and 8 were opened to create a path to the principal room of House CII. This fact indicates that this tripartite complex (15-14-13, a classical Hellenistic structure) is very important in this phase as well. This second phase looks as if House CII was intended to have its atrium transformed into a Roman peristyle area.[37] Despite the union of the houses, in this possible second phase both the tetrastyle atrium and the Tuscan atrium have a fairly clear structure of a Hellenistic courtyard house. They reflect their owners' desire for remodelling and adapting the rooms in search for Roman axiality.

Whatever the case, when House CII was an independent house, although having a centripetal arrangement with Greek reception rooms, its courtyard was similar to the atrium tetrastyle.

## The house with porticoed courtyard of *Heraclea Lucania*

The ancient colony of Taranto, which in the 3rd century lied within the Roman focus, shows a similar process in the development of its houses. For example the house of the *cortile porticato* (Fig. 4) – in the 3rd century the *domus* was a peristyle Greek house, but in the 2nd century BC its peristyle was transformed into an atrium with an *impluvium* in the same domestic plan. The *domus*, located in the central quarter, occupied a square of 17.90 × 17.90 m. At the time of the house with the porticoed courtyard, it seems that the household was used for artisanal activity (pottery production).[38] The presence of numerous looms in the houses of the 3rd century BC, as well as in this one, also reflects the importance of wool production in *Heraclea*. There is a series of porticoed courtyard houses which indicate the artisanal class, but this porticoed patio house has a larger surface than the others (300 m$^2$). This element indicates a higher social standing in comparison to other inhabitants of the Collina del Castello. For the 2nd century BC, a remodelling of the courtyard is observed – it transformed the *cortile* into an atrium with columns. During this

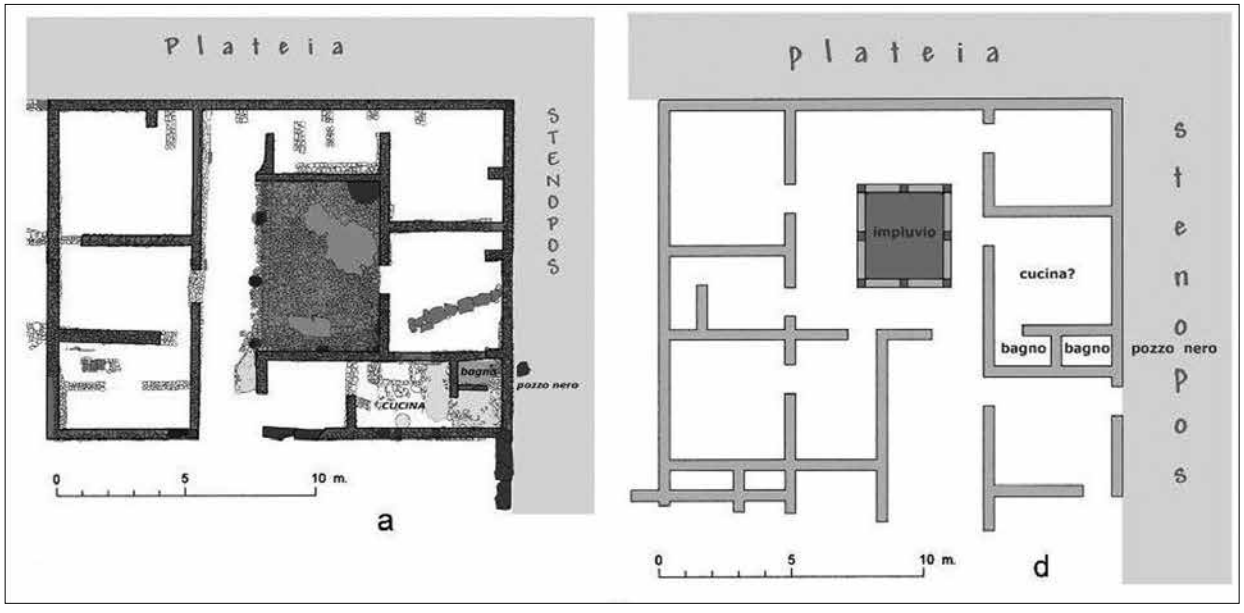


Fig. 4. Plan of the house with porticoed courtyard, *Heraclea Lucania* (after Giardino 2014, 1025, fig. 2).

[36] Bragantini *et al*. 2008, 123.
[37] Bragantini *et al*. 2008, 124, 136–151.
[38] Giardino 2005, 412–413; 2014.

refurbishing, there was also a change of the tiled pavement for an *opus signinum* with ceramic fragments. The interesting aspect of this private example is the determination of the owners of the already existing Greek house in their search for a Roman-style courtyard in the second phase.

## Conclusions

The above examples are some of the instances of this type of a 'hybrid house' found in southern Italy. Certainly, they share very clear common features. The substitution of a peristyle with a courtyard resembling an atrium is the most obvious one. But the review of additional cases revealed more egalitarian features which were not seen during the previous brief analysis. For example the tendency to build a lateral entrance located on the right side in some houses or an indirect entrance. It is also common to find a tiled pavement in the *impluvia*, the centripetal distribution, or the permanence of the tripartite complex of rooms without connectivity (such as House A.I.2 in *Velia* and House CII in *Paestum*), and so forth. However, this review is also raising many questions that we hope to solve in the future. One of the most important problem is the identification of the main rooms, such as the *tablinum*, as most examples were traditionally identified, or as Greek reception rooms also. This task will be one of the key elements allowing better assessment of the actual impact that this type of houses and their inhabitants had on the Roman social network. In order to identify the public spaces in the house and their correct circulation, the Network Science Analysis will be applied to understand the arrangement of the domestic areas. With the results, we will be able to analyse the relationship between the domestic spaces for social and public representation and the most private areas of the household. Hence, it will also be necessary to study the materials from the selected houses. The analysis of the materials recovered from the various *domus* will enable appreciating the productive functions of the house and the level of consumption, as shown by the artisanal class of the house with porticoed courtyard of *Heraclea Lucania*. Such collection of data and a quantitative study of different materials (agricultural tools, equipment for industrial production, household equipment, *etc.*) could determine what type of domestic work was undertaken by the families who lived in these households, as well as what the production capacity for a given household or the consumption levels were. This information will help us understand what type of families lived in the houses and what kind of representative functions the domestic unit had. In this way, we will be able to try to establish the relation between their central distribution courtyards and reception rooms. Therefore, the existence or not of the ritual of *salutatio*, tightly-related to the *tablinum*, is definitely not the same in the context of their social lives. The atrium house is designed to perform very specific public functions between the owner and different segments of the society – functions which are not appreciated in the same way in the documented examples of the tetrastyle courtyard house, such as, for example, a *tablinum* or the axiality used to develop these political and public functions in the traditional Roman way. But it is also necessary to ask ourselves what the introduction of the Roman courtyard or Roman-influenced courtyard into the Greek house structure meant. Especially that it is not so important whether it was an atrium or a reduced peristyle, but rather whether it was a courtyard inspired by the Roman style or not. This fact only changes one morphological element of the house, like a 'fashion', or maybe it indicates a shift in the behaviour of the residents of the house with respect to their traditions and rituals. For this reason, it is very important to correctly identify the spaces and to try not to overlook either of the two vectors of influence, as well as their consequences for the social complexity of each city. In addition, we should not forget that we are talking about the Roman Period.

We hope that when this study is complete, it will prove helpful for the understanding of what was meant by the clash of cultures between the Greeks and the Romans throughout the Roman Empire.

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# Marina el-Alamein (Egypt): A Topographical Study and the Functioning of an Ancient Provincial Town on the Mediterranean Coast

Abstract

Marina el-Alamein, a small town situated around 100 km west of Alexandria, is a good example of a middle-sized settlement flourishing during the first three centuries AD. The present paper analyses the urban layout and plan of the settlement. The main hypothesis proposed here is based on the results of excavations conducted on the site since 1986. Thanks to the observations from the field, in addition to analyses of the already excavated structures, it was possible to reconstruct the street system and divide the urban space into three zones: the coastal zone (port area), the residential quarters, and the necropolis. All of them were situated on three natural terraces. The northern part, located along the seashore, was occupied by the port and warehouses. On the second terrace, wealthy residential quarters with a relatively large bathhouse complex were spread along the coast. Finally, a large necropolis with several types of monumental tombs created a border between the town and the desert.

**Keywords:** Egypt, Greek-Roman Period, urban planning, dwelling houses, bathhouse

Marina el-Alamein, a small antique town located around 100 km west of Alexandria, without a doubt belongs among the most unique archaeological sites situated in northern Egypt. Archaeological and conservation works have been carried out there regularly for almost three decades. Thanks to these excavations, it is possible to make an attempt to understand how the town was functioning in its prime.

Before the analysis is presented below, some words describing the site and the pertaining history of research are required. The archaeological site was recognised for the first time in 1986, when it was discovered accidentally during construction works, which were a part of a large tourist centre investment. The first rescue excavations were organised the following year. Since then and until his retirement, Wiktor A. Daszewski acted as the head of the archaeological mission investigating the area.[1] The majority, but not all, of Daszewski's activity focused on the examination of the necropolis situated in the southern part of the ancient town (Fig. 1). Thanks to his research, we know relatively much about the funerary customs practiced in the town during several centuries of its existence.

## General remarks

Generally, the southernmost part of the town was likely arranged institutionally or according to public space organisation patterns as well as social and topographical characteristics of the place. Even by looking at the cemetery complex alone, it is possible to identify several phases of its development. Not surprisingly, similarly to the town of the living, the town of the dead went through an evolutionary process of expansion. The oldest part of the Marina el-Alamein's necropolis recognised so far is situated in the central part of the southern section of the town. According to Daszewski's opinion, the oldest burial structures date back to the late 1st century BC or to the beginning of the 1st century AD. Several types of burial structures were concentrated there across a relatively limited area, ranging from simple graves without

[1] Daszewski 2011, 421–423.

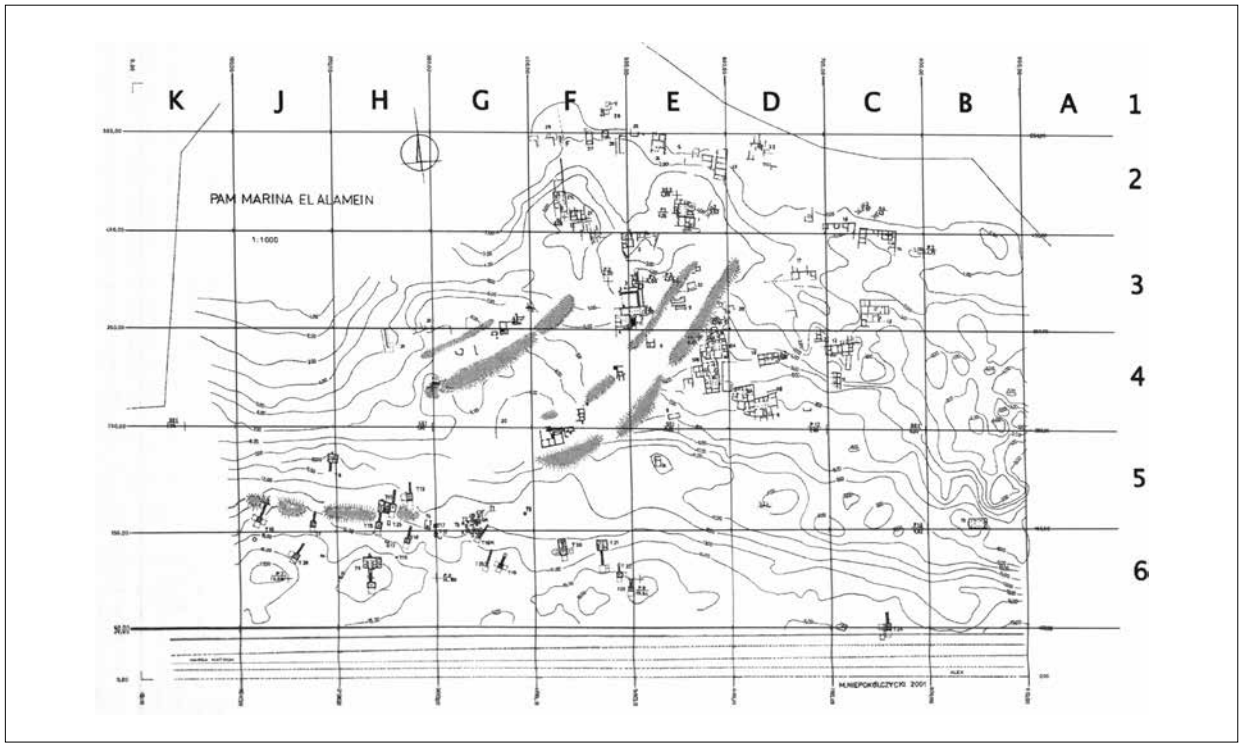


Fig. 1. Plan of the site of Marina el-Alamein (after Zych *et al*. 2008).

any overground parts, through trench tombs covered with flat slabs, the so-called 'stepped pyramid tombs or box graves', *tempietto* tombs, and 'mass graves', to columbarium tombs (Fig. 2).[2]

To the east and west of the central part of the necropolis, which doubtlessly is the most peculiar burial area in Marina el-Alamein, numerous tombs were also scattered across the site. Most of them belonged to the final stage of development of the necropolis. The necropolis development peak is manifested in a form of columbarium graves. Sometimes these tombs were finished with burial chapels attached to the front of the *dromoi*, leading to the graves' interiors. This kind of architectural and functional arrangement can be observed in tombs T6[3] and T21[4]. Probably, the variety of styles of the tombs and graves reflects different social status of the inhabitants of the town.

It is important to take into consideration the fact that even though numerous tombs and graves have already been excavated, only a fraction of their total number is currently at our disposal, since the majority still remain unpublished or even untouched by archaeologists. Thanks to their location within the town area, however, it can be estimated that the necropolis covered the southern part of the settlement almost completely. In some cases, the tombs may have been situated outside the town limits. Several columbarium sepulchres were discovered in the westernmost part of the protected area, which is located *c*. 1 km from the settlement's central quarters. The location of the burial places as well as their character and types doubtlessly belong to the most spectacular discoveries. However, even with a relatively good number of tombs and graves available for analysis, the problem of how to understand the necropolis' internal arrangement still remains unresolved. The question arises whether the necropolis developed according to a plan or evolved in a spontaneous way, in response to current needs. Most of the tombs in the central part of the necropolis, however, opened to the north, in the direction of the town and seashore. Such an observation clearly shows that, most probably, the necropolis area was intentionally separated from the town. It cannot be excluded that there was a main road between the tombs and the residential area, running towards Marsa Matruh (ancient *Paraetonium*) to the west and Alexandria to the east. The lay of the land supports this supposition: near the northern edge

[2] Daszewski, Zych 2007, 149–151.

[3] Initially designated as 'S6'; *cf*. Daszewski 1992, 33–36.

[4] Daszewski 2002, 79.

Fig. 2. A view on the necropolis (photo by K. Jakubiak).

of the necropolis, a subsided area spread along the E-W axis almost at the entire length of the urban zone and left enough space for a road.

## Town centre and the streets' distribution

North of the necropolis, there functioned a town situated inside a kind of geological trough. Thanks to the previous and recent works and observations in the field, it was possible to identify several units, if not town quarters. In the case of Marina el-Alamein, it cannot be confirmed whether the town was planned according to a grid plan or not. The streets included in the ground plan are not parallel to one another (Fig. 3). While it is impossible to determine why this kind of urban planning characterised the town, there are enough indications to explain why the grid plan, Hippodamian in style, never did. The first tentative attempt at understanding this urban layout and space arrangement was made by Stanisław Medeksza, but from the present state of knowledge his observations can be updated and re-evaluated.[5] Recently, Grażyna Bąkowska-Czerner and Rafał Czerner proposed a general view on the site.[6] In their study, both scholars were mainly focused on an analysis of the architectural structures. A peculiar layout of Marina was likely to be influenced by such natural factors as the devastating summer winds, bringing heat and sand from the desert, as well as the winter winds bringing humidity and cold from the sea. These climatic conditions most probably did not change much since the times when the town flourished. Consequently, the monitoring of the weather conditions and personal observations during the course of the archaeological research project suggested a hypothesis that climatic observations and knowledge in this part of the Mediterranean coast had implications for or influenced the architectural solutions applied in urban planning. This is why, probably, the model of the street grid was a kind of compromise between the organisation of space based on the tradition (Hippodamian grid plan) and protection of the town citizens against the aforementioned natural factors capable of damaging the architecture of the town as well as making the life there even more difficult. In order to protect themselves, residents of Marina rejected the Hippodamian urban structure and applied a modified version, cleverly adjusted to their needs. Certainly, the process of urban planning in such circumstances was based on the knowledge of the natural conditions characteristic of the Egyptian coastal zone. The question arises as to whether the people who lived there had such knowledge or would pass it down from generation to generation. The last supposition assumes that in Marina el-Alamein the concept of urban structure organisation needed to be modified already during the town's development. Unfortunately, it is still impossible to answer this question, since we do not have enough information at our disposal. The only available observations, albeit very limited, confirm that the architectural structures were built on top of one another using the layout of the previous constructions.[7] This is certainly not enough to develop a theory concerning the development of the town or any kind of changes in the town's urban planning.

Generally, it is difficult to find any remains of straight streets going through the town that would give the slightest impression that a grid plan of urban internal arrangement was used there. In some places, however, straight or almost straight streets were recognised. It is noteworthy that these straight segments of the street grid were relatively short, giving little room for blowing wind and thus increasing comfort for the residents. What deserves special attention is one of the broader streets discovered so far in Marina el-Alamein. The street, situated in the central part of the town, taking into account its

[5] Medeksza 1999.

[6] Bąkowska-Czerner, Czerner 2019.

[7] Jakubiak 2016.

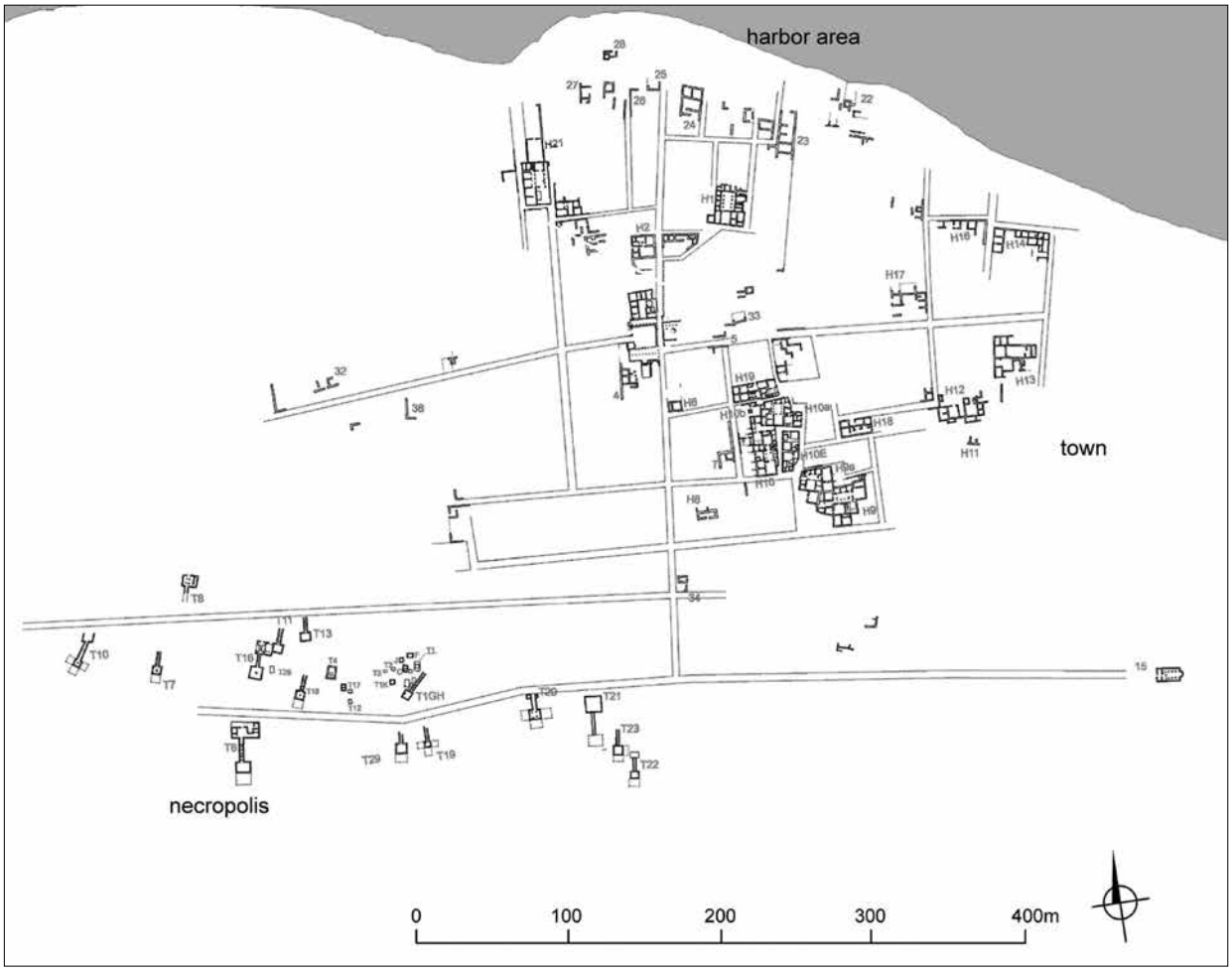


Fig. 3. Plan of the site of Marina el-Alamein (after Medeksza *et al.* 2010, fig. 1).

location in the town plan, must have been thought of as one of the most important arteries, making communication between the port area and the residential quarters easy and efficient. Next to this street, so-called House H21c was discovered, a very rich edifice with a commemorative monument dedicated to Commodus situated in its courtyard. It is hard to tell whether the residence was originally constructed there because of the vicinity of the broad street or for other reasons (Fig. 4).[8] Leaving speculations aside, it seems most important that the street functioned for several hundred years. During the excavations undertaken in 2012, a trench adjoining the street was partly explored.[9] The results of these works and stratigraphic observations confirmed that the street was in permanent use since the beginning of the 1st century AD. What is crucial is that this route, which played a vital role in the town's communication network, had never been paved. Each exploitation level of the street was marked by a layer of ashes mixed with pottery fragments and shells of freshwater snails. The street is also the longest straight artery so far discovered among the ruins of the town. It should be mentioned that the route was built to the west from the bathhouse complex originally situated in the central part of the town.[10] It cannot be excluded that several public buildings might have been erected to the west of the baths. Certainly, without trial excavations in that part of the ancient town this supposition will remain a mere conjecture. Yet, the presence of the broad or main street allows suspecting that some other important buildings were located nearby. Only further excavations may reveal what kind of architectural structures were functioning along the western side of the street.

[8] Medeksza 2001, 72–74; 2002, 92–103; Medeksza *et al.* 2003, 89–96.

[9] Jakubiak 2016.

[10] Daszewski 2011, 424–29; Medeksza *et al.* 2011, 109–118.

Fig. 4. Courtyard of House H21, a view from the north (photo by K. Jakubiak).

The second, partly-paved street, running almost in parallel to the above-mentioned artery, was functioning along the eastern elevation of the bathhouse complex (Fig. 5). It cannot be excluded that both streets were planned to frame the central part of the town. Based on the data recently made available, it is likely that the central part of the town was limited to the area north of the bathhouse complex and its vicinity and spread as far north as the port area. A significant role in this argumentation is doubtlessly played by the remains of flagstones which paved the street running northward from the bath complex. Additionally, the other paved street running perpendicularly along the E-W axis, beginning near the bathhouses and the central square between them, seems to be crucial in the aforementioned interpretation of the functioning of this part of the town. The traces of the paved street are still visible at a distance of *c*. 100 m to the east of the bath complex. This part of the street grid is a very promising area for further investigation. There, in the preserved part, not only the pavement and flagstones but also kerbstones survived in their original places. Unfortunately, the road is only partly visible and has never been fully examined, which makes it impossible to estimate the length of the paved section. The road was probably running as far east as the eastern town limits and further to the eastern suburbia of the town. It can be tracked all the way to the vicinity of House H13 situated in the eastern part of the town.[11] There, supposedly, it formed a junction with another, smaller street which was running along the N-S axis. The question remains whether the above-mentioned paved street had its continuation farther to the east or terminated as a dead end in this area. Unfortunately, our present knowledge does not allow determining exactly what kinds of dwellings were built there. The remains of partly-excavated architectural structures indicate that it might have been a relatively wealthy quarter. Naturally, without excavations in that part of the town that supposition cannot be verified.

## Residential district

Generally, the remains of residential architecture are situated in the southern and western parts of the ancient town. Major knowledge on the residential structures definitely comes from the excavations conducted in

[11] Zych *et al*. 2006.

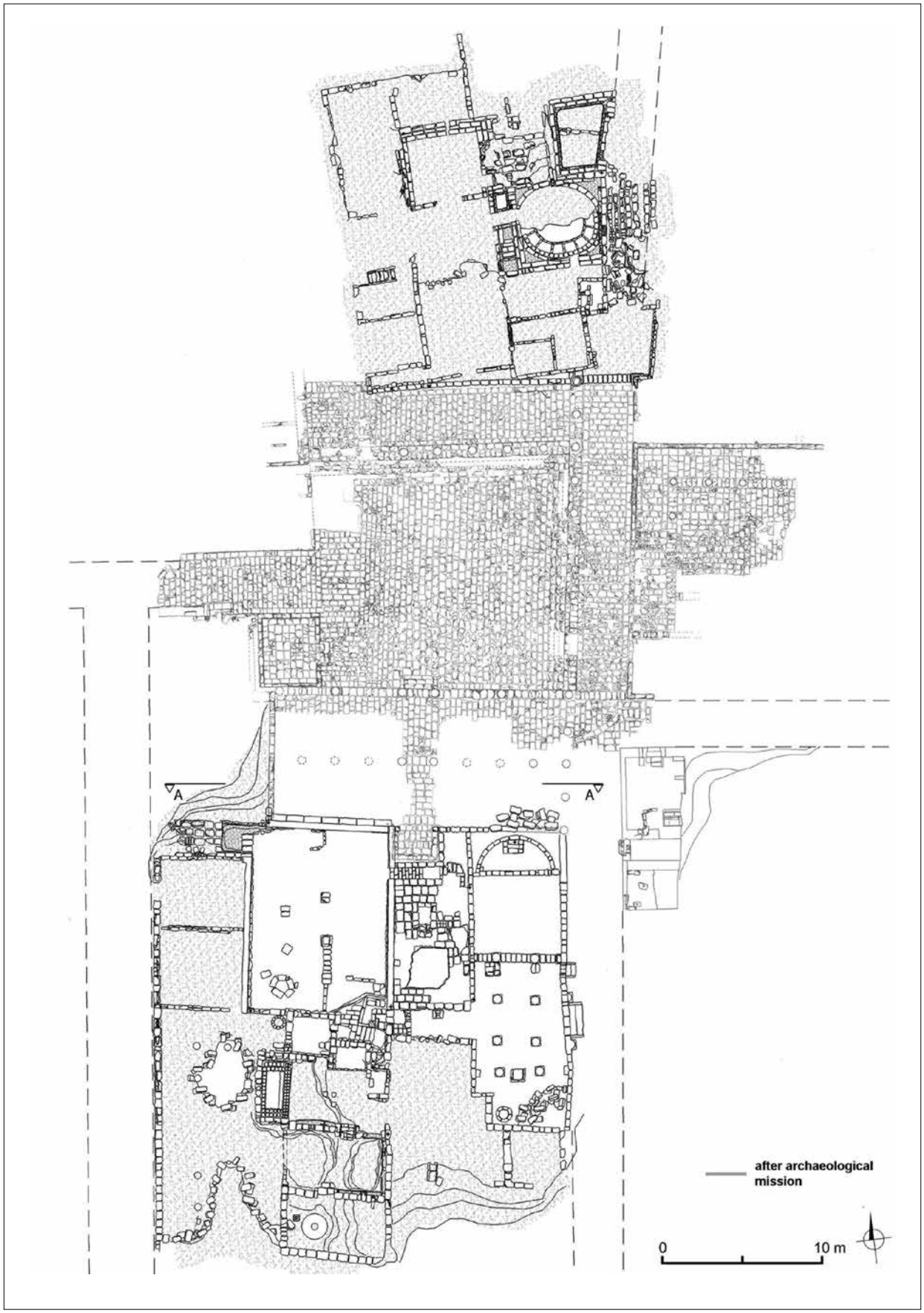


Fig. 5. Plan of the baths from the central part of the town (after Medeksza *et al*. 2010, fig. 6).

the southern part of the settlement. Most of the already excavated houses were rather rich, well-built, and well-finished. Taking into account the urban space arrangement, it seems at the first glance that the southern part of the town was arranged chaotically. A closer and more careful analysis of the space provides some further impressions concerning the internal spatial organisation of this district. Based on the present understanding, however, it is possible to assume that the layout of each house depended on the shape of the plot. The wealthiest of the investors also could have played a significant role. In consequence, the investors became the owners of a piece of land within the town. The only puzzling matter is why the shapes of the plots are sometimes not even remotely regular. It cannot be excluded that the shape of each plot, visible after the excavations, is a result of the earlier phase of the town's internal organisation. It cannot be assumed, however, that the town planning had never been changed over the lifespan of the settlement. As already mentioned, at least two building phases were confirmed by a single deep trial trench. The excavations showed that the structures were built on one another according to the same ground plan.

The best-known parts of the residential structures are currently the complexes of House 9[12] and House 10 (Figs 6, 7). Also, the northern part of the residential district was limited by House H19, which is situated north of the narrow street behind House 10a.[13] Only one house there had a rectangular layout and was constructed perpendicularly to the residential complex no. 10. Even there, the narrow street did not keep the same breadth at its whole length and was getting narrower near the entrance to House H19. The layouts of both compounds nos. 9 and 10 are irregular in shape and were located against each other. Both of them formed a cluster of several houses. This kind of residential structures' distribution seems to reflect the oriental or local style of dwelling organisation. In the complex no. 10, three large and well-built houses would form a residential quarter. Between the structures nos. 10 and 10a, a partly-excavated dwelling was cleaned up in the western part of the complex. Two out of three of the fully-excavated dwellings had internal courtyards with peristyle finishing. Inside the third one, a simple courtyard was situated in its western part. House 10e was constructed in an open space between the complexes nos. 10 and 9. This way, supposedly, the original court was taken up by the house, which arranged and finished this part of the residential quarter. In this manner, a small, roughly L-shaped street was designed to provide access to the structures in the complex no. 10.

The other residential complex (no. 9) consists of two houses only. The layouts of both of them were also irregular in shape. From the urban planning point of view, the most important is how difficult it is to observe one straight street along these complex architectonic constructions. Here, the street also turns several times to facilitate access to the dwellings' entrances.

The neighbourhood of the H9 and H10 districts has a very specific internal organisation which is, apparently, characteristic of the whole spatial arrangement of the town. Eastward of these residential complexes, several partly-recognised houses could be identified. Thanks to a field survey and rescue excavations, it was possible to confirm that houses H18 and H12, as well as House H13, were situated in the eastern part of the already known district. In that part of the town, remains of a possible street communication network are also clearly visible. There, at least two streets could be reconstructed. Both of them were running directly toward the east. Another street reconstructed there was running more or less along the N-S axis. This street had its beginning at the corner near House H12. In the northern part, the street was slightly bent to the east, toward the harbour. This relatively narrow route crossed another one, running E-W, which started near the bathhouse complex. In the north-eastern part of the already recognised settlement limits, some traces of three other streets and three more partly-recognised houses were detected. At this point, similarly to the other parts of the town, the streets were running not in parallel to one another. They ran straight only in small sections, and each of the fragments did so at a different angle.

The area located westward from the ruins of House H17 remains almost completely untouched, so it is difficult to tell what kind of architectural structures could be found there. A relatively vast area in the central part of the town is still awaiting future excavations. In the centrally-located northern part of the town, several residential structures were brought to light. Architectural structures H2 and H1 doubtlessly deserve attention (Fig. 8).[14] Especially House H1 seems to be crucial for a proper interpretation of that part of the town. This building is one of the largest dwellings ever excavated in Marina el-Alamein. Thanks to an architectonic analysis, it was possible to confirm that the building should be reconstructed as a two-storey construction. It was not only a wealthy dwelling, but was also used partly as an industrial structure. Several large tubes finished with water-resistant concrete were discovered in the eastern part of the house. The fact that considerable amounts of

[12] Medeksza 1996, 45–52; 2002, 89–102; Daszewski 2011, 429–431.

[13] Medeksza 2001, 65–72; 2002, 89–102; Daszewski 2011, 429–431.

[14] Medeksza *et al.* 2007, 10–15.

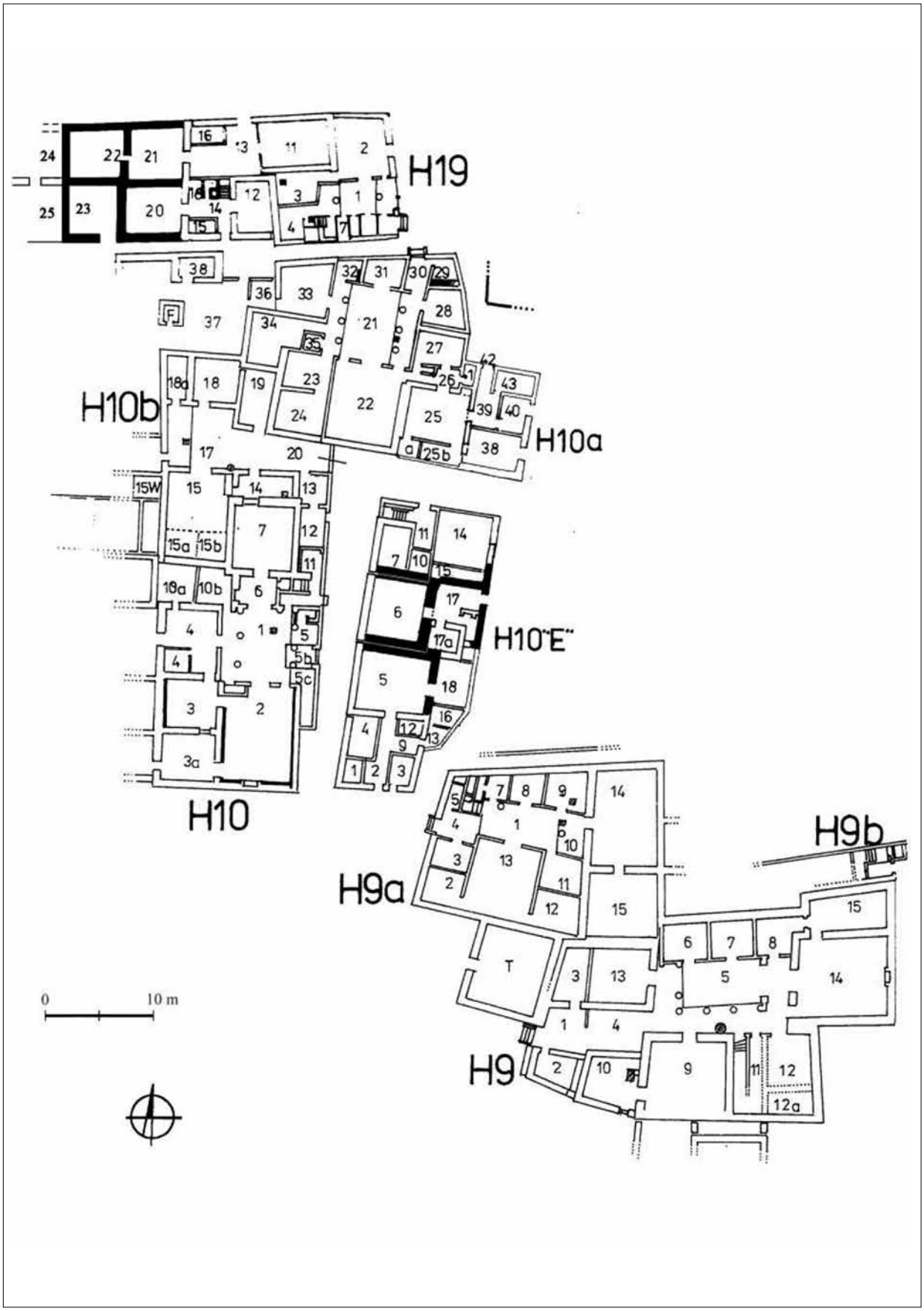


Fig. 6. Plan of the southern residential complex (after Medeksza *et al*. 2005, fig. 2).

Fig. 7. House H10a, a view from the south-east (photo by K. Jakubiak).

Fig. 8. House H1, a view from the north-west (photo by K. Jakubiak).

murex shells were found on a refuse-heap can indicate that a dye-house used to operate on the ground floor.

The other house, H2, a smaller but also well-built structure, is situated to the west from a slightly bent street running along the N-S axis. This street was most probably one of the main town arteries which passed by the bathhouse complex situated in the town centre. Several other architectural structures are still visible on the surface there, but their ground plans still await mapping and recording. It needs to be mentioned, however, that to the north from House H2 three other streets could be identified and recorded. Two of them were aligned along the E-W axis, while the third one ran northwards. Between these three streets – two parallel and one perpendicular to them going toward the harbour – House H41 has recently been excavated (Figs 9, 10).[15] This large house with two internal courtyards also belongs to the most spectacular architectural structures unearthed in Marina el-Alamein. There, inside a large stone-paved courtyard, remains of a private shrine used only by the residents were detected. The structure, similarly to the already mentioned House H1, was also a two-storey building. Most importantly, House H41 covered the area of the whole insula and was one of the largest residential structures ever functioning in this ancient town. The neighbourhood of House H41 without a doubt belonged to the most important spaces in the town. This supposition was confirmed thanks to the excavations in House H21, with an attached banquet hall situated directly to the north from the house (Fig. 11). Both unearthed structures and especially the remains of the Commodus commemorative monument located inside House H21 seem to support the hypothesis about the importance of this part of the town.[16]

## Harbour area

All of the structures situated in the northern part of the town were most probably connected with the harbour and, in consequence, to the port, which played a crucial role in the town's economy. It can be assumed that the port area started north of the line of houses H21 and H1,

Fig. 9. Courtyard of House H41, a view from the east (photo by K. Jakubiak).

[15] Jakubiak 2016.

[16] Czerner 2005, 126–130; Czerner, Medeksza 2010.

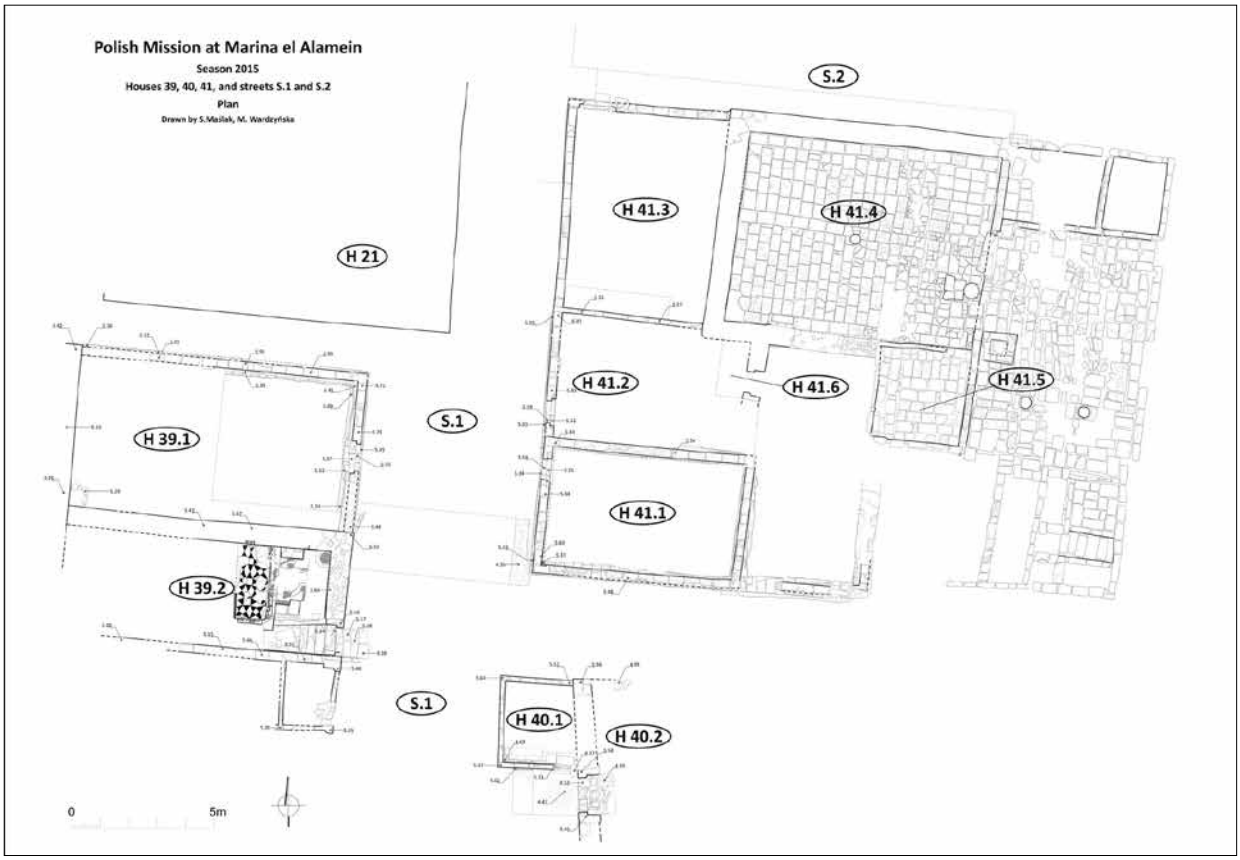


Fig. 10. Plan of House H41 (drawing by S. Maślak and M. Wardzyńska).

Fig. 11. Banquet hall attached to House H21, a view from the north (photo by K. Jakubiak).

with a street running along the E-W axis. To the north of this street, a small depression is clearly traceable. Most probably, it was an original landform, which provided free access to the seashore. Today, not many of the stone block and rock structures survive *in situ*. The structures as well as their layouts seem to be the remains of storage buildings spread all over the sunken area. The best-preserved ones are the two buildings known as structures 23 and 24. Several other buildings partly-visible on the surface (22, 25, 26, and 27) also belonged to the infrastructure of the port. Unfortunately, not all of the structures have survived in good condition, and this influenced the extent of our present knowledge on how the port in Marina el-Alamein might have been organised. It cannot be excluded that numerous port structures, such as storehouses, docking piers, and breakwaters, were most probably ultimately destroyed during the Porto Marina Resort construction process.

Thanks to an analysis of satellite photographs, it can be postulated that the seashore in the port area is badly damaged. The process of the seashore remodelling is already finished, and now the area of the ancient port is a part of a much larger modern tourist resort. Looking westward from the remains of the ancient port, the seashore looks very interesting. The area where the museum building and the dig house are presently located was probably free of any traces of human activity in the past. In the ancient times, supposedly, there was a sea bottom there. Here, a relatively flat harbour must have been originally formed. The original shape of the coast was probably changed by the ocean currents, which brought the material that was gradually silting up the area westward from the supposed headland. If the supposition is correct, it indicates that the location of the port was chosen perfectly, as the waters in the port basin were relatively calm, and only one small breakwater was enough to protect boats and ships anchored there.

## Final remarks

Generally, the town can be divided into several parts according to the specific role of the distribution of architectural structures within the settlement. Certainly, the character of architecture determined the specific organisation of each district. On the basis of our present knowledge and the results of the already conducted excavations and observations from the field, it is possible to identify quite a lot of units within the settlement. In the north, along the seashore, traces of port infrastructure can be found. The second unit, located between houses H1, H21, and H41 and their vicinity, was the district of wealthy houses with a private bathhouse, decorated with a pebble mosaic floor and attached to House H41.[17] This is, probably, where the most spectacular and representative group of private buildings was situated. The third unit, that is the town centre, was located in the vicinity of the bathhouse, with a basilica attached to the complex and a *palestra* structure as the central part of the compound. Supposedly, to the north-east of the northern part of the baths and directly to the south of House H1, an *agora* or the main city square can be inferred. The supposition can be supported by the fact that a subsided area, more or less rectangular in shape, is still clearly visible. In other words, the most important public buildings could have been situated in the discussed part of the archaeological site.

To the east and west of the centrally-located bathhouse complex, two large districts of wealthy houses must have been situated. The only well-examined features of the area are the two clusters of houses known as housing complexes 9 and 10. Taking into consideration the lay of the land and the surface of the area, it is likely that the whole central part of the town was occupied by wealthy and well-built residential structures. Eastward of the H9 and H10 town quarters, another district of dwellings developed in the vicinity of houses H14 and H16 and other buildings. A slightly more modest architecture can be observed there. These structures, partly excavated and recorded only on the surface, represent the average residential architecture. Most probably, the middle class inhabited this district of the town. However, this automatically provokes the question about the whereabouts of the poorer dwellings. It is likely that non-wealthy, ordinary people of Marina el-Alamein lived in the eastern part of the town. Unfortunately, this fragment of the ancient settlement is severely damaged by modern activity. The character of this part of the site, however, indicates that mud brick architecture may have dominated there. In many places, traces of eroded mud brick structures are still visible on the surface. In this part of the town, an early Christian basilica was constructed, most probably at the beginning of the 5th century AD.[18] This religious facility clearly confirms that the town survived the earthquake in the 4th century AD.

The last element that was an integral part of the town is a large necropolis attached to the settlement from the south. It cannot be excluded that the aforementioned basilica was erected over a burial of a local saint. Along a modern highway running toward Marsa Matruh, at the distance of at least 1,5 km, several types of tombs indicated the scale of Marina el-Alamein's cemetery. Most

[17] Jakubiak 2016.

[18] Daszewski 2011, 435.

probably, the tract of land between the cemetery and the town quarters used by the citizens was taken up by a main road connecting Alexandria to the east and *Paraetonium* to the west. In such a natural way, the two parts of the town were separated from each other. A clear and natural barrier divided the two worlds: the town of the living in the north and the town of the dead in the south.

Considering all the above-mentioned elements which together formed the town, it can be postulated that in the 1st century AD Marina el-Alamein was a peculiar settlement situated on the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. Especially the wealthiest members of the urban community once living there deserve our closer attention. Reflection of their social status is clearly visible in the different types of tombs, which can also provide information about the origin of the populace living in this part of Egypt. The street grid and the omission of the Hippodamian urban plan can be interpreted as an attempt to protect against the local weather and harsh climatic conditions. The coastal area with the port, the first natural platform used for dwelling and public space organisation (cultic or sacral structures were possibly located there), and the uppermost ridge, where the necropolis was located, paint a picture of a town divided in a very natural way into three zones of human activity. The towns from the shoreline are not as well-known as those from the Egyptian interior, such as the Faiyum Oasis and others.[19] This is what makes it still worthwhile to analyse the town of Marina el-Alamein as a specific and exceptional settlement functioning on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt. Therefore, Marina el-Alamein doubtlessly belongs to the most intriguing and important, as well as small yet wealthy, towns in the eastern part of the Mediterranean basin.

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[19] Davoli 2011.

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# House H9 from Marina el-Alamein – a Research Summary

Abstract

Studies on the relics of the Hellenistic-Roman town at the site of Marina el-Alamein in Egypt have been carried out since 1986. House H9 was one of the first buildings to be excavated, investigated, and preserved through conservation. Successive research has supplemented the previous studies. The house is one of the largest and earliest features at the site. In the context of Marina, it is more firmly embedded in the Greek-Hellenistic tradition, yet also refers to Roman solutions. It is a house of the *oikos* type, featuring a courtyard with two porticoes situated asymmetrically perpendicular to each other. Elements referring to the Greek systems of *prostas* and *pastas* can be discerned in the layout. The research focused on domestic cult as well as elements and character of the decor, including painted interior decoration. Architecture and home furnishings document civilisational changes at the cultural touchpoint between the Greek and Roman traditions.

**Keywords:** Marina el-Alamein, Graeco-Roman Egypt, residential architecture, decoration, domestic cult

Research on the Marina el-Alamein site (Matrouh Governorate/ET) on the northern coast of Egypt has been conducted since 1986, when relics of the ancient town were discovered during the construction of a modern tourist resort. Excavations were then undertaken by researchers from a mission of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology (PCMA) directed by Professor W.A. Daszewski along with Egyptian archaeologists. Soon, work on the site was undertaken by conservation missions directed by W. Bentkowski (from the State Studios for Conservation of Cultural Property from Zamość), then by J. Dobrowolski, and since 1995 by S. Medeksza (from Wrocław University of Science and Technology). The relics discovered during this research testify to the existence of a Hellenistic and Roman port, town, and necropolis between the 2nd century BC and the 6th century AD. The ancient town and port were located on the shores of a lagoon which still exists today, 96 km west of the metropolis of Alexandria and under its influence.

The examined archaeological features include some significant remains of quarters of residential buildings and houses, including a few of considerable size. These relics come from the second half of the 1st century, almost in their entirety. However, rich tomb monuments from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD testify to the existence of a city already developed in the previous period. The few relics of the walls from these times indicate that the majority of the buildings whose remains are currently known repeated the layout of older systems.[1]

[1] Czerner 2017, 42–46.

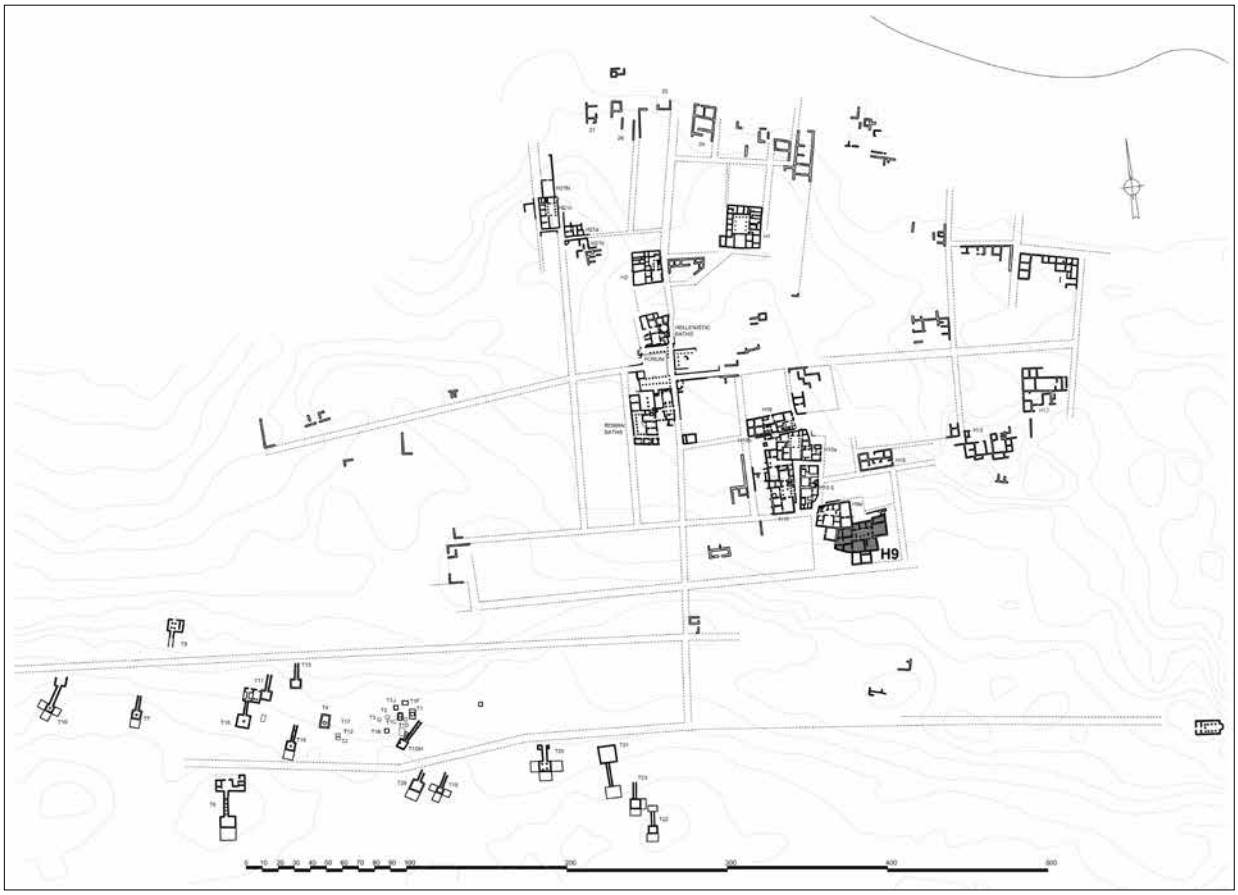


Fig. 1. Plan of the site at Marina el-Alamein showing the excavated structures and the reconstructed street grid with the location of House H9 (after S. Medeksza; compiled by K. Majdzik).

The town plan is not strictly regular, but the streets run latitudinally (main streets) and meridially (roads leading toward the wharf), with only minor deviations.[2] This determines the orientation of the residential houses (Fig. 1).

In terms of spatial arrangements, these are *oikos* houses with main reception rooms and courtyards on one axis. The courtyards were asymmetric, with one or two porticoes, or symmetric, some with incomplete peristyles. The latter are more similar to Roman concepts, while the former follow the traditions of Greek housing.[3]

Among Marina's houses, the one marked as H9 (Fig. 2) shows the strongest inspiration by the functionality of Greek residential architecture. It is an edifice whose relics were among the first to be examined and the first for which a preservation and conservation project was developed. This was completed in subsequent seasons.

House H9 is located in the south-eastern residential area of the ancient town, away from its centre. It was excavated by Egyptian archaeologists in 1987, shortly after the discovery of the town. Research aimed at developing a conservation project was carried out by architects from the conservation mission from Zamość and, since 1995, the Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission has been run by specialists from the Wrocław University of Science and Technology. The results of the studies of the building's architecture were published by Włodzimierz Bentkowski,[4] Urszula Fidecka,[5] Jan Radzik,[6] and Wiktor A. Daszewski (who discovered the site and directed the Polish Archaeological Mission of the PCMA until 2006).[7] Stanisław Medeksza (head of the Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission, 1995–2011) provided the most comprehensive presentation of the results of research on

[2] Medeksza 1999, 120–122; Pensabene 2010, 202; Medeksza *et al.* 2015, 1741.
[3] Medeksza *et al.* 2015, 1745.
[4] Bentkowski 1990; 1991.
[5] Fidecka 1991.
[6] Radzik 1991.
[7] Daszewski 1995, 19–25, figs 9, 10, 14; 2011, 429–431.

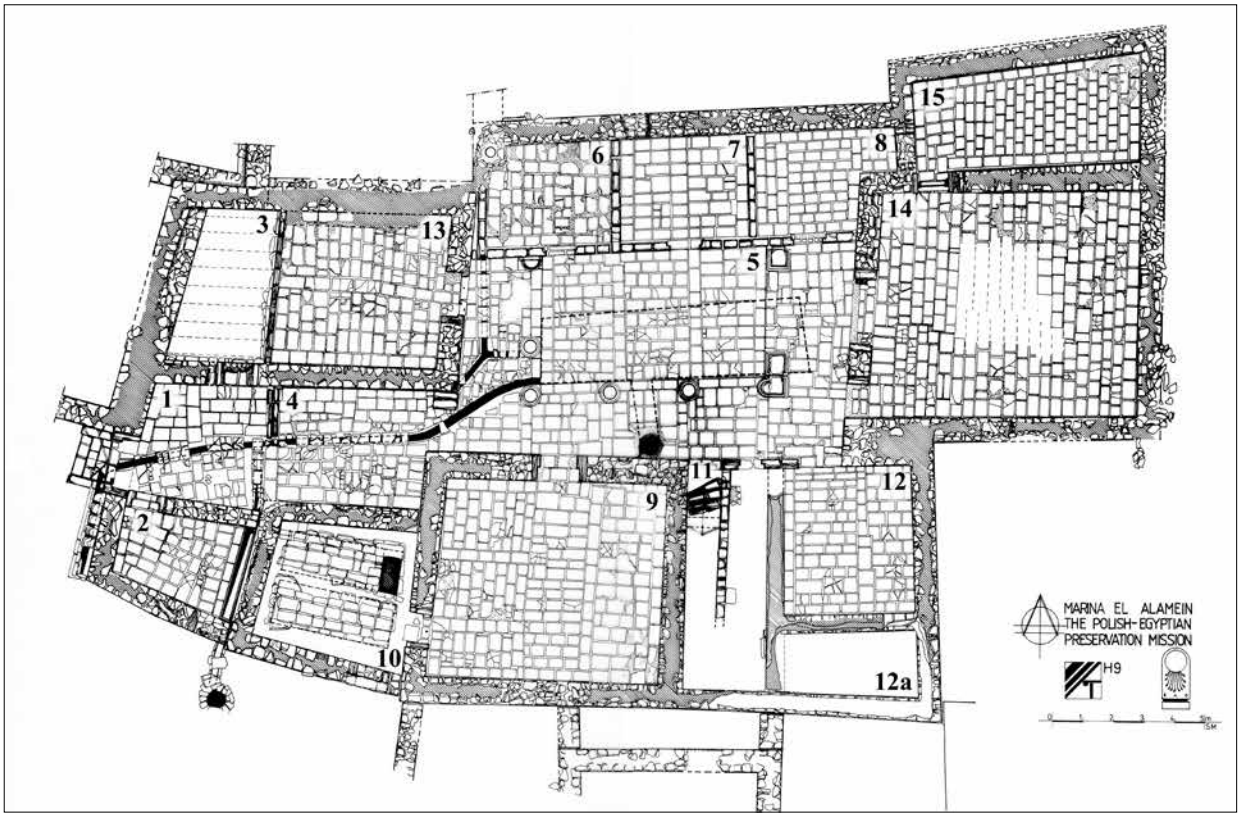


Fig. 2. Inventory plan of House H9 from Marina el-Alamein (compiled by S. Medeksza).

House H9 against the background of his studies of the residential architecture in Marina el-Alamein.[8]

The edifice underwent conservation with anastylosis of the portico elements between 1995 and 1998 (Fig. 3), and the preservation efforts were later repeated. This gave the opportunity for additional observations. The relics were extensively researched. Interpretations of the edifice, however meticulous they might be, left unexplained issues, some of which can be answered today. It is precisely what we wish to focus on in the present paper.

House H9 is located in a part of the town where the streets run relatively irregularly, due to the limitations imposed by the lay of the land. Therefore, its layout along the E-W axis, which occupies a space 40 m long and 24 m wide, deviates from a regular rectangle in its outline. In the centre of the house, however, there is a more or less rectangular courtyard (Fig. 4), and the two largest rooms to the east and south of it, as well as the third largest on the western side, are almost regularly rectangular. Most of the walls were made of rubble masonry cemented in the core with clay and plastered with lime mortar, which was also constructional and cemented the rubble on the façade.

It is an *oikos* house, which was the prevailing type in the town. The courtyard (5) and the main room, *oikos* (14), east of it, preceded by a *prostas* vestibule, are located along the same axis and organise the main space of the house.[9] The presence of both neighbouring rooms connected with the courtyard refers to the tradition of Greek houses.

Two column porticoes open onto the courtyard from the west and south. The southern portico extends eastward, creating a communication tract for the rooms on the south side of the house, referring to the layout of *pastas*, also known from the tradition of Greek houses.[10] A second large hall (9) dominates the southern rooms, with a width equal to the size of the courtyard. This was probably an *andron*, which became a Roman-style *triclinium*[11] in the following exploitation phase. The neighbouring kitchen area (10) with two vaulted cellars would certainly testify to this. They were accessible through

[8] Medeksza 1999, 125–126, figs 3–7; Medeksza *et al.* 2015, 1745.
[9] Daszewski 2011, 431; Medeksza *et al.* 2015, 1745.
[10] Medeksza 1999, 125; Medeksza *et al.* 2015, 1745; see also Hoepfner, Schwander 1994, 99, fig. 321.
[11] Medeksza 1999, 125; Daszewski 2011, 431.

Fig. 3. Archival photo of House H9 during the conservation works in 1996, a view from the south-west (Archive of the Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission).

Fig. 4. Courtyard of House H9, a view from the north-west (photo by R. Czerner).

a hatch closed with a stone slab. Amphorae were discovered inside.[12]

From the east, a stairwell (11) rose adjacent to the *andron/triclinium*. Further to the east were located two rectangular rooms occupying the south-eastern part of the house. One of them (12a) had secondary partition walls – to the north and west – made of dried brick. The ground floor room located further to the east and occupying the south-eastern corner of the building was not functionally connected with the household, and it was impossible to enter it from the inside. Its eastern and southern walls are only partially preserved. A narrow room (15) was located in the north-eastern corner of the house, north of the *oikos*.

The courtyard was asymmetrical, and there was no portico on the northern side. Three small rooms were located there. Researchers have suggested that one of them, the western one (6) in the original phase, could have been a kitchen. A stove relic was found there in the thickness of the western wall, in the north-western corner. The investigation in 1997 showed that the thickening of the stove wall was built secondarily on the existing floor. The function of the hearth reveals that there was no wall above it. All this indicates that the stove came from the late period, when the abandoned and ruined house was re-used. The aforementioned three rooms, the only ones in the whole house, were walled on the side of the courtyard and separated by regular limestone ashlars. Portico columns, as well as pillars flanking the entrance from the courtyard to the *prostas*, were also built from regular elements.

The corridor – divided in a later phase into two parts (1 and 4) – leading eastward from the entrance to the southern portico of the courtyard (albeit with an axis nudged slightly southward in relation to that of the portico) organised the western part of the house. Two rooms were located to the north and south of the corridor. The south-western room (2) housed a latrine, whereas the north-western (3) was a warehouse, which the excavation discovered to be filled with amphorae.[13] In the south-eastern room (10) was located the aforementioned kitchen adjacent to the *andron/triclinium*, and the north-eastern (13) was a living room entered from the east via the courtyard. It was located exactly opposite the *oikos*, which was on the other side of the courtyard, on the same axis. The intercolumniation of the portico in front of it was prominent and wider than the others.

The courtyard and rooms were paved with limestone slabs. Under the courtyard, there was a vaulted tank with a well located in the southern portico. Two downspouts in the western and northern walls of the courtyard supplied water to the tank. However, water from the central part of the courtyard was drained by a sewer under the floor of the entrance corridor to the latrine and through it to the cesspool well located on the street to the south of the house. This street was later built up by structures adjacent to the house. A further, western section of the sewer, under the corridor floor, also supplied water to a trough located outside the house, by the western wall next to the entrance.

In the above-described manner, researchers were able to functionally interpret the layout of the relics excavated from the house.[14] Likewise, they noted several additions to the walls.[15] Having interpreted them, they reached the conclusion that the eastern part of the house had been extended westward from a line demarcated in the north by the western edge of the courtyard and in the south by the western wall of the *andron/triclinium* (9).[16] They explained the extension as a second construction and exploitation phase, but the question of its function was left untouched by researchers, and subsequent observations and analyses raised doubts as to the justification for separating these two phases. Undoubtedly, the late phase of reconstruction or repairs after a disaster was executed with the use of dried brick.[17]

When analysing the possibility of the existence of the two functional phases and the extension of the house, it should be noted that there must have been a wall on the western side of the western portico of the courtyard and that it probably belonged to some room, including in the first assumed phase. In the western part of the house, there are relics of a latrine, fed by the sewer from the central part of the courtyard, formed in the floor of its western portico. This floor does not bear any traces of transformation and, therefore, most likely comes from the original phase. Analogies from other houses in Marina show that latrines located next to the entrance were mandatory elements of even the smallest households. Therefore, a latrine should be expected to exist in House H9 from the beginning as well, and it was also presumably located on the western side.

The described modification, if it did ever take place at all, was therefore not an extension to the west, where no structures had previously stood. Instead, it could have

[12] Bentkowski 1991, 10.

[13] Bentkowski 1991, 25.

[14] Bentkowski 1990, 40–42; 1991, 23–28; Fidecka 1991; Medeksza 1999, 125–126; Daszewski 2011, 429–431; Medeksza *et al.* 2015, 1745.

[15] Fidecka 1991, fig. 1.

[16] Fidecka 1991, 33, 35; Medeksza 1999, 125.

[17] Described in detail by Medeksza; see Medeksza 1999, 126; Daszewski 1995, 427.

been a major reconstruction, perhaps an enlargement of the earlier western part, during which some walls were adapted, although not necessarily all of them.

However, a general reconstruction, and particularly of the western part of the house, which it affected, need not have taken place at all. Indeed, besides the above-mentioned functional issues, it is worth noting that there were no breaks or extensions between the outer northern walls of the eastern and western parts along the line of the aforementioned division. The connection and continuity in this zone were clearly demonstrated by the first investigators[18] and confirmed by later studies.[19] However, the addition of individual walls and rooms in the southern part could have been merely a result of construction phases.

Thus, the house could have generally been built in a single phase, as an extension to House H9a located to the north, which had been erected earlier along with a tavern adjoining it from the south. The irregularity of the external outline of House H9 resulted both from this extension, as well as from the irregular course of the streets from the other sides, mainly from the south. However, the main, largest rooms of the *oikos*, *andron/triclinium* and Room 13, were arranged as regularly as possible and almost rectangular. What tied the layout of the house together was the rectangular courtyard complex with porticoes and three rooms from the north. It has a very regular layout, albeit running parallel to the long northern wall of the house and thus slightly twisted in relation to the major axis of the three main rooms. The courtyard complex is made up of regular large limestone elements, including walls made of ashlar masonry, using different technology and is much more meticulous than the other walls of the house. It was made by different craftsmen and probably at a later stage of construction.

## Form of the roofs

S. Medeksza's observations and considerations[20] regarding buildings from Marina, though general, are indeed pertinent to the subject of roofing: whether they were surface (sloping) roofs covered with tiles, or flat roofs or terraces covered with clay daubing or lime mortar. The tradition of Greek and Roman houses in this region allows both, as well as gable roofs over the highest reception rooms and flat roofs covering the other rooms. On the other hand, the lack of *tegula* roof tile relics, with the exception of a single specimen in the whole site, would tend to suggest flat roofs and terraces. In the Hellenistic baths located in the centre of the ancient town, a relic of a clay structure of a roof (or a floor) from palm beams was discovered.[21] Therefore, flat roof technology is known to have been used.

## Upper level

On the southern side of the house, to the east of the *andron/triclinium*, were stairs (11). Researchers explain their presence by positing that they led to roof terraces or upper-level rooms. The latter option would have facilitated a functional division into the part of the house for men (*andronitis*) on the ground floor and for women (*gynaeconitis*) on the upper floor. It was similar in other houses, where stairwell relics were usually also preserved. However, in the absence of any remains of the upper parts of this and other houses (with the exception of the columns of the portico floor in House H1),[22] it is difficult to explain more precisely whether there were indeed rooms on the first floor and whether they covered the whole house or just a part of it. However, an answer may be found based on a functional analysis and the applied building techniques.

The *oikos* (14), the largest reception room, due to its size and grandeur had to be higher than the neighbouring ones (whose height can be reconstructed at about 3.20 m). It featured an *aedicula* in the eastern wall, whose finial rose to at least 3.50 m, which, together with the necessary space above, required a considerable height. The entrance from the courtyard to the *prostas*, preceding the hall, was flanked by pillars whose height can be reconstructed at 3.75 m, based on proportions. The *andron/triclinium* (9) located in the south had similar dimensions to the *oikos*. The considerable span of the beams with their low load capacity could have also precluded any functional space above the room. However, this is not certain. These rooms, and in any case the *oikos*, were covered directly by a roof, whether flat or sloping, placed much higher than the floor of the upper level.

It is unlikely that the upper level – a terrace or rooms – accessible by stairs, would have been restricted only to the space limited by the aforementioned two rooms: the *oikos* (14), higher than the other ground floor rooms, and possibly the equally high *andron/triclinium* (9). This space (where the stairwell was located), above rooms 12 and 12a, and maybe over the interior to the east of them, which was inaccessible from the house, would be relatively small and not worth building developed stairs. Thus, probably the roofs of the southern and

[18] Fidecka 1991, fig. 1.

[19] Medeksza 1997, figs 2, 3; 1999, il. 3; Medeksza *et al.* 2015, fig. 4.

[20] Medeksza 1999, 124.

[21] Bąkowska-Czerner 2016, 173.

[22] Czerner 2011, 133–140, figs 4, 5.

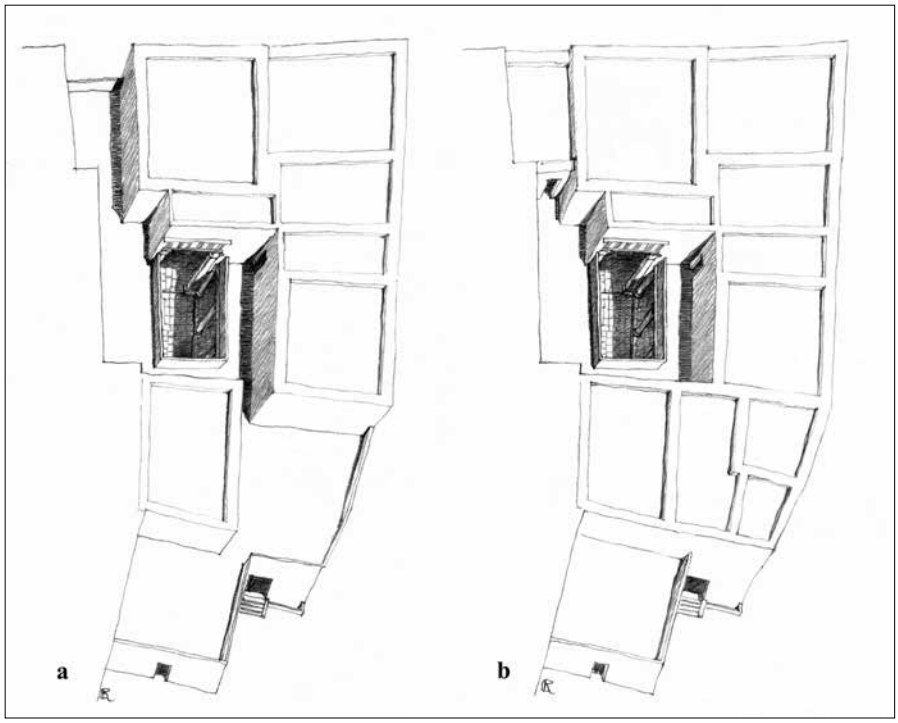


Fig. 5. House H9. An attempt at a reconstruction of the form of the roofs and upper floor: a. Upper floor minimally developed with rooms; b. Upper floor maximally developed with rooms (compiled by R. Czerner).

western portico of the courtyard served as communication galleries and provided access to the floor located above the farther parts of the house, especially over the western one.

The question of the height of the buildings located north of the courtyard is significant. Their thin walls indicate that they could have only supported a small load and, therefore, that this part of the buildings remained one-storey and was covered with a terrace. An analogy to a gallery above porticoes is unknown in Marina. No relics of balustrades remain, but they could have been made of wood or just simple walls. Nevertheless, such a solution is known to have been commonly applied in other towns and is therefore very likely.

The question remains as to what part of the floor was occupied by the rooms and what was the terrace like. The stairwell consisted of two flights, while the slope of the preserved relic of the stairs shows that one flight of a known length would have been enough to reach the level above the portico, or around 3.20–3.30 m (with the reconstructed height of the portico columns standing at 3.06 m). The flights could have been shorter or the eastern one could have lacked any stairs and instead served as a corridor on the upper level, leading from the end of the stairs in the south northward, to the gallery. In any case, two flights would only be needed, if indeed there was a room to the east of the stairwell on the upper floor. Therefore, this part of the upper floor could not have been an exposed terrace (Fig. 5a).

Apart from this part, above the raised terrace there were the walls and roofs of the *oikos* (14) and probably the *andron/triclinium* (9), and maybe also the western Room 13. In addition to this minimum, upper floor rooms can be expected above all or part of the western section of the house. Over the three rooms north of the courtyard, as mentioned, there was probably a terrace. There could have also been an upper floor room north of the *oikos* (Fig. 5b). One might even consider the existence of a room above the *andron/triclinium*.

## Wall niches

In the northern wall of the kitchen (10), two niches preserved only in the lower parts were found, and their upper part was reconstructed (Fig. 2). They are located at the same height and are more or less of the same size. Their function is not certain, but they may have been used in the kitchen as shelves. However, looking at similar niches preserved in Pompeii, one can assume that they were *lararia*. These types of niches were also found in other houses in Marina, and some of them performed such function.[23] Domestic shrines were also found in

[23] Bąkowska-Czerner, Czerner 2017, 142–144.

Fig. 6. Niches in the southern wall of Room 12a (photo by S. Medeksza).

several sites in Egypt, including Karanis.[24] In Pompeii, a greater number of *lararia* were found in the kitchens, near the hearths.[25] There are also examples of several *lararia* located in a single wall.[26] Unfortunately, in the described kitchen in Marina there are no traces of painting which could help identify the niches.

There are also niches in the southern wall of Room 12a (Fig. 6). They are situated relatively low, more or less at the same height, and were probably of the same size. It was noticed that in the second half of the 1st century, when the room was reconstructed and the walls of dried brick were built in there, the niches were also walled up with bricks. The room's function changed. Perhaps in the first phase, when there were *lararia*, it could have been a *sacrarium*. Likewise with Room 15, connected with the *oikos*, its location may indicate that it was a *sacrarium*, also by analogy to the layout of the rooms in House H10.[27] Unfortunately, there is no evidence for this; it remains a mere conjecture.

## Interior décor

Some elements of the interior décor, sculptural and painted, are known (relics preserved during the excavations and described by the researchers).[28] The porticoes featured columns with simplified pseudo-Ionic forms of the Marina type.[29] The bases of the columns were also simplified, with a conical profile supported by a band, characteristic of Marina arrangements. Wooden beams must have been laid on the columns, as no relics of stone architraves, even the smallest, were preserved whatsoever. The situation is typical for the entire town, even its grandest buildings. There were probably stone cornices on the beams, along the length of the ceilings. On both sides of the entrance, from the courtyard to the *prostas*, there were pillars in a square layout, connected to the

Fig. 7. Pseudo-Corinthian capital of the pillar framing the entrance from the courtyard to the *prostas* (photo by R. Czerner).

[24] Fennelly 1968, 317–334; Frankfurter 1998, 34–136.
[25] Giacobello 2008, 60.
[26] Giacobello 2008, 64, 134; Van Andringa 2011, 91–98.
[27] Bąkowska-Czerner, Czerner 2017, 142, fig. 3. For more on the *sacrarium*, see Sfameni 2014, 16–22.
[28] Fidecka 1991, fig. 3; Radzik 1991.
[29] Thus named according to the suggestion of the discoverer of the site; see Czerner 2009, 20–24; Daszewski 2011, 440.

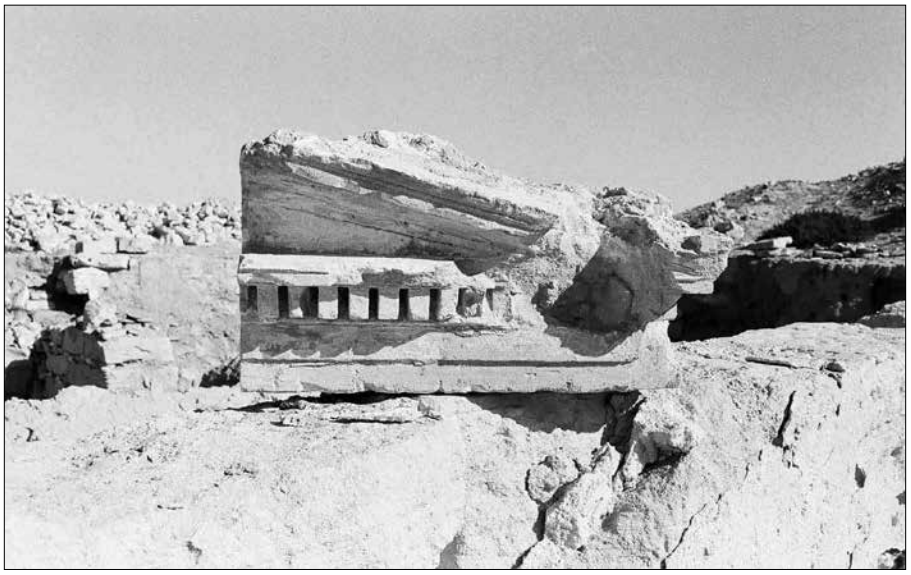

Fig. 8. Pediment element found during the excavations in House H9 (Archive of the Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission).

wall. They had simplified bases with a profile similar to the columns and geometricised pseudo-Corinthian capitals of the Marina type (Fig. 7).[30] The lintel, which was almost 3.00 m long, was probably also wooden. It cannot be ruled out that this is the origin of a surviving relic of a triglyph-metope frieze.[31] Two relics of dentil cornices with small-scale decoration, originating from both sides of the triangular pediment, were also found (Fig. 8). Each of them was about 0.50 m long, and there must have been at least an equally long central element between them. Thus, the length of the pediment corresponded to the lintel above the door.

An *aedicula* was located in the *oikos* in the middle of its eastern wall.[32] This solution is typical of Marina, and similar *aediculae* are known from the reception rooms of houses H10, H21c, and H21 'N'. Stone elements consisting of one side and the pediment of the niche were preserved and known at the time of the excavations (Fig. 9). Its form is noteworthy, with semi-columns and pilasters on the sides and a pediment, which did not form a closed tympanum, but whose bottom cornice was pulled back and circled the side and rear walls of the niche.[33] This peculiar baroque form is repeated in the other known niches and is typical of the site. The niche was polychrome. There are remnants of red paint on the pilaster, head, and dentils of the lower cornice.

Fig. 9. Remains of the *aedicula* assembled by W.A. Daszewski (photo by W.A. Daszewski; after Czerner 2009, fig. 64).

## Polychrome

The house featured rich painting decoration. The interior walls were covered with multilayer plaster and polychrome on the top layer. Unfortunately, only descriptions, photos, and tracings have been preserved.[34] When the ruins of the building were excavated, fragments of painted plaster were still visible on the walls,

[30] Czerner 2009, 5–16; Daszewski 2011, 440.
[31] Fidecka 1991, fig. 3.
[32] Bentkowski 1990, 41, fig. 3; 1991, 27, figs 11, 12; Radzik 1991; Czerner 2005, 125, fig. 1; 2009, 40, fig. 64; Daszewski 2011, 431.
[33] Pensabene 2010, 206; Czerner 2017, 52.
[34] The research on painting was conducted by M. Małachowicz (1995) and E. Łużyniecka (1996).

Fig. 10. Remains of the polychrome on the southern wall of the *oikos* (photo by W.A. Daszewski; after Czerner 2009, fig. 75).

the bases of the columns, semi-columns, and pillars. The column shafts, made of drums, were plastered and painted white. However, the bases of the columns, semi-columns, pillars, and the socles of the walls were black, as in other houses in Marina.[35] Numerous shards of monochromatic and multi-coloured plaster were found in the rubble. Some featured marbling, geometrical patterns, and stripes, while just a few were decorated with plant motifs. Black, red, blue, white, yellow, and brown were the dominant colours, while green was featured less often. On the plasters, shallow engraving for rustication and shallow pilasters could be observed.[36]

The best-preserved polychromy was in the *oikos*[37] on the southern wall (a preserved fragment of dado about 4.00 m long and about 1.50–1.55 m high) (Fig. 10) and on its extension, on the eastern wall of the courtyard (about 1.60 m in length), closing the southern portico. Above the black socle, in separate square fields, separated from each other by wide, coloured stripes, the *oikos* featured multi-coloured circles. One of them was painted inside with colourful patterns. At the end of the wall, above the socle, there is another decoration, a vertical rectangle. Something similar is also found on the eastern wall of the courtyard. Probably a pilaster was painted over the rectangles. Similar dado decoration can be found in the *tablinum* at *Casa della Caccia Antica* in Pompeii.[38] Blue, red, yellow, white, and purple were used.[39] In the *oikos*, only a few fragments of blue plaster were preserved in the rubble. Unfortunately, the painting decoration of the room might be only approximately reconstructed (Fig. 11). The above-mentioned, richly-decorated *aedicula* was mounted on the eastern wall. It seems that in the *oikos*, plaster was applied on the wall covered with a layer of clay. Another technique was used in the room north of the *oikos* (15), where technological layers have survived.[40] Coarse plaster was applied to the façade of the rubble masonry wall, roughly sanded, and then fine-grained plaster was applied, which was then painted. Unfortunately, there are no traces of paintings in this room.

Two layers of plaster are observable in places exposed to destruction: on the bases of the columns, semi-columns, pillars, and socles of the walls and on the northern wall of the courtyard. Above the socle, whose height reached 0.48 m, traces of yellow from the first phase were visible, which was covered with plaster with traces of red preserved up to the height of 1.33 m. It seems that the walls of the rooms were only painted once. Some of them bear traces of black socles (nos. 1, 4, 13, 14, 15, and 12 – where the black socle ends at the height of 0.22 m with a red belt 0.02 m wide, and above in the corner a black plaster was visible up to the height of 0.35 m).

Mention should be made here of one more important, albeit small, fragment of plaster (about 0.15 × 0.13 m) with figural decoration (Fig. 12).[41] It is not known, however, whether it definitely comes from this house.[42] On the dark brown background that fades into

[35] Medeksza *et al.* 2015, 1753–1754.
[36] Medeksza 1999, 128.
[37] Daszewski 1995, 24, fig. 3.
[38] Strocka 1987, 37, pl. IV, fig. 1.
[39] Daszewski 2011, 431.
[40] Medeksza 1996, 8.
[41] Medeksza 1999, 129, il. 17.
[42] The described fragment was found near the house, to the south of it.

Fig. 11. An attempt at a partial reconstruction of the interior decoration of the *oikos* (compiled by R. Czerner).

black in places, a dimly visible bust of probably a seated male figure remains. The body is covered with a robe in light ochre, probably a *himation*. The left arm appears bent at the elbow and raised. Long, slightly wavy hair covers the ears. On the head, surrounded by a yellow nimbus, lies a wreath of fine leaves, maybe laurel, ivy, or vine. The eyes, lips, and nose are proportional.

Many elements indicate that it might be a representation of Dionysus, whose images are relatively often found in Marina.[43] In representations of the wine god, the nimbus – usually blue or gold-yellow – started to appear in the middle of the second century in Syria.[44] Its gold-yellow colour indicates a relationship with the sun. With such a nimbus, Dionysus most often appears, for instance, in scenes of his meeting with Ariadne,[45] and later on Coptic textiles.[46] Both on mosaics and textiles, he is presented with a nimbus and a wreath on the head.[47]

The god of vine, regeneration, connected to immortality, a cosmocrat, popular in Egypt, was associated with the royal power of Ptolemy, and later with that of the Roman Empire. Most of Dionysus' representations with a nimbus were discovered in residential buildings.[48] Sometimes, the visualisations painted in a house were related to the activity, cult, authority, and preferences of its owner. The large number of amphorae found in the warehouse, possibly meant for wine, and the cellar of the discussed house, as well as its connection with the neighbouring House H9a and the tavern there, might suggest that the owner was an entrepreneur, perhaps a seller or wine producer, in which case his patron could have well been Dionysus. It should also be emphasised that House H9 belonged among the larger and wealthier houses in Marina. It is not known yet what was in the south-eastern part of the building. Maybe it was a room belonging to House H9 with an entrance from the outside and some commercial and service-related purposes.

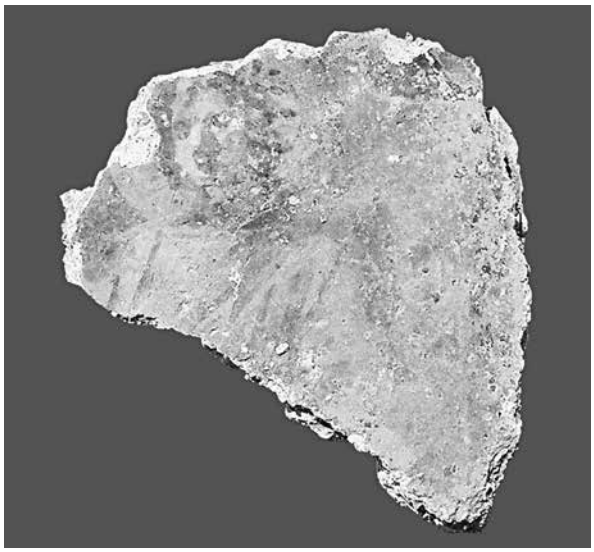

Fig. 12. Fragment of plaster with painted figural decoration (Archive of the Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission).

The dimensions of the described painting may suggest that it adorned a *lararium*. Niches devoted to Dionysus have also been found in Pompeii,[49] probably also in Karanis.[50]

[43] Bąkowska-Czerner 2014, 318, fig. 7; Bąkowska-Czerner, Czerner 2017, 144, 145.
[44] Cecconi 2016, 19.
[45] Cecconi 2016, 5, 53, fig. 3 (Zeugma, *Casa di Dionisio e Arianna*, 2nd–3rd century AD).
[46] Cecconi 2016, 18; above all in the Syrian territory (between the 2nd and 3rd century) and in Egypt from the mid-4th century.
[47] Cecconi 2016, 5, 53, fig. 4 (Zeugma, Maison d'Okéanos, 2nd–3rd century AD), fig. 36 (Brooklyn Museum inv. no. 71.132, 5th century AD).
[48] Cecconi 2016, 38.
[49] Giacobello 2008, 64, 233.
[50] Fennelly 1968, 333–334.

Usually, an altar was placed in front of a *lararium*. From the pictures taken in the 1980s,[51] it appears that the round marble altar currently standing in the portico of the inspectorate office in Marina could have come from House H9 (Fig. 13). Unfortunately, the altar is damaged; its upper part was not preserved. On the profiled round pedestal there is a column of a smaller diameter, and on the upper edge of the pedestal, bare feet of three figures are visible. Two pairs are parted, and one is joined at the heel. The figures were represented facing forward and leaning back against the column. Above them must have been the finial of the column with a place intended for offering sacrifices. Round altars of this type may be encountered at other sites[52] and are also depicted in the paintings from Pompeii.[53]

Fig. 13. Relic of a round marble altar (photo by R. Czerner).

## Final remarks

We do not have much information about artefacts excavated in House H9. In addition to the amphorae, which were only mentioned in the earlier studies, three lamps were published.[54] Two of them were found in the dried brick wall between rooms 4 and 13, which undoubtedly came from the first phase of the reconstruction, and the third during the cleaning of Room 12a. All are dated to the 1st century AD.[55]

The first stage of the construction of the house took place at the end of the 1st century BC, while the reconstruction is dated to the second half of the 1st century AD. Researchers noted that the doors in some rooms were walled up.[56] This situation, and the hearth installed in the wall of Room 6, show that the house had been partially damaged, probably after the earthquake in the year 365. Similar reconstructions, room divisions, and blocking of doors in other houses in Marina also come from this period.[57]

The results of recent studies indicate that House H9 could have been built within a single construction phase. The interior was rebuilt and probably used until the end of the 4th century. There is a question mark over the existence of a kitchen in the early phase in Room 6, and the dating of the hearth was moved forward. From the beginning, the kitchen was located in Room 10. An attempt was made to reconstruct the floor, with rooms, terraces, and galleries above the portico. The layout is inspired by a Greek house, but some elements preserved there can be encountered in the Roman tradition, including the large number of niches. There are also features characteristic of Marina itself, visible in the architectural details. The *aedicula* in the *oikos*, and perhaps also the niches in rooms 10 and 12a, indicate the existence of a domestic cult. The house was adapted to the cultural changes taking place in Egypt. Its size, along with the architectural and painting decoration, testify to the standard of living of the inhabitants of Marina as well as their traditions and cults.

[51] Pensabene 2010, fig. 6(d).
[52] Abbiati Brida 1997, 102.
[53] Fröhlich 1991, L20, 258, pl. 3.2; L24, 258–259, pl. 4.2; L37, 264, pl. 9.1; L98, 292, pl. 10.2.
[54] Medeksza 1996, 2, figs 11–13.
[55] Medeksza 1996, 2, no. 4.
[56] Bentkowski 1991, 25.
[57] Bąkowska-Czerner 2014, 312–321.

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# Architecture of the Official Spaces of Selected Residences in *Nea Paphos*, Cyprus

Abstract

This paper deals with public areas in ancient residences. These zones, emphasising the social status of the owners of the houses, are analysed in several large residences erected in the Graeco-Roman Period in *Nea Paphos*, Cyprus: the 'Hellenistic' House, the Villa of Theseus, and the House of Aion. Particularly, the special arrangement of the layout and the architectural decoration of three major public zones were studied: the entrance, the main courtyard, and the main room.

**Keywords:** *Nea Paphos*, residences, official spaces

## Introduction

Irrespective of time and place, a residence usually performs different functions catering to the needs and wishes of its owner. In the Graeco-Roman world, rich citizens designed their houses in a way which combined at least two spheres of their life: the more private one consisting of personal, family apartments, and the more public one associated with the official activities of the owner. The latter frequently received special architectural layout and embellishment emphasising the social status of the master of the house.[1] The aim of the paper is to trace the changes in the design of these public zones in selected Roman residences in *Nea Paphos*, Cyprus.

## *Nea Paphos* – an ancient town

*Nea Paphos* is an ancient town on the south-western coast of Cyprus (Fig. 1) founded in the 4th century BC. In the 3rd century BC, the island became a part of the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt, which proved to be very important for the development of Cypriot art, culture, and architecture. In 58 BC, Cyprus became a part of the Roman Empire, and *Nea Paphos* continued to be one of the most important cities on the island, where, most probably, one of the palaces belonging to the Roman governor was located.

Maloutena, a southern residential part of *Nea Paphos*, was occupied by splendid houses,[2] such as the House of Dionysus, the House of Orpheus, the 'Hellenistic' House, the Villa of Theseus, and the House of Aion. The last three constitute the most important edifices uncovered by the Polish Archaeological Mission of the University of Warsaw. Until 2007, Professor Wiktor A. Daszewski directed the Polish excavations in Maloutena. Since 2008, the Mission has been supervised by Doctor Henryk Meyza.[3]

## Paphian residences

The 'Hellenistic' House is the oldest of the residences excavated by the Polish Mission, and it was built by the end of the 1st century AD and soon after destroyed by an earthquake.[4] The House occupied the western part of a rectangular insula created by the regular Hellenistic urban grid (Fig. 2: A, A', 9, and 10).

[1] Hales 2003, 1–6, 18, 28–29, 36–39, 58–60.
[2] Młynarczyk 1990, 184–193; Daszewski 1998a, 5–23.
[3] The author has been working for the Polish Archaeological Mission as an architect since 2005 and would like to extend her gratitude to Dr Henryk Meyza for supporting her in many studies of the ancient Cypriot architecture.
[4] Meyza *et al.* 2017.


Fig. 1. Map of *Nea Paphos* (based on Młynarczyk 1990, 162, fig. 16; Medeksza 1998, 37, fig. 1; retrieved from Google Earth on 5.10.2014).


Fig. 2. Plan of Paphian residences with marked official zones: the 'Hellenistic' House, the Villa of Theseus, and the House of Aion (drawing by S. Medeksza).

The Villa of Theseus was constructed after the fall of the 'Hellenistic' House and completed the destruction of the northern part of the older edifice. The construction of the Villa started in the 2nd century AD and continued in several phases up to the 4th century, transforming an oblong portico palace into an almost square peristyle one. This largest Cypriot residence was one of the most important buildings in *Nea Paphos* and in Cyprus, and it had all the characteristic features of a palace of a Roman Emperor's official representative, thus being identified as a *villa publica* or a *palatium*.[5]

At the same time, in the 4th century, the youngest and the smallest of the residences excavated by the Polish Mission, the House of Aion, was erected to the east of the Villa of Theseus, in the southern part of the so-called Late Roman Insula, next to Street B leading from the Paphian harbour to the Maloutena Plateau.[6] There is an ongoing discussion about the function and nature of the House of Aion: was it a small but richly-equipped private residence or a seat of an unknown pagan religious-philosophical society placed in Maloutena, the residential district of *Nea Paphos*?[7] Hopefully the continuous studies of the House of Aion may reveal its function in the future.[8]

The Paphian residences are in the majority of cases in a bad state of preservation: the remains of their walls usually reach no higher than a few lower layers of blocks, and their architectural embellishment is nowadays only fragmentarily present. But even poorly-preserved traces permit analysing layouts and structures, as well as observing transformations of plans and changes in trends of decoration and equipment of the residences over several centuries.

Irrespective of the time and place of the erection of the ancient rich houses, some of their internal spaces were more important and dominated the whole edifice. They were usually connected with public activities of their owners and therefore required an appropriate architectural frame, which resulted in more elaborate embellishment than in the private areas.[9] We may point out at least three such public zones: the entrance (first), usually leading to the main courtyard (second), next to which the main room (third) was located.[10] Their analysis will be exemplified in details by three selected Paphian residences: the 'Hellenistic' House, the Villa of Theseus, and the House of Aion.[11]

## Entrance zone

The entrance zone was the first of such public areas (Figs 2–5). It was usually composed of a main gate and some internal rooms, *e.g.* an atrium or/and auxiliary rooms for a guard, although particular arrangements could have differed significantly from case to case. A special architectural frame is a common feature of the residences' entrance zones – a kind of the owner's 'show-off' on the threshold of the house.[12] The main gate and the subsequent rooms of the entrance zone would often be designed along one of the general compositional axes of the house prolonged through the peristyle court and the adjacent rooms.

## Entrance zone in the 'Hellenistic' House

Unfortunately, there are no clear traces of the entrances leading to the 'Hellenistic' House, including its main gate. However, it seems reasonable to assume that by design the gate was located near the main hall and the courtyard of the House (both described and analysed below). The courtyard is situated in the central part of the residence and is surrounded by porticoes leading to several side rooms from each side except the southern, where the portico borders directly with Street A'. In the middle of the external wall of the southern portico, there is a threshold with holes – most probably assembly sockets for hinge pins of the doors (Fig. 2). Regrettably, only the lowest layers of the southern wall are preserved, so we cannot be sure if there was any special composition designed for the main gate. However, judging by the very rich architectural decoration of the House, and especially

[5] Daszewski 1985b; Daszewski, Michaelides 1988, 53; Medeksza 1992, 5, 17, 24, 30; 1998, 25.

[6] Daszewski 1985a; 1998a, 12–15.

[7] Daszewski 1985a; Mikocka 2018, 127.

[8] The House of Aion is currently studied by Ms Julia Mikocka, a PhD candidate from the University of Warsaw (Mikocka 2018). The wall painting and the mosaics of the House of Aion have been analysed by Prof. Elżbieta Jastrzębowska (Jastrzębowska forthcoming a; forthcoming b).

[9] The paper focuses on the architectural means used to distinguish the public zones of the residences. In many official rooms, mosaics were used as floors and paintings embellished the walls. Their style and content constitute a separate scientific topic outside the scope of the article.

[10] Hales 2003, 19, 28–29, 77.

[11] Remains of several other houses were uncovered within the area of the Polish excavations: the North-Eastern House in the northern part of the so-called Late Roman Insula, north of the House of Aion; the North-Western House under the north-western corner of the Villa of Theseus; the Roman House built above the western part of the 'Hellenistic' House; and the so-called Early Roman House east of the 'Hellenistic' House. As their public zones are not sufficiently preserved for a comprehensive analysis, the paper focuses on the official areas of the residences indicated above: the 'Hellenistic' House, the Villa of Theseus, and the House of Aion (Fig. 2).

[12] Hales 2003, 47, 57.

its two courtyards, the presence of such an arrangement appears highly probable. Perhaps some of the many decorative pieces found in the remains of the House originally constituted the architectural frame of its main gate situated in the southern wall leading to Street A'.

## Entrance zone of the Villa of Theseus

As mentioned above, the Villa of Theseus was gradually built and enlarged. According to a detailed analysis and reconstruction presented by late Professor Stanisław Medeksza,[13] in the first phase it was erected as an oblong palace with a wide portico running along its northern façade. The western side of the palace was distinguished with a projection of Room 23 – one of the largest halls in the residence, identified as an *oecus*, whose northern elevation was equipped with a portico repeating the composition of the central long colonnade. The arrangement of the eastern side of the palace built in the first phase is unknown, as it was completely destroyed during the enlargement of the residence in the second phase. Prof. Medeksza assumed that the composition and the contour of the portico palace were symmetrical. Therefore, one can expect that its right, unknown side might have been analogous to the left one in terms of the design of the façade – an external colonnade continuing the rhythm of the portico in front of the central part of the edifice (Fig. 2).[14]

The form and the position of the main entrance to the portico palace remain unknown, and its discovery is highly unlikely due to the massive enlargement of the residence during the second phase of its construction. Although it is impossible to reconstruct the exact form of the main gate without any fragments, a theoretical analysis of the palace's layout permits pointing out at least two hypothetical positions where the main entrance might have been located. Placing it in the middle of the portico, in front of the most important area of the residence, its main hall, is the obvious solution known from several Roman villas. Such an arrangement would have strongly emphasised the palace's major axis of symmetry along its two key public zones: the main entrance and the main hall. However, prof. Medeksza suggested another possible location of the main gate based on several analogies to other Roman residences with the portico running along the main façade treated as a communication corridor linking rooms that were placed next to it – for instance in the Villa Westenhofen. The main entrance to these palaces was designed in one of the side projections or wings.[15] Therefore, to get to the main hall, one had to pass many rooms while going through one of the palace's side wings and then down the portico. In the case of the Villa of Theseus, if an entrance was placed in one of the side projections, it must have been the eastern, unpreserved one (Fig. 2). The arrangement of the western wing in the form of one big room would rather exclude placing the entrance there, the more so that the western part of the palace was most probably used for private apartments. The unpreserved eastern wing was intended for more public or official activities due to, among other things, its location closer to the Paphian port.[16] Unfortunately, as mentioned above, there are no physical remains that could confirm or falsify the presented theoretical considerations concerning the main entrance to the Villa of Theseus in its first phase, when it was still a portico palace.

In the second phase, the residence was turned into a peristyle palace by adding extra wings in the north, around a huge courtyard which became the main compositional element of the Villa. Crossing the original street grid by the enlarged residence was another result of the transformation of the portico palace into the one with a large peristyle. The Villa would then form the eastern closing of the main Street (B) connecting Maloutena with the *Nea Paphos* port. This new aspect of the palace was accentuated by its new main entrance complex situated in the newly-built eastern wing along the axis of the road leading to the harbour,[17] which is another feature characteristic of the location of Roman residences (Figs 2–4).[18]

A monumental entrance situated in the central part of the eastern wing was a strong, dominating architectural feature. The main gate might have been designed as a two-column Corinthian porch (*prothyron*) crowned with a simple tympanum. Several fragments of such an architectural ensemble, including blocks from the entablature, a few pieces of Corinthian capitals, and plain column shafts, were discovered on the so-called Late Roman Street in the vicinity of the entrance zone of the Villa.[19]

The first room (no. 69) after crossing the gate is longitudinal and is situated crosswise to the main axis of the entrance zone, which runs along the extended axis of Street B. The shorter sides of the room are terminated with two apses. There are several oblong niches with low benches in the walls, which suggest the function of Room 69 – a vestibule serving as a waiting area for the guests before they were allowed to enter the following

[13] Medeksza 1992; 1998.
[14] Medeksza 1992, 24–26, 64–65; 1998, 26, 28–30.
[15] Swoboda 1969, 23; Medeksza 1992, 25–26; 1998, 29–30.
[16] Medeksza 1992, 25–26, 28; 1998, 29.
[17] Medeksza 1992, 5–6, 24–26, 34, 41; 1998, 35.
[18] Hales 2003, 44–45.
[19] Medeksza 1992, 6, 41; 1998, 35–36; Meyza *et al.* 2011, 286–287, fig. 3.

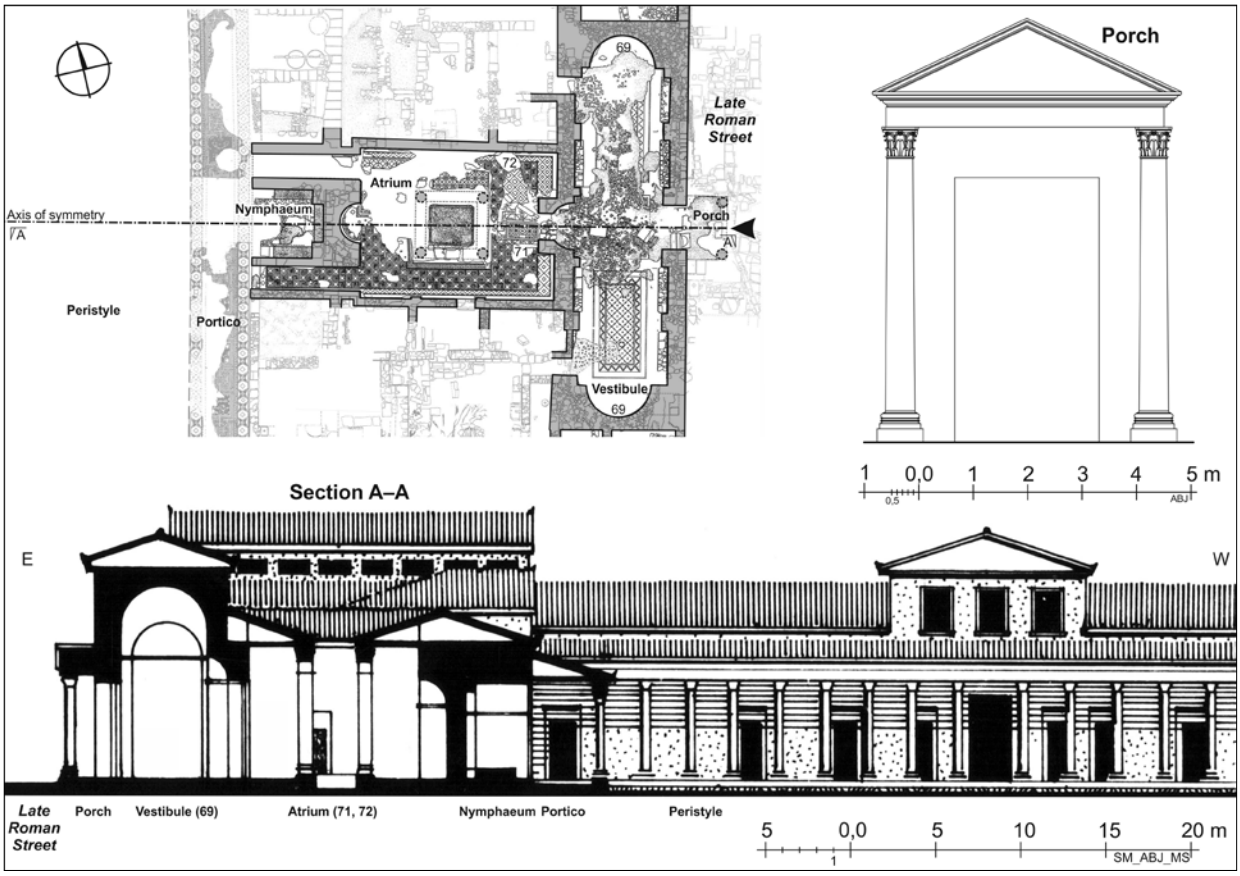


Fig. 3. Entrance zone of the Villa of Theseus (the plan drawn by S. Medeksza; the section reproduced from Medeksza 1998, 48, fig. 2b; the porch drawn by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka).

rooms of the Villa. Three doorways in the wall opposite the one with the main gate led further on. Two of those, placed symmetrically to the main axis, connect the waiting room with smaller rooms which most probably were intended for the guard of the Villa responsible for controlling the incomers. The third is located axially vis-à-vis the main gate in an apse. It contains doors leading to the next room of the entrance zone – an atrium with an *impluvium* – a crucial element of a Roman residence.[20] Four, presently missing, columns standing in the corners of the basin supported the ceiling. There is another apse, a small one, in the wall behind the atrium. Two passages on both sides of this shallow semi-circular recess led to the major public zone of the Villa of Theseus: the peristyle court. A kind of *nymphaeum* was placed behind the atrium from the side of the courtyard closing the whole entrance complex.[21]

All the rooms of the entrance zone (69, 71, and 72) were paved with geometrical mosaics. Several small apses in the walls of the waiting room and the one in the atrium were most probably designed for statues. Perhaps some of the many splendid sculptures uncovered in the Villa[22] were originally standing in the entrance zones.

Judging by the thickness of the walls, the rank of the entrance zone was accentuated by elevating it in relation to other neighbouring parts of the palace: the whole residence with an elevated entrance zone constituted a closure of the viewing axis of Street B leading from the harbour. Such a location of the residence and its entrance emphasised the highest rank of the Villa among other houses built in Maloutena.

The axis of the entrance zone, from the Corinthian portico through the waiting room to the atrium, lies on the E-W axis of the whole residence, thus replicating the

[20] Hales 2003, 18–19.

[21] Medeksza 1992, 37, 41–42, 44, 62–63; 1998, 35–36.

[22] Selected literature concerning Paphian sculptures is provided in the bibliography published in Daszewski, Meyza 1998, 131–138.


Fig. 4. Entrance zone of the Villa of Theseus (photo by M. Jawornicki).

course of the main Street (B). This axis is also one of the major compositional principles of the Villa's peristyle court described below.

## Entrance zone in the House of Aion

An interesting composition of the entrance may have also occurred in the youngest of the Paphian residences – the House of Aion – much smaller than the Villa of Theseus or the 'Hellenistic' House, but also furnished with very rich architectural decoration.[23]

Many decorated blocks characterised by similarly rich carvings of high artistic quality were uncovered in Room 19 in the eastern part of the edifice,[24] but it seems that they did not originally belong to this room. Most probably, they were used to embellish the House in some other area. As there are no clear indications of their original location, it was assumed that they must have been used to emphasise an important part of the House, perhaps its main, monumental façade directed toward one of the major Paphian roads – Street B linking Maloutena with the main harbour of the town.

The theoretical reconstruction of the arrangement of the façade takes into account the gate, above which a multi-span arcade could have been placed (Fig. 5)[25] – this idea was based upon the pieces of architectural embellishment corresponding with the decoration of the main façades from the Balkan palaces, such as *Porta Aurea* at the palace of Diocletian in Split[26] or the West Gate of the *Felix Romuliana* Palace in Gamzigrad.[27] Clearly, in such arrangements the niches under the arcades were of exceptional importance, most probably holding statues – a kind of manifestation of the residence owner's rank and beliefs.

The exact position of the gate within the southern wall of the House of Aion is unknown. At least two

[23] Medeksza 1987; Mikocki 1992; Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2016.
[24] Daszewski 1998b, 127–129, figs 6–7; Daszewski *apud* Hadjisavvas 1998, 691–692; Daszewski 1999, 172–173, fig. 10; Lichocka, Meyza 2001, 168, 201–202, fig. 7; Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2016, 152–154, pl. 2.
[25] Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2016, 160–164, pls 5–6.
[26] Selected literature: McNally 1996, 41–42; Nikšić 2004, 167; Cambi 2005, 166–167; Nikšić 2011, 196.
[27] Selected literature: Čanak-Medić 1978, 78, fig. 60; Ćurčić 1993, 70, 85, fig. 11; McNally 1996, 42; Breitner 2011, 143–146.

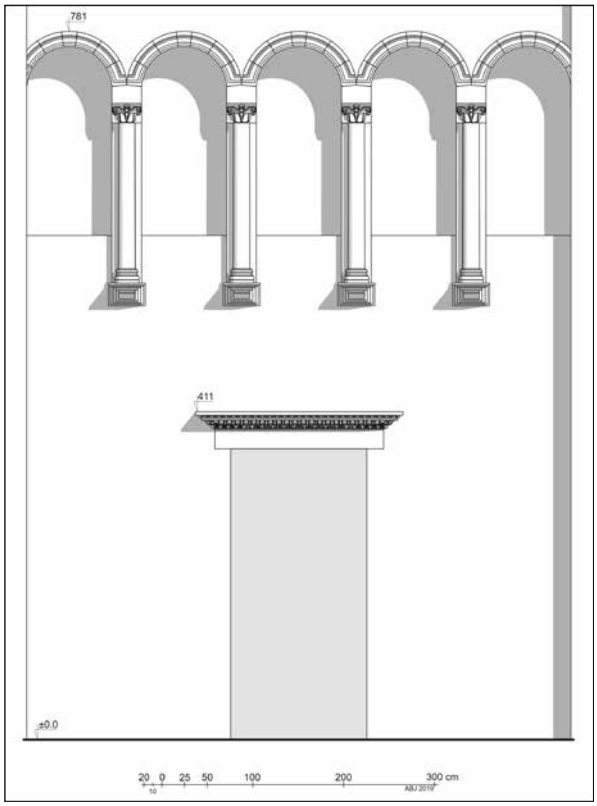


Fig. 5. Reconstruction of the entrance to the House of Aion (drawing by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka).

arrangements are possible: the first one where the gate linked the street and the small court of the House and the second one with the gate leading from the street straight to the main hall of the edifice (rooms 1 and 2; Fig. 2). Given the rich architectural embellishment of the latter, the second variant seems to be more probable.

## Courtyard

The entrance zones were frequently placed next to the subsequent public spaces of the rich residences – centrally located main courtyards (Figs 2, 6–8). Such carefully designed open spaces played a very important role in the functioning of ancient residences, as they supplied them with light, air, water (if there were basins for collecting water, which was a very common practice), privacy, and tranquillity. They also allowed communication between the rooms surrounding them. Furthermore, the courtyards were often used as the principal meeting places where the inhabitants of the house could gather. This led to a special role of the courtyard as a public space and resulted once again, just like in the case of the main gate, in rich architectural embellishment and special facilities, such as sculptures, benches, flowerbeds, basins, fountains, or even fish ponds (*piscinae*).[28] A very well-preserved example of the latter may be found in one of the other Paphian residences – the House of Dionysus.[29] In the late antique Graeco-Roman society, the peristyle house was considered as an ideal Roman house, an object of aristocrats' desire, and the proof of their high social status.[30]

The courtyards were usually designed as regular, square or rectangular, circumscribed areas with two axes of symmetry, which could have been emphasised architecturally by important rooms or areas of the residences, such as the entrance zone or the main room. The court usually took the form of a peristyle: a large open space surrounded by porticoes derived from the Greek architecture.[31] The roofed colonnades played a very important role in a residence. Not only did they provide shadow so important in the hot climate but also allowed the owner to manifest once again his social status and wealth through architectural means, such as extravagant arrangements and layouts, richly-decorated classical orders, or expensive materials, *e.g.* imported stones.

## Peristyle of the 'Hellenistic' House

The 'Hellenistic' House was erected around two courtyards. The main one lies in the eastern part of the edifice (Figs 2, 6). Together with the porticoes, it occupied probably most of the width of the House. However, the design of the northern part of the courtyard is hypothetical, because of the massive destruction of the House caused by earthquakes and the subsequent erection of the Villa of Theseus.[32]

The court was surrounded by porticoes creating a spacious peristyle.[33] Two axes of symmetry, running through the centre of the court, were emphasised. The E-W axis, being the most important one, was accentuated on the western side by the richest and biggest portico with the main hall behind it. The eastern end of this axis was highlighted by the central span of the eastern portico, which was wider than the rest. The N-S axis was most probably underlined on the southern end by the main entrance to the 'Hellenistic' House. Its northern end was completely destroyed, but it seems probable that its composition could have emphasised the central span.

The main hall of the residence (Room 10) was designed behind the western portico characterised by the

[28] Jashemski *et al.* 2018, 341–481.
[29] Nicolaou 1967, 101–103, figs 1–2.
[30] Medeksza 1992, 42–43.
[31] Hales 2003, 208–209.
[32] Meyza *et al.* 2017.
[33] A detailed analysis of the architectural decoration of the 'Hellenistic' House is going to be published in a separate paper: Brzozowska-Jawornicka forthcoming.

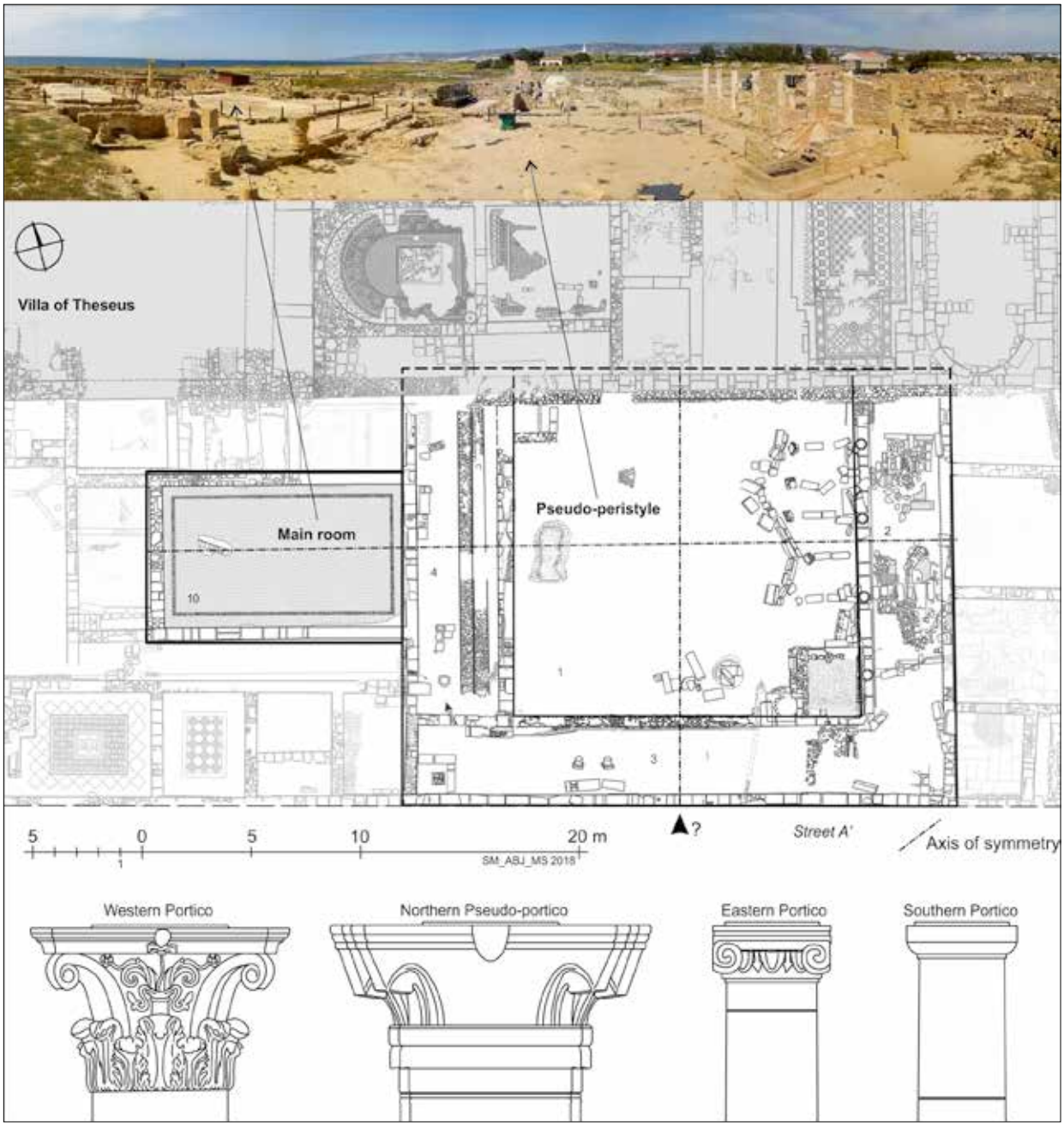


Fig. 6. Peristyle and the main room of the 'Hellenistic' House (capitals of columns from the peristyle – drawings and photo by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka).

wealthiest architectural decoration in the House. To the east of the courtyard, more modest rooms were located – the domestic area of the residence.

Out of the four porticoes of the court, the eastern one, erected in slightly simplified Ionic order, turned out to be the best-preserved structure of the 'Hellenistic' House. The southern Doric portico has been preserved in a much worse condition, but it was possible to determine its size as being equal to the Ionic colonnade.

The western portico was erected in the Corinthian order in a special variation called the Alexandrian style. As written above, the north part of the main courtyard was completely destroyed by the later construction of the Villa of Theseus. However, pieces of another type of capitals discovered in the main courtyard may indicate that they could have constituted the architectural frame of its northern part. They were identified as the so-called blocked-out capitals resembling the 'Nabataean' capitals of Type 1 known from Petra.

Judging by the form of the capitals, it also seems that the northern part of the main courtyard was designed as a pseudo-portico with engaged columns. It means

that the court would have been a pseudo-peristyle. Such design shows strong connections between Cyprus and Egypt, as pseudo-peristyles were commonly used in the architecture of Alexandrian houses, for example in Kom el-Dikka.[34]

The size of the architectural remains of the western and northern porticoes permits determining the height of their columns: they were much taller than those from the two other porticoes. It seems that the courtyard of the 'Hellenistic' House was composed of porticoes of two different heights – a configuration described by Vitruvius as the Rhodian peristyle.[35] Together with the usage of four different architectural orders, it formed a very extravagant and unrepeatable arrangement. The Rhodian peristyles are known from, for instance, Cyrenaican residences:[36] the House of Great Peristyle or *Casa della Quattro Stagioni*.

During excavations conducted in the area of the peristyle, interesting traces of older structures were uncovered, including the remains of several basins and water cisterns. Most probably, they were built earlier than the 'Hellenistic' House or during the first phases of its erection, prior to the peristyle described above. They were covered with a thick layer of fertile soil,[37] which suggests the function of the peristyle courtyard – a garden surrounded by richly-decorated porticoes.

## Peristyle of the Villa of Theseus

The central courtyard of the Villa of Theseus was another great Paphian peristyle – the largest not only in *Paphos* but also on the whole island (Figs 2, 4, 7, 8). It constituted the centre of the composition of the Villa when the residence was transformed from a portico palace without an inner court into a peristyle palace arranged around a huge courtyard.[38] During the first phase of the Villa's enlargement, it was designed as an almost square peristyle with a side measuring around 50 m. The second one changed the outline of the court – the northern wing was widened inside the courtyard to the south, so that the layout of the courtyard became rectangular. Those transformations affected the northern wing of the Villa, used as a domestic, less representative area, but a discussion of this is beyond the scope of this paper. It seems also that after the reconstruction, the northern wing was not fitted with a portico from the side of the courtyard, but with a plain wall. Such an arrangement would make the courtyard an incomplete peristyle with three instead of four porticoes: western, southern, and eastern.[39]

The courtyard was designed as a square peristyle in the first phase of the transformation, from the portico palace to the peristyle palace, with two axes of symmetry: the E-W axis covered the former course of Street B, accentuated on the western side by Room 17, while the eastern was emphasised with the monumental entrance zone described above; the N-S axis was highlighted by the most important part of the whole Villa – the complex of the main hall, described below, placed in the middle of the southern wing, which from the beginning constituted the most important part of the palace. It was strongly underlined by the southern portico, forming another dominant axis of the residence, with two strong accents on both ends. Room 36 closed the portico from the east with the famous mosaic floor depicting Theseus, which gave the Villa its present name.[40] The western counterpart of Room 36, the *oecus* (Room 23) was designed in an extravagant form resembling a basilica with very narrow side aisles.[41]

The trial trenches dug in several spots of the courtyard of the Villa of Theseus uncovered structures that had been constructed before the building. Judging by the size of the peristyle, there must have been some inner facilities, such as benches (garden furnishings), but there are no clear traces of them.

The porticoes surrounding the courtyard were undoubtedly provided with a proper architectural frame, most probably with slender columns. There are very few remains of architectural decoration which could be unambiguously associated with the porticoes, for example an Attic base with the lower part of a smooth column shaft. The material of these pieces is their most interesting feature, since they are made of marble and granite[42] – stones which were certainly imported to Cyprus, as there are no deposits of such rocks on the island suitable for use in architecture. Importing huge amounts of those, at least 50 columns, indicates the highest position of the Villa owner in the Cypriot society, a very high rank in the administration of the Roman Empire's provinces, as well as his considerable wealth.

The style of the colonnades remains unknown. The Doric and Corinthian orders were suggested.[43]

[34] Selected literature: Majcherek 1995, 11–20, figs 1–2; 1997, 22–30, figs 1–2; 2000, 32–34, fig. 5; McKenzie 2007, 150, 180–183, 210, figs 309, 310a.
[35] Vitr. *De arch*. VI.7.3.
[36] Stucchi 1975, 217–218, 309, fig. 320; Pensabene, Gasparini forthcoming; Rekowska forthcoming.
[37] Meyza *et al.* 2017.
[38] Medeksza 1992, 26, 31–33; 1998, 26, 32–35.
[39] Medeksza 1992, 30, 39–40; 1998, 34–35.
[40] Daszewski 1977; Daszewski, Michaelides 1988, 53.
[41] Medeksza 1992, 6, 24–27, 31, 33, 36; 1998, 28–30.
[42] Medeksza 1992, 29; 1998, 30–31.
[43] Medeksza 1992, 29; 1998, 30.
[44] Daszewski 1985a; Mikocka 2018, 127.

Fig. 7. Peristyle of the Villa of Theseus, pieces of a column (photo by M. Jawornicki).

In my opinion, the latter seems much more appropriate for the embellishment of the seat of a Roman governor of Cyprus. The columns could have been imported as ready-made elements from the quarries outside the island, which would have resulted in using elements characterised by a finish different from the Cypriot tradition.

As mentioned above, very few remains of the architectural decoration from the peristyle were excavated. Such a situation may stem from later re-usage of the Villa's carved decorative elements in Paphian buildings erected after the destruction of the palace and the burning of the marble elements in later lime kilns. Perhaps some of the columns which may presently be seen in the Byzantine castle known as *Saranda Kolones* (Forty Columns) or in the early Christian Basilica of Chrysopolitissa originally belonged to the largest residence of the island (Fig. 1).

## Courtyard of the House of Aion

Although the House of Aion is the smallest of the Paphian residences examined in this article, its layout is much more ambiguous than those of the others, which results in an ongoing academic discussion concerning its function: whether it was a public or a private house.[44] It is worth underlining that peristyles treated as basic elements of architectural designs were used in both private and official buildings, for example in villas as well as in public baths, so the presence or lack of such a courtyard does not indicate the function of a building.

There are no signs of a large courtyard in the House of Aion. It seems that there was a courtyard in the middle of the southern part of the House, but a rather small one, especially in comparison with the peristyles of the 'Hellenistic' House or the Villa of Theseus. Only three porticoes bordered it from the western, northern, and eastern sides, so it was an incomplete peristyle (Fig. 2, rooms 16E and 16W, 6 and 40).[45]

At the end of Antiquity, the Graeco-Roman society and its lifestyle started to change. These changes had a strong impact on architecture. The lack of a large peristyle court in the design of the late-antique residences is considered as one of the symptoms of the decline of Graeco-Roman Antiquity.[46] Taking that into account, the lack of a complete, spacious peristyle in the House

[45] Daszewski 1999, 169; Lichocka, Meyza 2001, 168; Mikocka 2018, 126.

[46] Ellis 1988, 565–576.

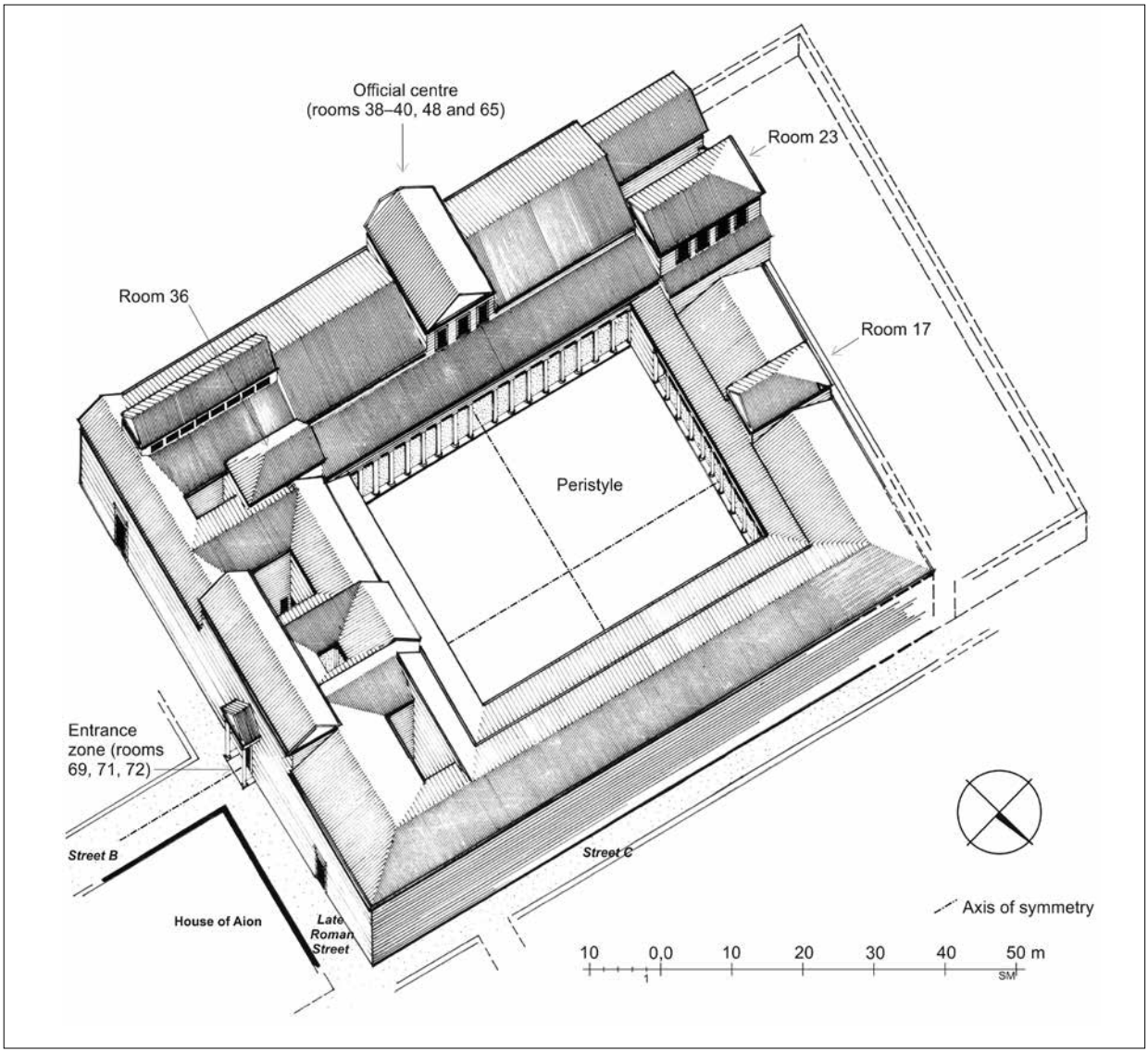


Fig. 8. Villa of Theseus – a reconstruction of the final phase (reproduced after Medeksza 1992, 111, fig. 30).

of Aion seems significant, whatever the function of the building, private or official. Designing a more modest, in terms of scale and decoration, main court may be regarded as a sign of the times when the classical peristyle courts were no longer required.

## Main hall

The main hall, usually connected with the peristyle courtyard, was another space of a residence requiring special architectural frame which would reflect its representative function (Figs 2, 6, 8–11). It was a space where the owner would meet his guests. It could have been derived from rooms of various functions, such as the Greek *oecus*, the Roman *tablinum* (initially a master bedroom, later an office),[47] or also Roman *triclinium* (a reception hall). It is also important to underline that, in the light of the recent research, rooms were multifunctional and used according to the needs and wishes of the family living in the residence and not according to a clear and rigid terminology concerning the typical Greek or Roman houses known, for example, from the Vitruvian treatise.[48]

The main hall was of great importance particularly in residences belonging to high-ranking citizens of the

[47] Hales 2003, 107–108.

[48] Hales 2003, 126–147 with indications to further literature.

Graeco-Roman society, so it required appropriate arrangement and special embellishment. In comparison to the entrance zone and the main peristyle courtyard, the main hall was considered to be a slightly more official space, as it was the room where the owner would perform his official duties. In such circumstances, the architectural means used to emphasise his role as a representative of the authorities were particularly significant.[49]

Usually, main halls were designed on a rectangular layout, with the main entrance placed on the shorter side connecting the room with one of the porticoes of the peristyle courtyard. This portico could have been fitted with a colonnade and an entablature more decorative than the others – the complete set of official zones, composed of the main room and the adjacent portico of the peristyle, were highlighted. As written above, the Rhodian peristyle, with the main portico higher than the others, constitutes one of the most extravagant versions of such an arrangement.

The main entrance to the room was usually located in the middle of the shorter wall and at the same time in the centre of the main portico. The symmetrical composition of both, the room and the portico, was underlined by a portal of the gate leading to the main hall. Its design could also be richer than that of the other doorways.

The main axis of the residence usually followed the axis of symmetry of the main courtyard and the portico neighbouring the main hall, where it went through the gate connecting them. Then it continued in the main hall, overlapping the longitudinal axis of the room. This axis was also used to emphasise the position of the master of the house – his seat/throne was placed at the end of the room, opposite the entrance, and at the axis linking the peristyle with the main portico and the main hall. The area around the master's seat could be even more architecturally accentuated by the layout of the back side of the room and its cover – for instance, instead of a straight wall enclosed by a ceiling or a roof, an apse surmounted by a semi-dome could be introduced.[50]

According to Vitruvius, locating the main room on the southern side of the residence was the best position concerning its exposition to light and, in consequence, its insulation and heating.[51] In practice, the location of the main room in relation to the cardinal directions resulted from a variety of factors taken into account by designers, primarily including the local specificity. The southern side might have been generally preferred but not always favourable or even possible to achieve.

## Reception hall of the 'Hellenistic' House

The arrangement of the main room of the 'Hellenistic' House (Figs 6, 9) follows in many aspects the scheme presented above; however, a few of its features are designed in a different manner. Although the complete destruction of the northern part of the House makes it difficult to reconstruct the appearance of its peristyle courtyard, it seems logical and probable that the main, longitudinal, axis of the residence reception hall was coordinated with the axis of the main courtyard. As written above, the importance of Room 10 was underlined by the arrangement of the courtyard in the form of the Rhodian peristyle, with the Corinthian portico, the most decorative colonnade in the House, preceding the main hall.

The layout of the reception hall was rectangular, with one of the shorter sides connected with the adjacent portico. The position of the main hall behind the western colonnade does not follow the Vitruvian principle according to which it should be placed on the northern side of the peristyle in order to get as much sunlight as possible. It seems that designing the main room of the 'Hellenistic' House on the western side of the courtyard might have been caused by the desire to shield it from the prevailing cold western winds in winter.[52] Such reversed orientation of the main hall in relation to the cardinal directions perfectly exemplifies an adaptation of the general rules to the regional weather and climate conditions.

The reception hall was furnished with a white mosaic of irregular fragments of pebbles surrounded by a black border. The walls were decorated with wall-paintings resembling the so-called first style of the Pompeian painting.[53]

## Official centre of the Villa of Theseus

The main hall of the Villa of Theseus was surrounded by several accompanying rooms – the official and representative centre was situated in the middle of the southern wing – its location underlined the key role it played within the residence (Figs 2, 8, 10). In the first construction phase of the Villa, when it took the form of a portico palace, the centrally located main hall with adjacent rooms dominated the whole edifice, with its height simultaneously creating its axis of symmetry. In the second phase, when the portico palace was expanded into the peristyle palace, this axis was prolonged to the north for the newly-built extensive courtyard surrounded by eastern, northern, and western wings.[54]

[49] Medeksza 1992, 28–29.
[50] Medeksza 1992, 48–63.
[51] Vitr. *De arch*. VI.1–2.
[52] Medeksza 1992, 13–14.
[53] Daszewski 1991, 83; 1992, 253; 1993, 88.
[54] Medeksza 1992, 6, 24, 26–27, 30; 1998, 32.

Fig. 9. Reception hall of the 'Hellenistic' House (photo by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka).

Similarly to the 'Hellenistic' House, the position of the main hall of the Villa of Theseus is opposed to the Vitruvian principles, as it is oriented to the north. This design might have resulted from the climatic reasons mentioned in the paragraph about the main room of the 'Hellenistic' House, but also from the desire to direct the Villa's façade towards Street B – the most important one in the Maloutena area.[55]

As mentioned above, the key part of the Villa of Theseus forms a whole complex, composed of five rooms, going far beyond the schemes of the traditional Roman *tablinum*. The most important set, the reception hall, consists of two compartments placed along the N-S axis of the whole residence: a circular one (no. 39) followed by a rectangular one (no. 40) open to the peristyle. They are symmetrically flanked on both sides by two more sets of rooms: Room 38 in the west and rooms 48 and 65 in the east. Together with the monumental three-part entrance leading to the southern portico they formed a set of rooms typical of an imperial palace.[56]

The most important room in the Villa of Theseus (no. 39) is easy to identify thanks to its unique form of a wide rotunda. The external contour of the room wall protrudes beyond the southern outline of the edifice in the form of a polygonal apse (three sides of an octagon). The internal form and outline of Room 39 were changed during the transformations of the residence. According to prof. Medeksza, the room was primarily designed as a wide rectangle with a longer E-W axis. Its long side, opposite Room 40, formed a section of a circle measuring around 1/3 of its outline: a shallow apse round on the inside and polygonal on the outside. Two shorter sides of Room 39 were connected directly with the lateral rooms – 38 and 48 – possibly with wide arches. Such an arrangement allowed the owner of the residence to appear in front of his guests by entering the apse of Room 39 directly from one of the side rooms. This kind of design of the main room might be considered as an equivalent of a throne hall closely related with the official duties of the Villa's owner and points to the representative

[55] Medeksza 1992, 13.

[56] Medeksza 1992, 48; 1998, 30.

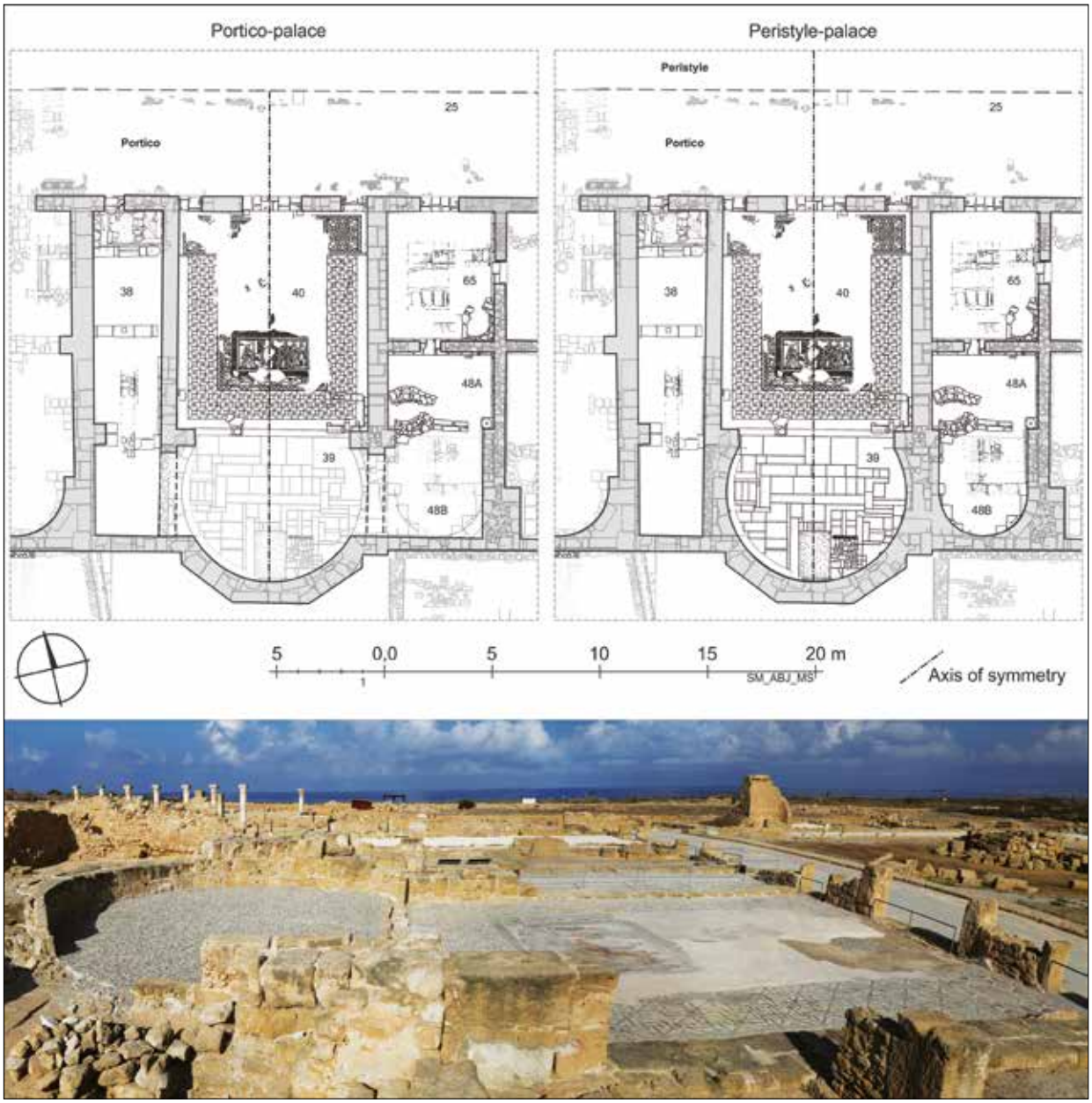


Fig. 10. Official centre of the Villa of Theseus (drawing by S. Medeksza; photo by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka).

nature of the residence – a *palatium* indicating an emperor. The room could have been covered by a 'standard' roof above the rectangular part and a semi-dome over the apse.[57]

The design of Room 39 was remodelled during one of the reconstructions of the Villa: the side connections linking Room 39 with rooms 38 and 48 were walled up, thus giving the room a new outline: a much larger section of a circle, measuring around 2/3 of its circuit. This new form, an almost complete rotunda, permitted covering the room in a much more extravagant way – probably with a dome, although only the lower layers of the walls survived to the present day, which makes it impossible to unambiguously determine the form of the missing upper part.[58] The transformation of Room 39 strengthened its

[57] Medeksza 1992, 20, 28, 54; 1998, 30.

[58] Medeksza 1992, 27, 35, 37–38, 40, 57; 1998, 34.

form as a throne hall, giving the centrally located owner's seat more impressive architectural background characteristic of the Roman palaces.[59]

As in the case of the entrance zone, the walls of rooms 39 and 40 are thicker than the others. It suggests that this part of the residence was higher than the rest, which introduced a basic strong architectural accent into the shape of the Villa of Theseus.[60]

Only a few decorative elements were excavated in the vicinity of the main hall complex, including a Corinthian capital of a half-column and two fragments of an ornately decorated cornice, but even they point to the richness of the decoration. The rooms were covered with marble cladding.[61] A mosaic depicting the first bath of Achilles was one of the four figure panels decorating the floor of Room 40, while stone paving covered the rotunda.[62]

The extravagant architectural design and expensive materials used to create the complex of the main hall clearly indicate a special role of these rooms in the whole edifice and at the same time the highest rank of the Villa of Theseus among all the houses not only in *Nea Paphos* but all over Cyprus. Undoubtedly, it was a residence of the most important person on the island.[63]

## *Triclinium* of the House of Aion

The most distinguished part of the House of Aion was located in the south-western corner of the building and was composed of two rooms. The presumed entrance to the main complex of the House led from Street B to a rectangular vestibule (Room 2), which was open to the main room of the edifice – an almost square *triclinium* (Room 1).[64] Both rooms were also connected with other rooms: the *triclinium* with Room 3, situated to the north, and the vestibule with Room 5, to the east. The latter was further connected with the portico (Room 16W) of the courtyard (Room 16) placed opposite Room 2 (Figs 2, 11).

The importance of Rooms 1 and 2 is underlined in two ways. Firstly by their size – they are bigger than other rooms of the House of Aion. Secondly by their embellishment – both are equipped with mosaic floors: the vestibule with geometric panels and the *triclinium* with the most exquisite late antique figural mosaic in Cyprus – a representation of the Greek gods and mythical characters with a unique ideological programme (among others Leda and the Swan, Hermes and Dionysus, Cassiopeia, Apollo, Marsyas, and Aion[65] who gave the House its modern name).

The exceptional status of the *triclinium* of the House of Aion is also emphasised by a niche located in the middle of the back western wall, recessed in the thickness of the wall. The niche in the form of a small, semi-circular apse arched with a semi-dome received a rich architectural decoration: a frame composed of two Corinthian half-columns surmounted with projecting entablature. Presumably, its interior was filled with a missing statue, which must have been well visible as the niche was placed about 0.5 m above the floor level.[66] The niche framing the statue and the splendid figure mosaic might have formed a single complex iconographic programme of the edifice, whose correct interpretation may be the key to determining the function and 'nature' of the House of Aion – public or private.

## Summary and conclusions

The long duration of the settlement at Maloutena enabled us to study its architecture over several centuries in the Hellenistic and Roman times. This area, reserved for rich citizens of *Nea Paphos*, was used for spacious, richly equipped residences characterised by a wide variety of layouts and decoration, such as different architectural orders, mosaic floors, or wall paintings.

The residences and their embellishment manifested the aspirations of the owners and their families. On the one hand, we can observe the desire to keep up with the latest 'world-wide' fashion and tendencies, while on the other – a strong attachment to the local, old, and verified solutions and schemes. Most of the artistic novelties introduced to the Paphian residences were invented outside Cyprus and brought to the island, which was constantly under external cultural influences. The peristyle house was a Greek invention,[67] broadly used across the whole

[59] Medeksza 1992, 19–20, 26–27; Smith 1956.
[60] Medeksza 1992, 28.
[61] Medeksza 1992, 28–29.
[62] Daszewski, Michaelides 1988, 60–63.
[63] Medeksza 1992, 20, 62.
[64] Lichocka, Meyza 2001, 155; Mikocka 2018, 124.
[65] Selected literature concerning the interpretation of the iconographic programme of the mosaic from the *triclinium* of the House of Aion: Daszewski 1985a; Deckers 1986, 145–172; Daszewski, Michaelides 1988, 13–77; Bowersock 1990, 49–53; Olszewski 1990–1991, 444–463; Balty 1995, 275–289; Quet 2006, 511–590; Kessler-Dimin 2008, 255–281; Olszewski 2013, 207–239; Ladouceur 2018, 49–64.
[66] Daszewski 1984, 294–314; Medeksza 1987, 227–230; Mikocki 1992, 135–150; Daszewski 1998b, 128; Daszewski *apud* Hajisavvas 1998, 691–692.
[67] Hales 2003, 207.

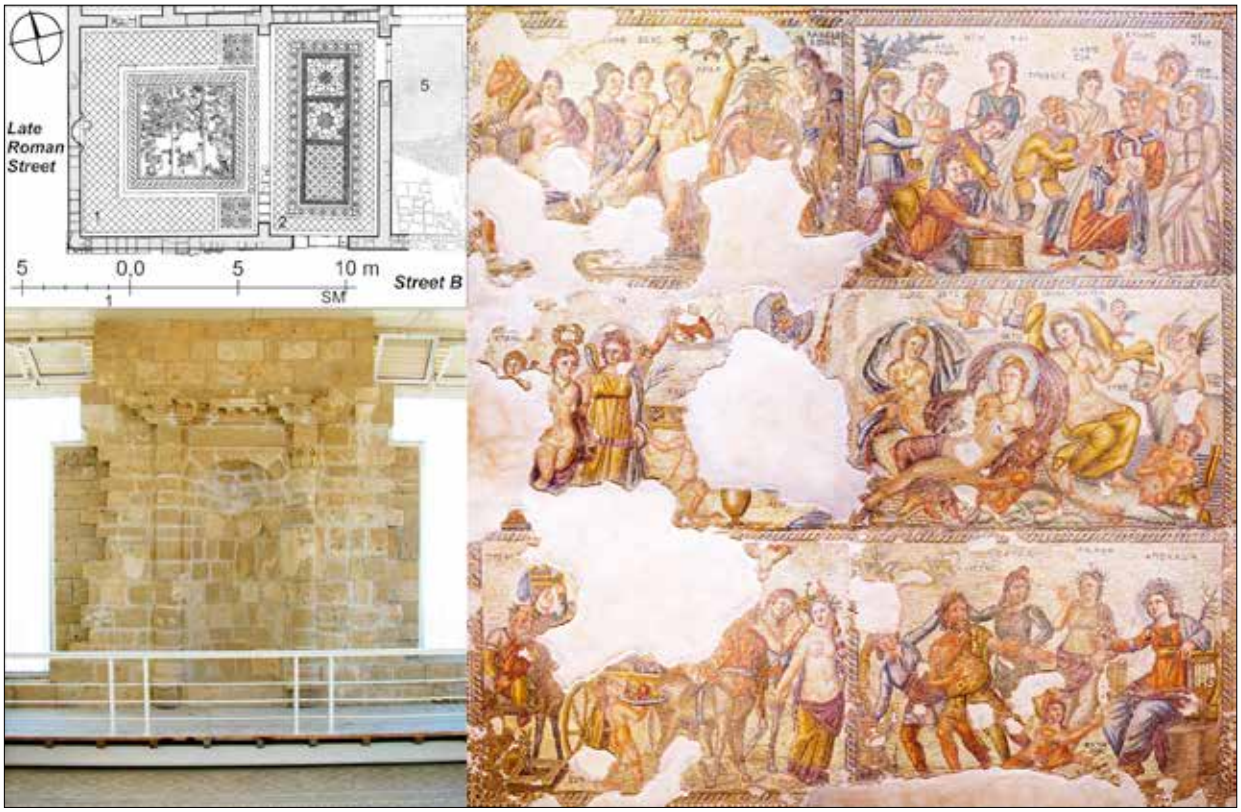


Fig. 11. *Triclinium* of the House of Aion: the plan, the niche for a statue, and the mosaic floor (drawing by S. Medeksza; photos by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka, M. Jawornicki).

Hellenistic world. The transformation of the classical peristyle surrounded by four porticoes into a pseudo-peristyle closed by walls with embedded half-columns may be observed, as written above, in the Alexandrian residential district as well as in the Paphian 'Hellenistic' House and came to *Nea Paphos* most probably *via* very strong links between Cyprus and the Ptolemaic Kingdom. These Alexandrian influences in Cyprus seem to be crucial during the Hellenistic and early Roman times, and can be observed in several other cases. The extensive use of the so-called Alexandrian style of architectural decoration constitutes the most obvious phenomenon: Alexandrian Corinthian capitals, cornices with modillions, or mixed orders are just a few manifestations of this trend, all of them present in the Paphian architecture, including the residences.[68]

Apart from the trends from the Greek culture, many Roman influences may be observed in the Paphian residences, for instance the incomplete peristyles in the Villa of Theseus or the House of Aion bear strong resemblance to the courtyards known from, among others, Pompeian houses.[69] Such an arrangement, with at least one plain wall instead of a portico, could have been a common solution in the entire Graeco-Roman world in a situation where there was not enough space to introduce a complete four-portico court.

The atrium, being a key part of the house entrance, is another purely Roman invention seen in *Nea Paphos*. The monumental entrance zone of the Villa of Theseus, with a vestibule preceding the atrium which leads to the grand peristyle, forms a perfect example of the classical arrangement, in this case enlarged greatly due to the rank of the residence, whose design was inspired by the architecture of Roman imperial palaces.

Emphasising the official areas is understandable and characteristic of all the residences, not only in *Nea Paphos* or Cyprus but irrespective of time and place. They were the representational areas where the owner wanted to 'show off' in front of his guests. Paphian residences are no exception. This demonstration could take various

[68] Guimier-Sorbet, Michaelides 2009; Brzozowska-Jawornicka forthcoming.

[69] Hales 2003, 153–154.

forms. The owner of the 'Hellenistic' House decided to use as many various architectural orders as possible: in two courtyards five different styles may be observed. As if that was not enough, the main courtyard was designed as a Rhodian peristyle with porticoes of two different heights. The designers of the Villa of Theseus built the biggest residence not only in *Nea Paphos* or in Cyprus. It is one of the biggest palaces in the whole eastern part of the Roman Empire, with strongly underlined official zones and furnished with imported architectural decoration. The youngest of the analysed residences, the House of Aion, cannot match the previous ones in terms of size, but it was still very richly decorated with its main façade modelled on the elevations of the Balkan imperial palaces and its *triclinium* floored with one of the most impressive mosaics of late Antiquity.

Most of the architectural decoration from the analysed residences was carved in Paphian workshops from local stone, calcarenite. The imported pieces of architectural decoration are rather rare – such an extravagance was available and reserved only for the wealthiest Paphian citizens from the top of the social ladder, like in the case of the owner of the Villa of Theseus. Importation of ready-made pieces of architectural decoration resulted also in the introduction of new trends on the island – trends which could have been later taken over by local workshops and developed into regional variants of general stylistic currents, as shown, for instance, by the Alexandrian architectural decoration.

The residences of Paphian Maloutena constitute examples of local architecture in an average town of the Graeco-Roman world. They were built according to regional traditions on the one hand, whereas on the other they followed the world's latest trends. While analysing the residential architecture, one has to always keep in mind that the appearance of a given house is the result of individual choices, decisions, and tastes of its owner and local specificity. The particular location of Cyprus on the crossroads of cultures was a reason behind its bigger neighbours' constant interest in the island. In consequence, it brought about a fascinating mixture of the prevailing influences of the Greek *koine* and the *Romanitas* with an admixture of the Orient. This complex Graeco-Roman world, composed of many cultures mutually influencing each other,[70] is reflected in the Cypriot art and architecture, including the rich houses of the local Paphian elite.

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[70] Hales 2003, 208–209, 24 –243, 245–247 with references to further literature.

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# How Roman Are Roman Houses in the Eastern Mediterranean? The House of Leukaktios (*Ptolemais*, Cyrenaica) and the House of Orpheus (*Nea Paphos*, Cyprus) as Case Studies

Abstract

Cyprus and Cyrenaica, two regions strongly influenced by the Alexandrian cultural heritage, which came under the Roman rule already in the 1st century BC, are simultaneously both typical and unusual examples of acculturation understood as a mixture of Hellenistic and Roman components. This is reflected in various spheres of life, including the architecture of the houses owned by members of the urban elite which are investigated in this article. Two residential units – the House of Leukaktios at *Ptolemais* in Cyrenaica and the House of Orpheus at *Nea Paphos* in Cyprus – will be presented to discuss different attitudes towards Romanisation from the perspective of an individual as reflected by particular dwellings.

**Keywords:** Cyprus, Cyrenaica, residential architecture, interior décor

## Prolegomena

The question in the title – 'how Roman is a Roman house?' – contains, at least partially, an answer: the house must be Roman. However, contrary to its appearances, a house is not defined as Roman by its geography and chronology alone. We can also read its Romanness through the person of the owner of the house. Being a Roman (*civis romanus*) required some visual signs. During the Imperial Period, urban elite members in the Greek East perceived *Romanitas* as a privilege, so they did want their houses to demonstrate their Roman identity as well as the wealth and social status which would often go hand-in-hand with it.

Whereas some ambiguity and uncertainty always remain when it comes to inferring identity from a house, we can say that it was the architecture of spatial control as well as decoration marking out hierarchies of space (to draw attention to some areas while rendering others 'invisible') that might be the indicators of adaptation, assimilation, resistance, or imposition of Roman identity.

Before answering the question posed in the title, it is worth considering the definition of 'what makes a Roman house a Roman house' as articulated by Wallace-Hadrill, who based his remarks on the houses from Pompeii and Herculaneum.[1] In his considerations, Wallace-Hadrill quoted Vitruvius, who, while describing residential architecture, stressed the sharp difference between the Roman and the Greek houses or identified the Roman house by contrasting it with the non-Roman house, where non-Roman meant Greek (or rather Hellenistic). His enumeration was based on the differences stemming from social practice in the Greek and the Roman societies – the major discrepancy would be the presence of a separate area for women, *gynaiconitis*. Then, he focused on two oppositions – the separation between the male and female areas *vs* the distinction between spaces meant for guests and family. Finally, according to Vitruvius, the most distinctive feature of the traditional Roman house would be the sequence of atrium and *tablinum* which corresponded to the aristocratic patronage practice of *salutatio*. In consequence, Vitruvius's words suggest that the answer to the question 'what makes a Roman house Roman' has something to do with this very defined spatial arrangement. However, given that in the houses from Roman provinces, especially in

[1] Wallace-Hadrill 2015.

the eastern Mediterranean, the absence of an atrium was rather a rule than an exception, another definition seems to be needed for the 'Roman house' as an expression of Romanity *sensu stricto*.

Obviously, in the face of the variety and complexity of the residential spaces in the Roman world we cannot speak of an ideal type of the 'Roman house'. It is rather an expression of an inherent cultural identity, an amalgam of architectural traditions and social practices that might enable us to discern a distinctive Roman identity. Typologically, Roman houses are almost endlessly varied. Moreover, the houses differed significantly even within the same town, not to mention the fact that the same house could have been subjected to numerous reconstructions or modifications. Vitruvius observed (*De arch*. VI.5.1–2) that the way of building a house depends on the social status of the *pater familias*. At the same time, he listed *triclinia*, *exedrae*, and *oeci* in one breath (*De arch*. VI.3.8–10), without any suggestion about the Romanness of the *triclinium* and the Greekness of the *oecus*, and he did not distinguish the Greek intruder from the Roman traditional space. He described some important differences between the Corinthian and Egyptian *oeci* or the Rhodian peristyle but treated them as regular features of the Italic practice. Since grand people needed the grandest possible house, they applied all these Greek features just to manifest dignity, not to diminish their cultural identity as members of the Roman elite. Wallace-Hadrill would argue that what makes a Roman house 'Roman' is the suitable layout supporting the 'Roman way of life', or a shared private and public life. The second important factor would be the decoration properly underscoring the dignity of the owner. Finally, the Romanness is guaranteed by luxury, even if its language was developed as an imitation of, mainly but not exclusively, eastern models. To conclude, according to Wallace-Hadrill, Roman houses 'share a language of luxury and it is precisely this luxury that makes them instantly recognisable as Roman'. Going further – as the Roman house is 'at the heart of the construction of the power of the élite',[2] it had to be inhabited by someone who claimed belongingness to it.

In the Roman provinces, it was the residential architecture which was one of the important aspects that would determine the degree of Romanisation in the society and culture. In this article, I am going to examine archaeological and epigraphic evidence from two particular residences in the eastern Mediterranean region in order to present individual reactions to the amalgam of the Hellenistic (Greek) tradition and the new Roman reality against their socio-political background.

## Cyrenaica and Cyprus – parallels within the historical framework

I assume that both houses I am about to present, one at *Ptolemais* and another one at *Nea Paphos*, provide insights into this phenomenon within two regions: Cyrenaica and Cyprus (Fig. 1). Even if only Cyprus can be considered an island proper, both can be treated as examples of insular cultures, provided we understand insularity as 'the quality of being isolated as a result of being in islands, or of being somewhat detached in outlook and experience'.[3] What distinguishes these regions within the Roman Mediterranean are some parallels in history, including the 'episode' spanning several centuries when they, as the overseas territories, constituted the core of the empire of the Ptolemies. As such, they were managed by officials sent from Alexandria.[4] Accompanied by their families, the administrators rapidly joined the ranks of the old elite, contributing to the diversity of the social hierarchy of the urban classes. Just as the new administration impacted the development of urban planning and monumental public buildings, the influx of wealthy people had a significant impact on the development of houses, their layouts, and setting new trends in their decoration. An excellent illustration of this process is one of the most famous residences of the ancient world – *Palazzo delle Colonne* in *Ptolemais*.[5] The strength of the Alexandrian tradition is evidenced by traditions in architectural decoration which survived in Cyrenaica and Cyprus until late Antiquity.[6]

Even if Cyrenaica and Cyprus were inherited by Republican Rome already in the 1st century BC, it was only during the reign of Augustus that the new Roman political reality was implemented after an unstable period of trouble. Under the Roman Imperial rule, unlike previously, both Cyprus and Cyrenaica were gradually losing their importance and within the Roman Empire were to play a secondary role as a political backwater.[7] Both regions appear to have been of equal rank in the hierarchy of provinces.[8] These provinces would not afford

[2] Wallace-Hadrill 2015, 186.

[3] Knapp 2008, 18.

[4] Bagnall 1976.

[5] Pesce 1950; Gasparini 2014; Rekowska forthcoming.

[6] Pensabene, Gasparini 2017.

[7] Mitford 1980; Laronde 1988. Since the Augustan Period, both regions had been rarely mentioned in historical narratives; however, the recent approach and archaeological evidence changed this perspective, especially on the role of Cyprus within the Mediterranean; see Kaldeli 2010; 2013.

[8] In the Republican Period, Crete and Cyrenaica became a joint province. Cyprus was first incorporated to Cilicia and later was transformed into an independent province; Mitford 1980; Laronde 1988.

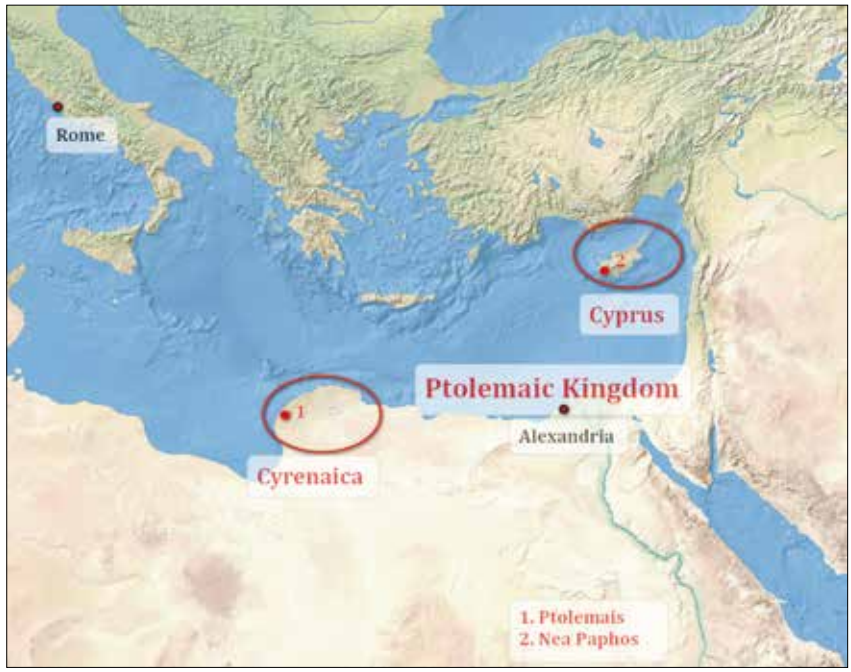


Fig. 1. Map of the eastern Mediterranean: Cyprus and Cyrenaica (based on https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b6/Mediterranean_Basin_and_Near_East_before_1000_AD_topographic_map.jpg, accessed 3.04.2020; compiled by M. Rekowska).

one a quick promotion in the senatorial *cursus honorum*; therefore, the pro-consulates of Cyprus and Cyrenaica were not particularly desired by ambitious senators. Even so, representatives of the Roman administration would permanently reside in both regions:[9] governors (pro-consuls and *praesides*), *legati*, and *quaestores provinciae*, as well as officials directly depending on the emperors, such as *procuratores* and *curators civitatum*. Over time, more and more lower-level officials were involved in the administration system, and, for reasons both organisational (efficiency) and economical (relative cheapness) in nature, certain daily duties were shifted to local Greek authorities or municipalities.[10] In consequence, there was a relatively low inflow of migrants arriving from Rome. In the early Roman Empire, Roman citizenship was rather rare among the natives of Cyrenaica and Cyprus. Nevertheless, since the beginning of the 1st century AD, gradual Romanisation is clearly visible throughout the material culture, including the residential architecture. Its development is undoubtedly due to the increase in the well-being of urban residents. As a matter of fact, during the Imperial Period, both regions enjoyed a time of stable prosperity due to the trade in wine, oil, and grain (in the case of Cyprus also the exploitation of natural resources, such as copper or timber, and ship-building).[11]

In Cyrenaica and in Cyprus, because of the Jewish revolt (in the beginning of the 2nd century), cities suffered considerable damages. Hadrian invested heavily in rebuilding the cities of Cyrenaica, which gave him the title of *Restitutor Libyae*. But it was the Severan reign that constituted a heyday of the eastern provinces, which resulted from the dynasty's policy being oriented towards the East and the intensification of Romanisation. During this period, an extensive architectural development occurred.[12] The new and 'fresh' trends in the residential architecture should be connected to the ethnic as well as social factors.[13] Due to the economic prosperity, a class of wealthy owners, joined by newcomers, began to grow in strength, which is visible more through the residential architecture than written sources. For Cyprus, the Severan

[9] Eck 1972–1973, 235. For a list of proconsuls of Cyprus, see Eck 1972–1973, 250–253; Thomasson 1984, 295–302; 2009, 123–125. Based on the available epigraphic and literary sources, Nowakowski distinguished 63 governors and other 56 Roman officials in Cyprus; see Nowakowski 2010, 5, note 2. For a list of proconsuls of the *provincia Creta et Cyrenaica*, see Eck 1972–1973, 244–251; Thomasson 1984, 361–362. About the administration of the province of *Creta et Cyrenaica*, see also Baldwin 1983, 9–10, 16; Laronde 1988, 1015–1031; on the military presence, see Laronde 2009.

[10] Hopkins 1980, 121.

[11] When prosperity was not disturbed by earthquakes or turmoils, such as the Jewish revolt in the beginning of the 2nd century AD. See Horbury 2014 for an extensive bibliography; on Cyprus, see Michaelides 1996.

[12] This is demonstrated by, among others, the expansion of the road network; see Mitford 1939; 1966; 1980, 1332–1337; Bekker-Nielsen 2004.

[13] Żelazowski in this volume.

Period, due to its great building activity, gained even the label *Severan floruit*.

Both cities, *Ptolemais* and *Nea Paphos*, are of the Hellenistic origin.[14] They owed their prosperity to their rising role as very attractive ports in the Ptolemaic maritime empire.[15] The stationing of the Roman fleet in *Nea Paphos* and *Ptolemais* during the Roman Period seems certain, although their role and meaning as naval bases were strongly reduced.[16] Nevertheless, the peaceful conditions prevailing in the Mediterranean benefitted port cities, whose economy depended largely on safe sea trade. Both port cities acted as centres for the redistribution of agricultural surplus on the one hand and of imported goods on the other. Even if there is an important difference in the formal role that *Ptolemais* and *Nea Paphos* played in the administrative system under the Ptolemaic and Roman rules,[17] one can tentatively assume that they had a similar social structure. It seems probable that the core of the new urban elite grouped people of a similar origin – on the one hand not very numerous officials from the West[18] and, on the other, representatives of the old aristocracy. There must have been a third, increasingly important group of people for whom the financial status went hand-in-hand with their social standing, thus requiring identification with the Roman authorities. In conclusion, we may suspect that during the middle Roman Imperial Period (2nd–mid-3rd century) the society in both cities was truly heterogeneous, even if the ambition of people of a certain financial status identifying themselves with the ruling class was to be seen as Romans. And their houses were to show it explicitly.

In this context, we should 'decode' the houses which do not follow the exact Roman model, demonstrating rather a speculation on what *domus romana* may have looked like depending on different factors. When discussing the problem of self-presentation through the domestic architecture, it is nonetheless worth noticing that we should take into account the fact that often enough members of the elite themselves were identified by researchers on the basis of the houses rather than the other way round – we are not always able to define houses through their owners' putative social categories, such as 'curial class'.

## House of Leukaktios at *Ptolemais*

The House of Leukaktios is located in the central district of *Ptolemais*, although at some distance from the centre. It was built on a plot close to the *Palazzo delle Colonne*, the most renowned building in the town, which served its owner as a private residence as well as a place for official purposes. The entire insula (E XXI) was built up with houses of similar size and was apparently inhabited by people of a similar status, both social and financial.[19] This is confirmed by the expansion of the dwellings which testifies to a certain sequence of occupation from the Hellenistic foundation, through the peak of their development (from the 2nd to the 4th century), until their decline in the 5th century AD. All the residences represent the same type of urban house organised around a peristyle, with similar décor consisting of mosaics and wall paintings, both complemented by architectural decoration (Fig. 2). In the *Ptolemais* cityscape, these medium-sized houses did not stand out – neither in size nor in their layout or the extraordinary decoration. The House of Leukaktios is, however, exceptional and as such can be subjected to a more detailed analysis – firstly, because its architecture was 'petrified' at some moment due to an earthquake (partially destroyed, it was abandoned and never rebuilt, except for fragments of its eastern part used for industrial activities), and secondly, because of inscriptions indicating the owner's name.

The house's plan is not entirely regular, although it presents some features typical of residential architecture, with clearly demarcated different parts for inhabitants, guests, and economic infrastructure (Fig. 3).

[14] Młynarczyk 1990; Żelazowski 2012c. *Nea Paphos* began as a settlement already in the 4th century BC; however, it did not become an urban centre until the Ptolemaic administration was transferred from *Salamis*; see Balandier 2014; Mehl 2016, 249; 2019, 475; Vitas 2016.

[15] Even if both ports were of importance, only Cyprus was a truly transmarine base (Hauben 1987, 215). See also Młynarczyk 1990; Rekowska 2019.

[16] In *Ptolemais*, it is confirmed only indirectly, *e.g.* by the inscription CIL VIII 7030 mentioning 'Caius Julius Libotriarchus classis novae Lybic[a]e'. On Cyprus, see Mitford 1980, 1295.

[17] In the early 2nd century BC, *Nea Paphos* replaced *Salamis* as the capital of Cyprus and maintained this status under the Romans until the mid-4th century AD; see Mitford 1980, 1309–1315. We must notice, however, some controversies about the role of *Nea Paphos* as the capital during the Roman Period – the discussion (with bibliography) is cited by Nowakowski (2010, 193–196). Even if *Ptolemais* became the capital of *Libya Superior* only after the administrative reform of Diocletian, as a prosperous town it was an important regional (eastern Cyrenaica) counterweight to *Cyrene*, the capital, already in the earlier period; see Goodchild 1961.

[18] To the total number of Romans in *Paphos* should also be added a number of *negotiatores*, attested *inter alia* in inscription; see Mitford 1961a, 41. For more on Roman *negotiatores* in Cyprus and the supposed *conventus civium Romanorum*, see Mitford 1961b, 108.

[19] Insula E XXI was excavated by the Polish Mission from the University of Warsaw between 2001 and 2010; see Żelazowski (ed.) 2012.

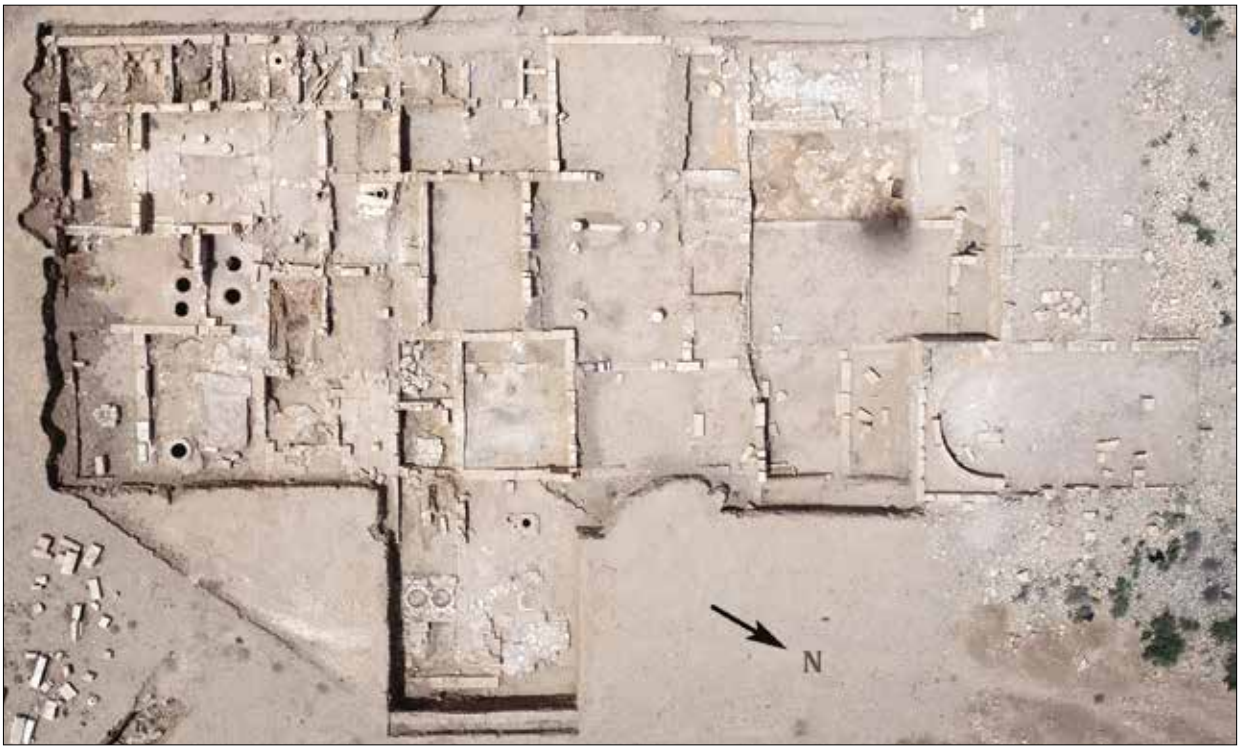


Fig. 2. Insula E XXI at *Ptolemais* (photo by M. Bogacki).


Fig. 3. Plan of the House of Leukaktios (based on Żelazowski 2012a; compiled by M. Rekowska).

The residence (c. 700 m$^2$ on one level) was accessed from the western street through a wide hall paved with a geometrical mosaic and followed by another room with an open *exedra* boasting a carpet mosaic (Fig. 4.A). The heart of the residence was a courtyard with four columns surrounded by rooms of various sizes, decoration, and purposes. The courtyard itself was decorated with a geometrical mosaic pavement (with a medallion with an inscription in the middle) and paintings imitating marble *crustae* on the walls (Fig. 4.B). The large and representative room on its southern side (measuring *c.* 40 m$^2$) had similarly decorated walls. The room layout, as suggested by a U-shaped mosaic lying around the central panel with a representation of a winged personification holding a *tabula ansata* (with an inscription), seems to indicate its function as a *triclinium* (Fig. 4.C). Possibly, the second *triclinium* was situated on the eastern side of the courtyard, where a somewhat smaller room (*c.* 32 m$^2$) was located, with similar, although much worse-preserved, decoration (Fig. 4.D). Even if the central panel of the mosaic is currently missing, its location – central but slightly pushed forward to the front of the room – created a characteristic arrangement for *klinai* to be placed on three sides. The northern wing of the house comprised several smaller rooms with modest decoration. Its character (mortar floor in *opus signinum*, plain paintings with simple geometrical motifs on the walls) shows that they probably served as private rooms (*cubicula*). The room on the western side of the peristyle had the most opulent and sophisticated decoration. The geometric mosaic 'carpet' on the floor was decorated with a well-preserved central panel bearing a representation of Ariadne asleep on Naxos, at the very moment when she was found by Dionysus and his retinue (Fig. 4.E).[20] On the walls – instead of an imitation of geometric marble *crustae* – there is a colourful composition of panels with depictions of different kinds of figures, mainly local birds, separated by painted Corinthian columns on a red background.[21] The room has a kind of annex (to the north), accessed through an extremely decorative, monumental tripartite

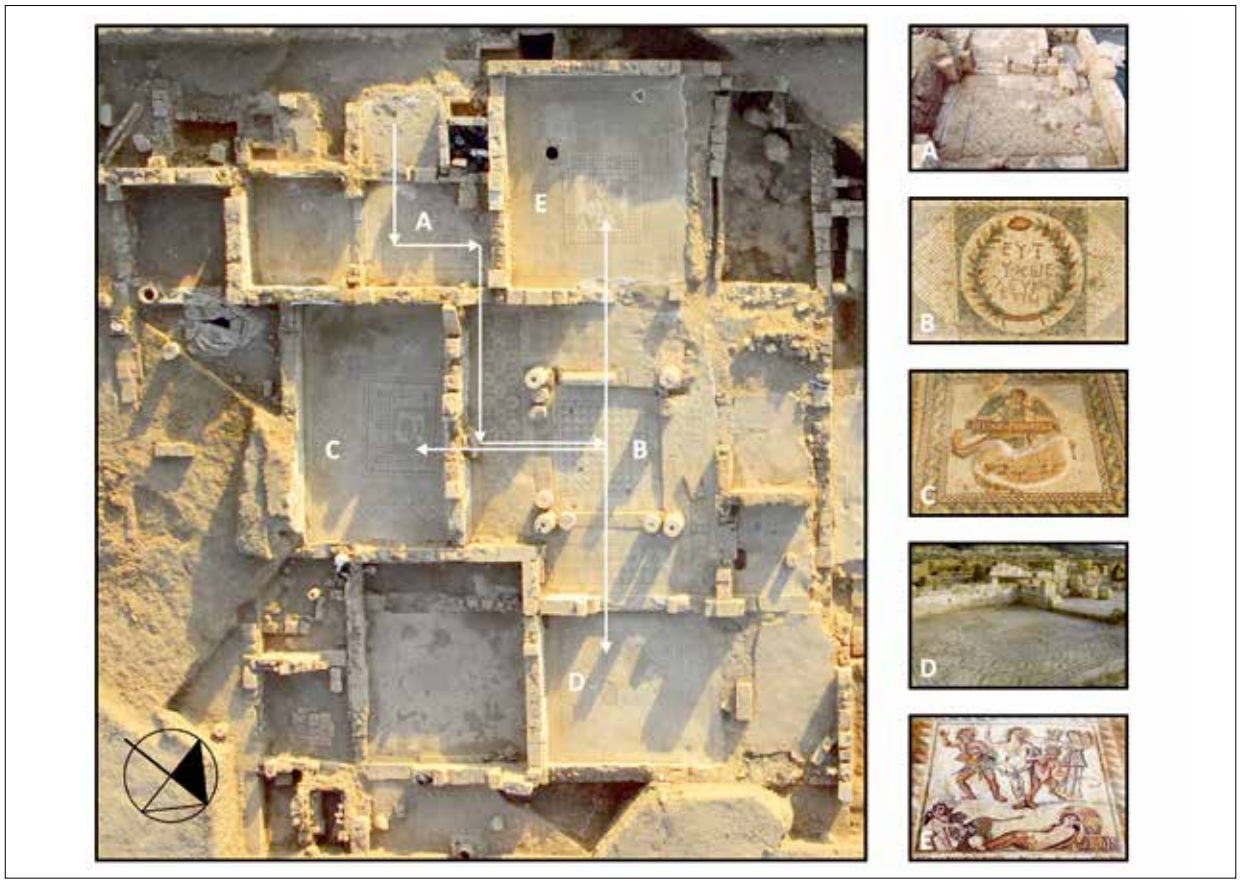


Fig. 4. Space of representation in the House of Leukaktios (based on a photo by M. Bogacki; compiled by M. Wagner).

[20] More on mosaics, see Mikocki 2004.

[21] See Żelazowski 2012b and Chmielewski 2012 for a detailed description of the painted decoration.

passage. Above the north-western part of the house there was an upper storey room decorated with a mosaic (with scenes belonging to the Achillean cycle, as indicated by the preserved legends), accessed from a staircase (located probably in the north-west corner of the peristyle).[22] The service area was on the eastern boundary of the insula, completely invisible for visitors.

Such layout was designed to create a striking impression upon an entering guest and allowed the owner to monitor the access to particular parts of the house depending on the visitor's dignity and status. Public and private spaces were highlighted by decoration so as to make the circulation pattern readable. The public space was delimited by geometrical mosaics and wall paintings bearing a decorative scheme imitating marble wall veneer (Fig. 4). A visitor entering the peristyle had the opportunity to read the inscription with the greeting to the owner in the centre, and, if he was invited to the dining hall, he could (or rather would) repeat the same greeting to the owner at the entrance. The northern wing (as well as the upper floor) was inaccessible for non-inhabitants. Only special guests were honoured with an invitation to the rooms in the western wing. The decoration of this part, as already mentioned above, is distinct and has a really intimate, much more informal character.[23] The special character of this room is emphasised by the presence of an annex, connected by a tripartite colonnade entrance with an arcuated lintel (Fig. 5). During the middle Roman Period, this architectural form occurred mainly in monumental public architecture; however, it was also successfully adopted for residential architecture (the earliest examples coming from the 1st century; nonetheless, it gained great popularity in the late Roman Period). In private buildings, such refinement added grandeur to a room and evoked associations with the palatial sphere.[24]

Fig. 5. Reconstruction of the tripartite entrance (compiled by J. Kaniszewski).

[22] Mikocki 2005.

[23] Olszewski 2007; 2010; Chmielewski 2012; Rekowska 2012b; Żelazowski 2012b.

[24] Rekowska 2012a; 2012b; Pensabene, Gasparini 2017, 661.


Fig. 6. Two mosaic inscriptions with the name of Leukaktios (photos by M. Bogacki).

Two inscriptions with the same text containing an exclamation 'εύτυχως' (Good luck!) and a name of a man 'Λευκατω' (Leukaktios), are of key importance for understanding the 'Romanness' of the house's owner (Fig. 6). Hence, it is worth to recall the conclusions made by prof. Adam Łajtar, who performed a meticulous analysis of these inscriptions. According to him, Leukaktios was a man of Greek origin, whose name makes a reference to a place – Λευκὴ Ἀκτή or Λευκάκτιον, which literally means 'the White Promontory'. Despite a variety of locations bearing this name, Egyptian Λευκὴ Ἀκτή (promontory on the main route from Cyrenaica to Egypt, *c.* 190 km west of Alexandria) seems to be the most logical eponym for the Leukaktios living in *Ptolemais*. As such, he would not be a descendant of the old Dorian aristocracy, nor a Roman official, but rather a representative of the new civic elite, whose prosperity possibly depended on the maritime trade with Alexandria. According to the archaeological evidence and stylistic criteria, we can date the house arrangement and decoration to the turn of the 2nd and 3rd centuries; nevertheless, it is quite clear that Leukaktios was not the owner of the house when the mosaics were laid. In both inscriptions, the words 'εὐτυχῶς' and 'Λευκακτίῳ' differ in the colour of the *tesserae* as well as palaeography, which confirms that they were reworked. We do not know in what circumstances – how and when – Leukaktios became the new owner (purchase? inheritance?). However, it does seem plausible that it took place after 212 AD, the date of the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, which granted Roman citizenship to all free men in the Empire. This would mean that Leukaktios, as Marcus Aurelius, was a new *civis romanus*. He must

have been a man of a certain material status, whose career developed in the 3rd century and who aspired to be a member of the urban elite. As such, he decided to keep the decoration of the house, while simply having the name of the addressee of the greetings in the inscriptions replaced.[25] Even if he did not choose it personally, he still appreciated the Roman-style design of his residence. Here, the lack of marble was compensated by painted marble wall veneer, as well as white plastered capitals and columns' shafts. Such solution, employed in the Roman residential context, was a decorative sign of luxury.

Therefore, the decoration of the House of Leukaktios cannot be read literally, as a passive reflection of its owner's wealth and status, but should rather be understood as a means of enhancing his position. He would identify with the Roman elites because such identification gave him a sense of belonging to a Roman (better) world as it was expressed by Aristides, who, in a well-known work *To Rome* (*Or.* 26), enthusiastically described the reality of the Roman domination (especially in relation to the eastern Mediterranean) under the rule of Antoninus Pius.[26]

## House of Orpheus at *Nea Paphos*

Another model of acculturation reflecting the intermingled Hellenistic and Roman traditions is illustrated by the House of Orpheus at *Nea Paphos* (Fig. 7).

The residence is difficult to interpret because of the last period of its occupation, when an industrial activity distorted the original layout of the house.[27] Even so, it is a very attractive example of a Roman residence with clearly separated public and private parts.[28] The central part of the building is a relatively large colonnade courtyard (*peristylium*), surrounded on four sides by chambers of different characters (Fig. 8). Smaller rooms

Fig. 7. House of Orpheus at *Nea Paphos* (photo by M. Rekowska).

[25] Łajtar 2012.

[26] Arist. *Or.* 26, 59–66; see also Fontanella 2015, 171–185.

[27] These are some preliminary thoughts on the House of Orpheus, excavated in the 1980s and 1990s. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to its excavator, prof. Michaelides, for giving me a chance to deepen research within the project financed by the National Science Center in Poland (NCN UMO-2017/27/B/HS3/01131) 'Residence as self-presentation of urban elites. Architecture and decoration of the House of Orpheus in *Nea Paphos*, the ancient capital of Cyprus'.

[28] The presentation of the plan refers to the house from the turn of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Several architectural relics witness its earlier and later phases; see Rekowska *et al.* in this volume.

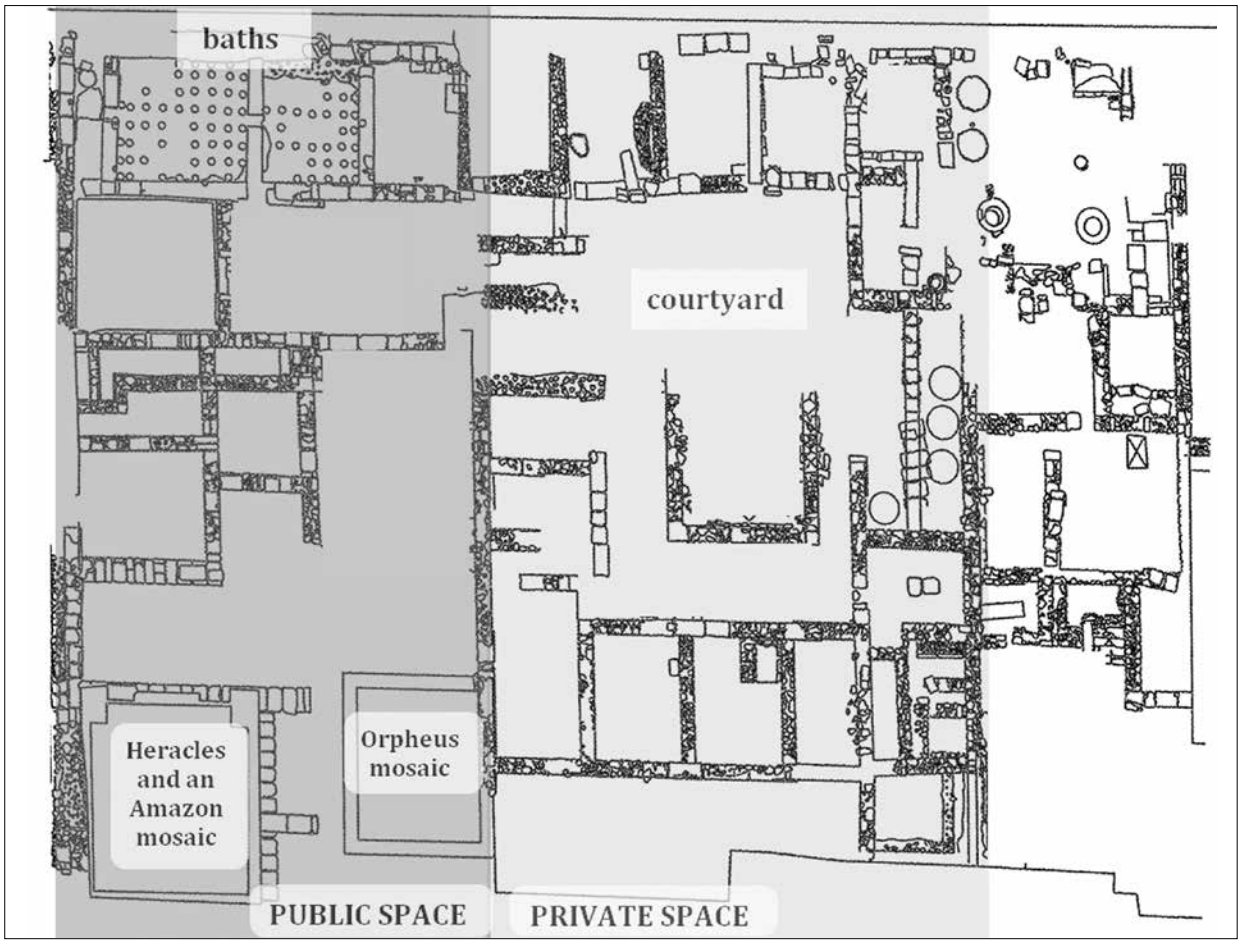


Fig. 8. Plan of the House of Orpheus (after Michaelides *et al.* 2019, fig. 1.2).

on the western side of the courtyard are modestly decorated, which indicates their private functions (*cubicula*?). Further to the south, one can see the remains of stairs leading to the upper floor of the residence.[29] This part seems to be accessible rather to family members and close friends only. The northern wing of the house has evidently a diverse, much more official character, being a space of representation for the owner (Fig. 9). In its western corner, one can find two chambers decorated with figurative mosaics. In its eastern corner, a thermal bath complex with well-preserved heating constructions (*hypocaustum*) in two rooms was located. Both rooms with mosaics *in situ* have a rich appearance. The larger one (7.0 × 6.5 m) is decorated with a mosaic with two figural panels set in a large geometric field. Panels with Heracles with a lion and an Amazon by a horse are lying back to back, and the arrangement of these panels resembles the dining room layout (*triclinium*). A monumental tripartite entrance which leads into the room imparts a solemn and official character to it.[30] The other, smaller, room (4.25 × 5.10 m) is also decorated with a mosaic, this time depicting Orpheus seated on a rock and surrounded by beasts.[31] Even if the myth of Orpheus is much more frequent on the mosaics in the West than in the East, this type of representation apparently belongs to the Eastern tradition.[32] In addition to the two figural mosaics which date to the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD, another mosaic with a geometric monochrome pattern

[29] On an attempt at an interpretation of the house layout in historical perspective, see Rekowska *et al.* in this volume.
[30] About the mosaic with Hercules and an Amazon, see Nicolau 1980–1981; 1983.
[31] About the mosaic with Orpheus, see Michaelides 1986; 1991.
[32] Michaelides 1986, 480–481.

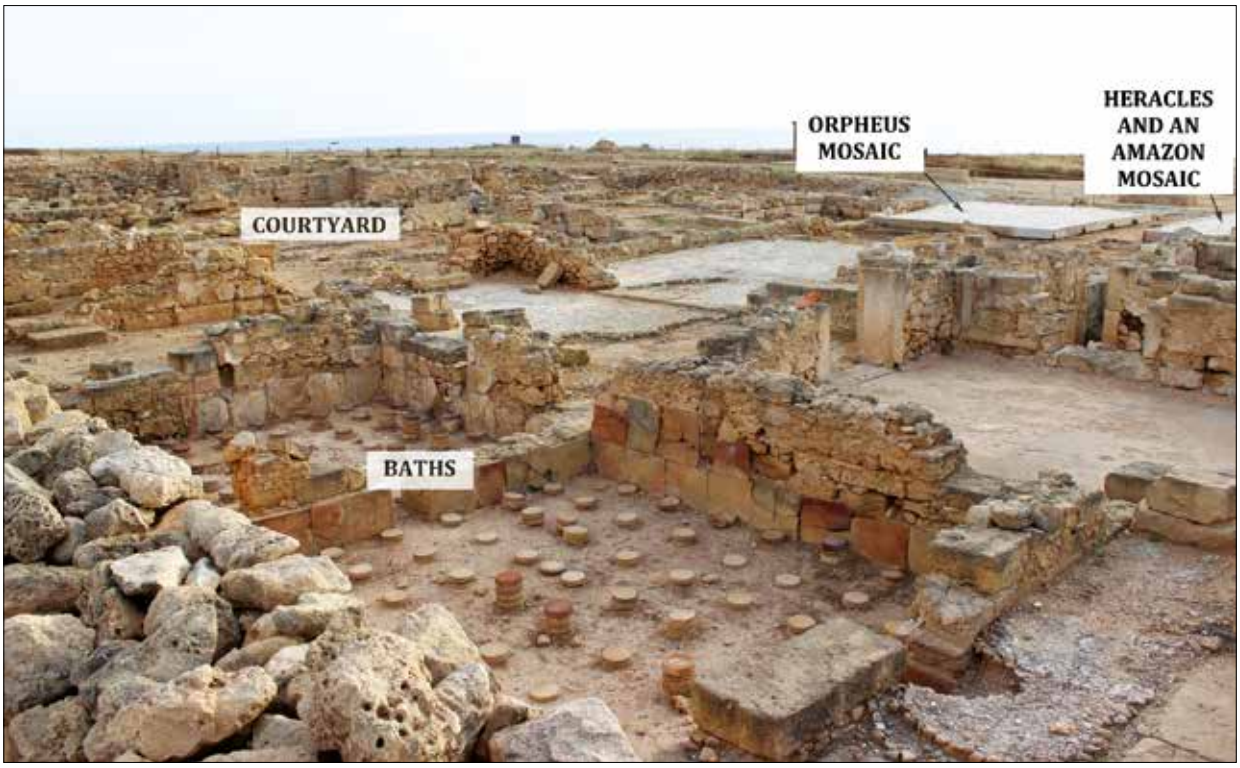


Fig. 9. Space of representation in the House of Orpheus, the baths in the foreground (photo by M. Rekowska).

made of greenish-grey *tesserae* was found in the southern part of the house.[33] *Nota bene*, the house must have originally had more mosaic decorations, as attested by numerous small fragments of mosaic pavement found within it. The décor of the rooms is complemented by wall paintings – several walls kept the painted decoration in the lower register, and, in addition, a great number of fresco fragments have been recovered from within the whole residence. These colourful fragments show plain or elaborate polychrome floral, geometric, and figural designs. Just like in the case of *Ptolemais*, here we also deal with a house whose owner is (probably) known by the name. The text of a Greek inscription found on the mosaic in the House of Orpheus mentions the Roman *trianomina* of '[...]ος Πίννιος Ρεστιτοῦτος' (Fig. 10).[34] Even if the verb following the name ('εποίει') could be interpreted as a signature of the artisan, according to the discoverer it relates rather to the commissioner. Also, the prominent position of the inscription makes it more likely that the name belonged to the patron rather than the artisan.[35] Hence, the hypothesis that at some point the house was owned by a person with a very Roman-like name – [Tit]*os* (or [Gai]*os*) *Pinnios Restitutos*[36] – seems very reasonable. Since citizenship itself was not so common among the islanders,[37] the name would rather point to a Roman official living at the back of the Villa of Theseus or, for instance, a senator who settled there after retiring from his political

[33] Even if its western part is currently missing, the preserved bedding allows one to estimate the size of the room to be no less than 6.45 × 4.9 m; see Michaelides 1991, 7–8. Nevertheless, we must leave some room for uncertainty regarding whether this room belonged to the house in question.

[34] Michaelides 1986, 485–486.

[35] Dunbabin 1999, 275. Such hypothesis is nowadays fully accepted; see Cayla 2018, 370.

[36] The name of Pinnios Restitutos is well-attested in Roman epigraphy; see Michaelides 1986, 485, note 84: 'There are reasons to believe that the man named is not the mosaicist but rather the owner of the house who commissioned and paid for the mosaic. Whatever the meaning, this is a rare type of inscription which remains, so far, unique in Roman Cyprus'.

[37] Relatively few Roman citizens have been attested on the island; see above note 16. See also Mitford 1980, 284; Fejfer 2013, 169–170, note 4; Lund 2015, 240, note 49.

Fig. 10. Mosaic inscription with the name of Pinnios Restitutos (photo by M. Rekowska).

career. This is even more likely given the Latin graffiti discovered on one of the walls in the south-eastern part of the house, which can also confirm the presence of the Romans from the West.[38] It was in response to their needs that the baths, a very Roman yet not frequent element of the houses in Cyprus,[39] were built. The organisation of the baths followed the order of bathing based on the gradation of temperature,[40] even if their regularity was disturbed by the fact that they were incorporated into the previous buildings.[41]

Given the above facts, we are able to conclude that the owner of the House of Orpheus, a Roman citizen coming probably from the West, adapted a model cherished by the old urban elite whose roots dated back to the Ptolemaic Period. Thus, not only did the elite's members preserve their own identity, but in a way they provided a source of *Romanitas* for other members of the Paphian community.

## Summing up

Both houses demonstrate how the provincial elites' understanding of their Roman identity could be manifested in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, both express different meanings through diverse means. Leukaktios from *Ptolemais* apparently wished to be seen as a Roman (even if the evidence for his citizenship is vague). Pinnios Restitutos, the owner of the House of Orpheus, was apparently a Roman citizen who, by the choice of decoration and the theme on the mosaics, intended to send a message to his guests confirming his thorough Greek educational background, which in this period was an upper class privilege. He also chose Greek to commemorate his Roman name on the mosaic because Greek remained the language of high culture. At the same time, his house with baths defined the essence of his *Romanitas*.

In the Roman (provincial) world, assimilation of the local elites generated a kind of standardisation. However, different models of assimilation are discernible, depending on ethnicity, individual taste, personal ambitions, and, last but not least, financial assets.

The model of Romanisation based on the aspiration of the provincial elites to enter into the new networks of power can be controversial;[42] still, it seems quite clear that the house, as a sanctuary of private life and at the same time a means of representation, remains in the centre of the question. The Roman cultural and social language created something distinctively new; nevertheless, in the eastern Mediterranean provinces this language was an interpretation of the Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman traditions. In such a case, the concept of Romanisation was not only complex and multifaceted but often elusive. However, to answer the title question, it should be emphasised that both houses were undoubtedly very Roman, since they were inhabited by the Romans, whether by self-identification or by origin.

[38] Michaelides 1993, 747; Herscher 1995, 288.
[39] In Cyprus, 16 baths dated to the Roman and early Byzantine periods are known, of which only five are related to private residences; see Christodoulou 2014.
[40] Yegül 1992, 354.
[41] Some preliminary remarks about the baths are noted by Christodoulou 2014, 92–93, figs 14–16 (see also the previous reports cited there – 98).
[42] Millet 1990.

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# Edilizia residenziale nel paesaggio urbanistico di Tolemaide in Cirenaica

Abstract

The article presents the private houses of *Ptolemais*' inhabitants in the context of the history and urban development of a city with a thousand-year-long history. Four periods can be distinguished in the history of *Ptolemais*: the first since the creation of the city's final spatial development plan in the 2nd century BC until the Jewish Revolt in 115–117 AD; the second in the 2nd–3rd centuries AD under the sign of development and growing aspirations of *Ptolemais*; the third in the 4th century AD until the first half of the 5th century AD, when the city served as the capital of the province of *Libya Superior*; and the fourth, from the end of the 5th century AD until the mid-7th century AD, in which *Ptolemais*, after a short period of crisis related to the nomad invasions, flourished again until the appearance of the Arabs, marking the end of the ancient city, although not the end of settlement in its area. Within this historical framework, changes in the city's buildings and the transformation of private houses can be identified, and various cultural influences associated with the arrival of new residents at different times with their baggage of experience or with the more or less significant presence of representatives of the civil and military administration of the Roman Empire can be seen.

**Keywords:** Cyrenaica, *Ptolemais*, ancient city, Graeco-Roman city planning, private houses, Romanization (Cirenaica, *Ptolemais*, città antica, urbanistica greco-romana, edilizia privata, romanizzazione)

Le ricerche archeologiche italiane, americane, inglesi e, infine, polacche a *Ptolemais* nella Cirenaica occidentale hanno portato alla scoperta di una decina di case private che ci offrono un quadro abbastanza dettagliato dello sviluppo dell'edilizia residenziale nella città, con l'esempio emblematico del Palazzo delle Colonne, una residenza tardoellenistica tanto discussa (Fig. 1),[1] contribuendo alle riflessioni più generali sulle case in questa regione del mondo greco-romano.[2] Tuttavia grazie alle ricerche topografiche polacche svolte a *Ptolemais* negli anni 2002-2010 si possono adesso inquadrare meglio le note case private nello sviluppo urbanistico e storico della città.[3]

Analizzando le forme dell'edilizia residenziale in una città, come d'altronde tutte le altre espressioni architettoniche ed artistiche, conviene riflettere in modo generale sulla popolazione e la potenziale committenza. *Ptolemais* fu pianificata come una città portuale e fondata nel luogo dove precedentemente si trovava il porto di Barce (el-Merg), la cui esistenza nel IV sec. a.C. viene testimoniata dallo Pseudo Scylax (*Perip*. 108),[4] quindi sul territorio della vecchia subcolonia di Cirene, situata nell'entroterra sulla fertilissima pianura di Gebel Akhdar e controparte tradizionale nei confronti della politica del capoluogo della regione.[5] A prescindere dalle intenzioni politiche e strategiche di un Tolemeo che si nascondeva dietro il nome dinastico della nuova città, *Ptolemais* aveva ereditato la popolazione con i suoi campi agricoli, i più estesi e fertili di tutta la Cirenaica, anche se in realtà non sappiamo quando i cittadini di Barce siano diventati *Ptolemaieis apo Barkes*.[6] Ammettendo pure la sostituzione politica di Barce con *Ptolemais* già nel momento della fondazione della nuova città, bisognerebbe forse immaginarsi un

[1] Lauter 1971; Bonacasa 2009; Fabbricotti 2013; Gasparini 2014.
[2] Spinola 1996; Bejor 1998; Pensabene, Gasparini 2014.
[3] Małkowski, Żelazowski 2012; Żelazowski, Gasparini 2014; Żelazowski, Misiewicz 2015; Żelazowski 2019.
[4] Struffolino 2017, 15-22.
[5] Chamoux 1952, 144-168, 225-226; Bacchielli, Santucci 2005a.
[6] Żelazowski 2012b, 69-70; Żelazowski, Misiewicz 2015, 33-35.

Fig. 1. Palazzo delle Colonne a *Ptolemais* (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 1. House of the Columns at *Ptolemais* (photo by M. Bogacki).

processo di graduale spostamento della popolazione, attirata dal grande centro portuale, ma comunque l'entroterra rimase sempre una stabile fonte di ricchezza per gli abitanti di *Ptolemais* fino alla tarda antichità e la grande città portuale godeva di tutti i presupposti per fare ancora nell'Impero Romano da contrappeso a Cirene e diventare il secondo centro della regione.[7]

Tuttavia l'estensione della nuova città su oltre 200 ettari entro le mura che correvano lungo il Wadi Ziwana e il Wadi Khambish, che per motivi d'approvvigionamento idrico, giungevano fino alle pendici di Gebel Akhdar, ci fa pensare a un grande insediamento nel quale potenzialmente ci fosse spazio per gli abitanti della vecchia Barce, ma anche per i diversi mercenari tolemaici, profughi da Cirene, come pure del resto per gli Ebrei, superando notevolmente altre fondazioni non soltanto tolemaiche.[8] In questo contesto, l'idea espressa di nuovo recentemente che il fondatore di *Ptolemais* fosse stato Tolemeo I Soter, magari ancora negli ultimi anni del IV sec. a.C. sarebbe molto affascinante, soprattutto visto il suo interesse per l'espansione verso l'Occidente, in cui fu seguito d'altronde dai suoi successori.[9]

Gli studiosi d'urbanistica greco-romana da tempo sono colpiti dalla coerenza e regolarità della pianta ortogonale di *Ptolemais*, caratterizzata da due larghe arterie (*plateiai*) tracciate dalle colline verso il mare, e come pare adesso tagliate nel mezzo dal decumano massimo nella terminologia romana.[10] La rete stradale indica più

[7] Romanelli 1943, 123-141; Kraeling 1962, 1-32; Roques 1987, 85-92, 106; Bacchielli 1997; Bacchielli, Santucci 2005b; Cohen 2006, 393-396.
[8] Małkowski 2009; Małkowski *et al*. 2012, 18-24.
[9] Laronde 1987, 349-377, 396-397; Mueller 2004; 2006, 142-146, 207, appendix III, no. 62; Cohen 2006, 393-396; Żelazowski 2012b, 67-70.
[10] Małkowski *et al*. 2012, 27-28; Żelazowski, Misiewicz 2015, 43-44.

di duecento isolati molto allungati, dalle dimensioni di 182,5 per 36,5 m, quindi con una ratio di 1 : 5, ormai diffusamente accettata (Fig. 2).[11]

La pianta molto regolare e uniforme suggerirebbe un'unica grande azione di colonizzazione. Tuttavia, da quando sembra aver trovato conferma nelle ricerche polacche l'intuizione di S. Stucchi, secondo cui *Ptolemais* sarebbe stata disegnata seguendo il piede tolemaico (36,5 cm) con isolati di 100 × 500 piedi e vie principali larghe 50 piedi, il problema della fondazione della città si presenta in modo più complesso.[12] S. Stucchi, a prescindere dalle discussioni sull'esistenza di tale misura nelle città cirenaiche, dove comunemente si usava il piede attico e successivamente quello romano, era consapevole che il piede tolemaico caratterizzava a Cirene gli edifici della fine del periodo tolemaico e dell'inizio dell'epoca romana. Di conseguenza egli suggerì di considerare la fondazione di *Ptolemais* come una sorta di denominazione e soltanto l'inizio di un processo d'urbanizzazione che si protrasse nel tempo. In questa prospettiva il nome di *Ptolemais apo Barkes*, a lungo mantenuto nelle fonti, significherebbe la fondazione della nuova città a spese della vecchia Barce, ma non necessariamente la pianificazione definitiva e precisa del nuovo insediamento, che potrebbe essersi verificata molto più tardi, persino nel II sec. a.C.[13]

Analizzando la pianta definitiva di *Ptolemais* è difficile resistere alla sensazione che l'architetto avesse cercato di adattare la sua città ideale alle condizioni trovate, per esempio alla posizione del teatro con la via d'accesso, cioè il *cardo* orientale.[14] Inoltre la pianta di *Ptolemais* si adegua chiaramente alla Porta di Barce a sud-ovest, come se l'architetto tardoellenistico proprio da questo punto avesse cominciato la pianificazione della città e dovesse tener conto anche di mura e alcune strade già in funzione. Comunque la pianificazione definitiva forse non sarebbe soltanto una conclusione del lungo processo d'insediamento e il progetto di un'ulteriore sistemazione della città ormai consolidata, ma si possono anche immaginare successive iniziative di colonizzazione e, dal punto di vista della storia della Cirenaica in questo periodo, sarebbe molto affascinante un'ipotesi che legasse la creazione della definitiva pianta di *Ptolemais* con l'attività di Tolemeo VIII Euergete II (*Physcon*) verso la metà del II sec. a.C., seguendo le sue iniziative a Cirene.[15] Forse non è del tutto casuale che gli edifici ellenistici scoperti dagli archeologi nella città non vadano oltre l'età tardoellenistica, come il Palazzo delle Colonne, il Mausoleum e il ginnasio.[16]

L'estensione di *Ptolemais* permette di includere questa città nella categoria dei più grandi centri urbani del mondo antico con caratteristiche specifiche, come per le città greche arcaiche e classiche hanno dimostrato le indagini del Copenhagen Polis Centre. Quindi anche per *Ptolemais* ellenistica si può supporre che tanti cittadini risiedessero fuori dal centro urbano nella *chora*, ipotesi tanto meno paradossale se si pensa ai campi agricoli di Barce sull'altopiano di Gebel Akhdar. Di conseguenza meno di cento isolati potevano essere occupati dall'edilizia privata, anche se meglio non entrare in calcoli troppo rischiosi senza ricerche più complesse.[17]

Gli scavi effettuati negli isolati di solito permettevano l'osservazione che le spaziose residenze d'epoca romana comprendevano più case precedentemente edificate su lotti abbastanza ridotti, come nel caso del Palazzo delle Colonne, oppure della Casa delle Quattro Stagioni.[18] A causa della forma degli isolati molto allungati non ci sono dubbi che i lotti originari erano stati tracciati per tutta la larghezza dell'isolato, anche se la loro lunghezza variava. Naturalmente è valida l'obiezione secondo cui gli edifici posteriori non dovevano rispecchiare le divisioni originarie, ma la presenza delle numerose cisterne e della roccia molto vicina alla superficie hanno determinato l'uso continuo degli stessi livelli d'occupazione e il riadattamento delle strutture precedenti nelle case private.

A questo punto conviene accennare alla situazione nell'isolato scavato dalla missione polacca, con circa un quarto della superficie scoperta (Fig. 3).[19] La graduale discesa del terreno verso il mare costringeva a piccoli terrazzamenti e a distribuire le singole case su diversi livelli, il che aiuta a rilevarne le delimitazioni. La residenza più sontuosa, chiamata Casa di Leukaktios del III sec. d.C. si estende su un intero livellamento per una lunghezza di circa 18,25 m (50 piedi tolemaici) e per tutta la larghezza dell'isolato, cioè 36,5 m (100 piedi tolemaici). Anche le case scoperte più a sud nell'isolato sembrano svilupparsi entro un lotto di 100 × 50 piedi tolemaici.[20] Bisogna però sottolineare che nelle diverse fasi d'occupazione di queste

[11] Kraeling 1962, 37-48; Greco, Torelli 1983, 339-340; Laronde 1987, 397.

[12] Stucchi 1975, 117-118, nota 7; Małkowski, Żelazowski 2012, 44-48; Żelazowski, Misiewicz 2015, 38-46.

[13] Stucchi 1981, 110, nota 124; Hellmann 2010, 204-213.

[14] Kraeling 1962, 93-95; Stucchi 1975, 136-137; Małkowski, Żelazowski 2012, 40-43; Żelazowski, Misiewicz 2015, 35-38.

[15] Laronde 1987, 435-437; Luni 1990; Małkowski, Żelazowski 2012, 55-56; Żelazowski, Misiewicz 2015, 46-50.

[16] Kraeling 1962, 62-67, 83-89, 113-115; Stucchi 1975, 128-131, 178-181, 203-204, 215-219.

[17] Mikocka, Misiewicz 2015.

[18] Kraeling 1962, 83-89, 119-139; Stucchi 1975, 142-149, 215-227.

[19] Żelazowski 2012a.

[20] Małkowski, Żelazowski 2012, 53-54; Żelazowski 2012b, 76-77.

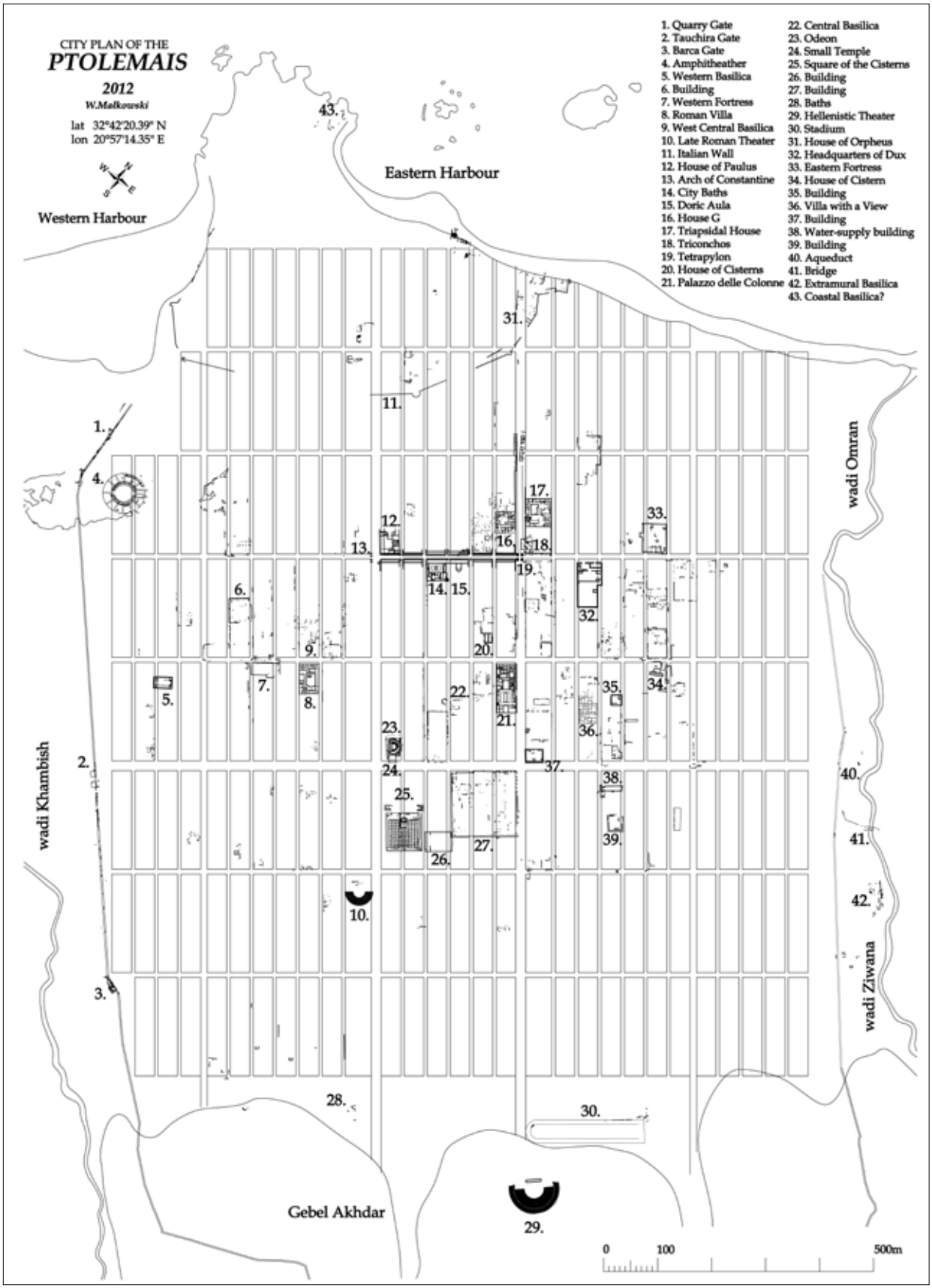


Fig. 2. Pianta di *Ptolemais* (elaborata da W. Małkowski).
Fig. 2. City grid of *Ptolemais* (elaborated by W. Małkowski).

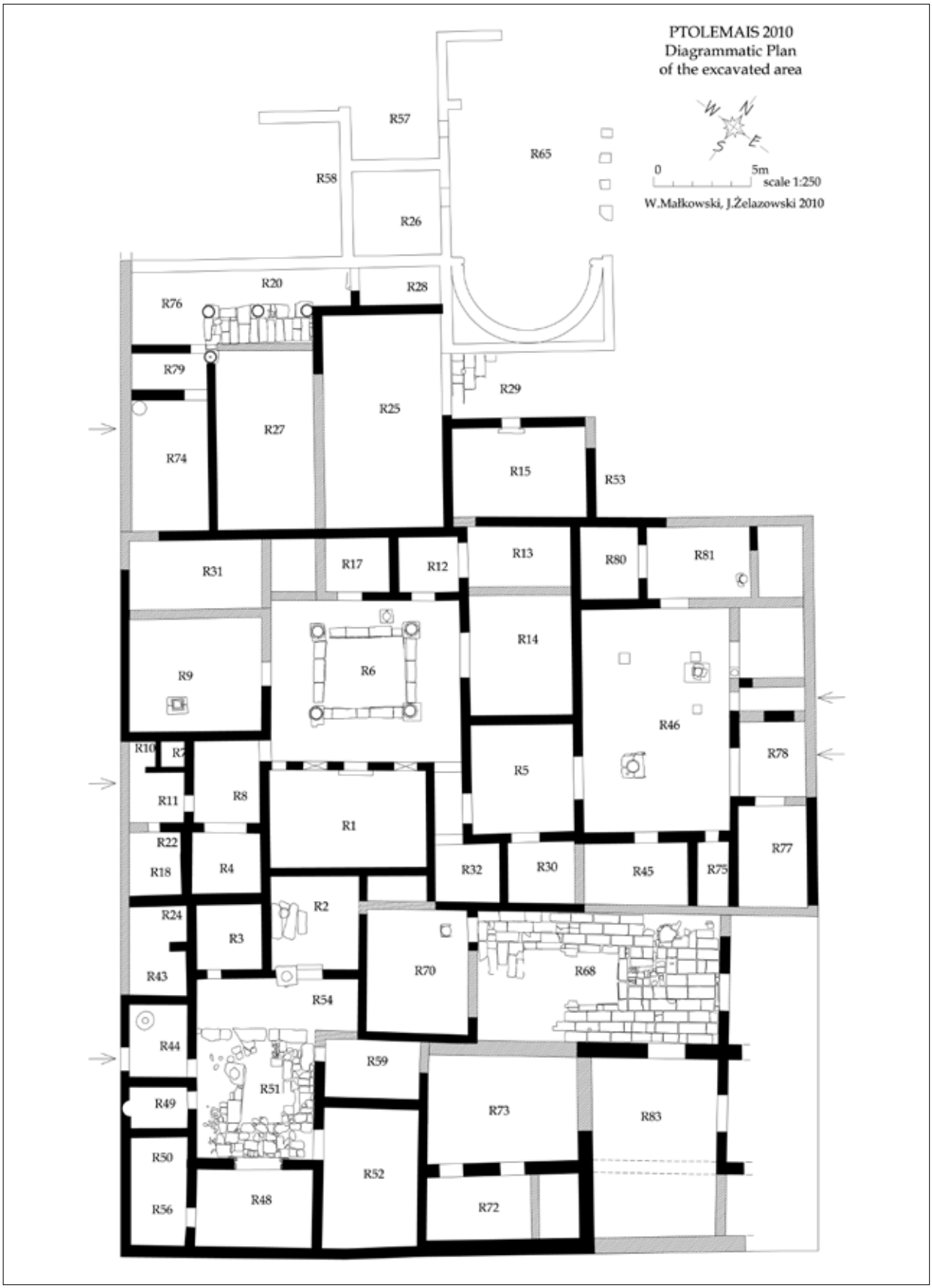


Fig. 3. Pianta dell'area scavata dalla Missione polacca (elaborata da W. Małkowski, J. Żelazowski).
Fig. 3. Plan of the area excavated by the Polish Mission (elaborated by W. Małkowski, J. Żelazowski).

dimore ci sono tracce del superamento dei limiti dei lotti presunti, quindi non è da escludere la presenza nell'isolato di divisioni originarie di 100 × 100 piedi tolemaici. In ogni caso in quest'isolato sembra che al massimo si fossero potuti tracciare 10 lotti di 100 × 50 piedi che costituivano la base per ulteriori suddivisioni e moltiplicazioni, dovuti ovviamente anche a passaggi di proprietà.

Naturalmente sarebbe troppo azzardato generalizzare queste osservazioni, ricordando le diverse lunghezze dei lotti originari emerse dagli scavi precedenti. Tuttavia conviene correggere l'immagine di *Typenhaus* a *Ptolemais* esposta da K. Mueller nel contesto delle fondazioni tolemaiche in Egitto.[21] D'altra parte se si suppone che ci fossero al massimo dieci case nell'isolato al momento della colonizzazione, moltiplicate per l'area occupata in città dall'edilizia privata, insieme con il presunto numero dei familiari, la cifra complessiva di abitanti corrisponderebbe bene alla presunta capienza di circa 7 mila spettatori del teatro ellenistico sulle pendici di Gebel Akhdar, come risulta dalle ultime ricerche polacche.[22]

Anche se la pianificazione molto uniforme suggerisce un grande progetto d'insediamento, tuttavia è sintomatico che ancora nel I sec. a.C. si conservassero alcune notizie di nuove azioni di colonizzazione a *Ptolemais* d'iniziativa ormai romana, forse nel contesto delle guerre contro i pirati.[23] Può però sorprendere che la città, malgrado lo sviluppo e il ruolo svolto fino alla tarda antichità, abbia conservato i principi della sua originale pianta ellenistica. Anche se in verità si possono osservare alcuni cambiamenti nella rete urbana, soprattutto nella parte occidentale, nondimeno la pianta generale della città non è cambiata sostanzialmente e mancano quartieri con diverso orientamento e strade e isolati tracciati secondo altri principi.[24]

Nel 96 a.C. la Cirenaica fu lasciata allo stato romano per testamento da Tolemeo Apione, ma il processo d'integrazione fu piuttosto lungo. All'inizio i Romani erano interessati alla gestione dei possedimenti tolemei e alla raccolta di *silphion*, forse come tributo, e le città lasciate libere (Liv. *Epit*. 70) caddero in confusione a causa di lotte interne, aggravate dai problemi con le tribù libiche che minacciavano i campi coltivati.[25] A quell'epoca gli interventi romani nella regione sembrano essere condizionati da fattori esterni, come la guerra contro Mitridate oppure contro i pirati, e la presenza dell'esercito romano doveva essere temporanea.[26] Indubbiamente la creazione della provincia nel 74 a.C. in qualche modo stabilizzò la situazione, ma i decenni successivi delle guerre civili a Roma non portarono a soluzioni definitive e gli abitanti della Cirenaica dovettero affrontare l'esercito dei pompeiani in fuga dopo la battaglia di Farsalo oppure il regno di Marco Antonio indeciso sull'unione amministrativa con Creta o sul ritorno all'Egitto di Cleopatra Semele.[27]

Bisognava aspettare il dominio di Augusto per stabilizzare la posizione della Cirenaica come provincia insieme con Creta, gestita da proconsoli senatori. I famosi editti di Augusto scoperti a Cirene che regolavano la giurisdizione locale dimostrano chiaramente lo sforzo del potere centrale di dare ai Greci un senso di appartenenza allo stato romano come concittadini e non sudditi, e di proteggerli dai pochi Romani residenti, ancora privilegiati, ma non più padroni in Cirenaica. Similmente si cercava di risolvere i conflitti delle città greche con le numerose comunità ebraiche confermando i loro tradizionali diritti. Questa politica di convivenza in certo senso rallentò il processo di romanizzazione, come la concessione abbastanza ristretta della cittadinanza romana ai gruppi dirigenti delle città.[28]

Comunque l'integrazione delle città cirenaiche nello stato romano non portò al massicio insediamento dei Romani, anche se naturalmente il nuovo ordine si doveva manifestare almeno nell'architettura pubblica delle città, e le numerose testimonianze di culto imperiale a Cirene ne sono la prova.[29] A *Ptolemais* il ginnasio ellenistico caratterizzato da un'enorme cisterna sotto la palestra è diventato il simbolo del potere romano, trasformato nel I sec. d.C. in una *quadriporticus* dorica, dotata della monumentale tribuna con colonne ioniche (Fig. 4).[30] Anche qui si può vedere la stessa dinamica delle trasformazioni del ginnasio di Cirene il quale, monumentalizzato probabilmente sotto Tolemeo *Physcon* verso la metà del II secolo a.C., diventò luogo di culto dinastico (*Ptolemaion*) per poi esser trasformato in *Caesareum* all'inizio del I secolo d.C. con ulteriori trasformazioni architettoniche, diventando foro dedicato al culto imperiale e simbolo del potere romano nella città.[31] A *Ptolemais* l'importanza per

[21] Mueller 2006, 112-116.
[22] Małkowski, Żelazowski 2012, 40-42; Żelazowski, Misiewicz 2015, 35-38; Żelazowski 2019, 256.
[23] Reynolds 1962, 99-101; 1990, 66; Laronde 1987, 459-461.
[24] Żelazowski, Gasparini 2014; Żelazowski, Misiewicz 2015, 67-85.
[25] Romanelli 1943, 13-24, 39-41; Laronde 1987, 439-443; 1988, 1008.
[26] Romanelli 1943, 43-46; Laronde 1987, 463-479; 1988, 1009.
[27] Romanelli 1943, 47-51, 59-62; Reynolds 1962; Laronde 1988, 1011-1013.
[28] Reynolds, Lloyd 1996; Żelazowski 2016, 240-245.
[29] Laronde 1988, 1034-1042; Żelazowski 2016, 252-256.
[30] Kraeling 1962, 62-67 (J.E. Knudstad); Stucchi 1975, 128-131, 141-142; Luni 2009, 58-67.
[31] Laronde 1987, 435-437; Luni 1990; 2006, 37-45; 2009, 75-80; Trifogli 2014.

Fig. 4. Piazzale delle Cisterne a *Ptolemais* (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 4. Square of the Cisterns at *Ptolemais* (photo by M. Bogacki).

il potere romano della menzionata piazza porticata, nota come Piazzale delle Cisterne, viene confermata dal fatto che ancora ai tempi di Arcadio venisse rinnovata.[32]

Indubbiamente la lealtà al potere romano determinava un'organizzazione dello spazio pubblico nelle città e anche a *Ptolemais* ci si può aspettare di ritrovare i *nympheia*, templi imperiali, oppure le grandi terme con le "sale marmoree" ancora da scoprire.[33] Tuttavia nell'ambito dell'edilizia privata questi fenomeni sono meno percepibili, anche se conviene notare l'usanza di decorare le entrate nelle case con le basi dedicate a *theoi Sebastoi* (*divi Augusti*) testimoniata non soltanto nella Casa delle Quattro Stagioni (Fig. 5).[34] Per gli abitanti di *Ptolemais*, come delle altre città cirenaiche, il culto imperiale s'inseriva nella tradizione del culto tolemaico e non richiedeva la rottura con il passato e l'imitazione del nuovo "modello" romano.

Si può pensare che in un certo senso l'accelerazione dei processi della romanizzazione fosse stata provocata dallo sconvolgimento della rivolta giudaica degli anni 115–117 d.C., anche se mancano testimonianze dirette della partecipazione degli abitanti di *Ptolemais*.[35] Tuttavia la portata dell'insurrezione in Cirenaica, Egitto, Cipro, Mesopotamia e forse Giudea dovette causare tra l'altro profondi cambiamenti nella popolazione. La distruzione di tanti edifici, i massacri vicendevoli degli abitanti, testimoniati a Cirene nelle fonti archeologiche ed epigrafiche, ebbero come risultato la scomparsa degli Ebrei per lungo tempo dalla Cirenaica, l'arrivo di nuovi coloni, rappresentati per esempio dai tre mila veterani portati a Cirene e la presenza più accentuata dell'amministrazione civile e militare romana, impegnata nella ristrutturazione delle città e nel mantenimento della quiete pubblica.[36]

[32] Stucchi 1975, 204-208.
[33] Gros, Torelli 2010, 410-420.
[34] Łajtar 2012, 266-271.
[35] Reynolds 1990, 71-72; Capponi 2018.
[36] Gasperini 2007; Ziosi 2010; Capponi 2018, 79-84.

Fig. 5. Entrata principale nella Casa delle Quattro Stagioni a *Ptolemais* (foto di J. Żelazowski).
Fig. 5. Main entrance to the Roman Villa at *Ptolemais* (photo by J. Żelazowski).

Questa nuova situazione politico-sociale doveva incidere sui processi di romanizzazione, ma anche di globalizzazione e sembra sintomatico che mentre a Cirene fu riadattata per i combattimenti gladiatori l'orchestra del teatro più grande, a *Ptolemais* si costruisse un anfiteatro nuovo.[37] Nel II sec. d.C. la città crebbe e ci sono tante tracce della monumentalizzazione del centro con le vie porticate allargate, come per esempio la Via Monumentale (Fig. 6), oppure il *cardo* occidentale,[38] e la costruzione del nuovo *bouleuterion* segnò le crescenti aspirazioni di *Ptolemais* nel periodo antoniniano, testimoniate dalla corrispondenza della città con Antonino Pio (Fig. 7).[39] Anche l'edilizia privata in questo periodo mostrò piuttosto l'agiatezza dei suoi abitanti e non mancano i sontuosi sistemi decorativi scoperti nelle case del II-III sec. d.C.[40]

In un certo senso questa *aemulatio municipalis* tra le città di Pentapolis era vincente per *Ptolemais*, se diventò la capitale della nuova provincia di *Libya Superior* nell'ambito della riorganizzazione dello stato romano iniziata da Diocleziano, e mantenne questa posizione fino alla prima metà del V sec. d.C., e il suo vescovo, come dimostra il caso di Sinesio di Cirene, assunse il ruolo di metropolita.[41] È vero però che tale decisione imperiale poteva essere influenzata dalla volontà di spostare l'amministrazione provinciale nelle zone più sicure della Cirenaica, dopo gli ennesimi attacchi dei nomadi dalla Marmarica, e l'indebolimento di Cirene a causa dei terremoti del III sec. d.C.[42] Indubbiamente l'Arco di Costantino costruito a *Ptolemais* all'incrocio tra *cardo* occidentale e Via Monumentale diventò il simbolo della nuova posizione della città,[43] e la presenza stabile dell'amministrazione

[37] Kraeling 1962, 95-96; Robert 1971, 33-35, 124; Stucchi 1975, 295; Ensoli 2010, 130-140.
[38] Kraeling 1962, 74-83; Stucchi 1975, 274; Żelazowki, Misiewicz 2015, 60-62.
[39] Traversari 1960, 43-45; Kraeling 1962, 89-93 (R.G. Goodchild); Stucchi 1975, 278-279, 465-467; Reynolds 1978; Balty 1991, 431-432, 496-498, 620; Boatwright 2000, 182.
[40] Gasparini 2009; Mikocka, Misiewicz 2015; Żelazowski 2018.
[41] Roques 1987, 85-92; Wipszycka 2015, 294-303.
[42] Romanelli 1943, 130-141; Kraeling 1962, 20; Roques 1987, 85; Lloyd 1990.
[43] Stucchi 1975, 338-341; Roques 1987, 85.

Fig. 6. Via Monumentale a *Ptolemais* dall'Arco di Costantino (a sinistra) al Tetrastilo (a destra) (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 6. Monumental Street at *Ptolemais* from the Arch of Constantine (on the left) to the Tetrastyle (on the right) (photo by M. Bogacki).

Fig. 7. Odeon a *Ptolemais* (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 7. Odeon at *Ptolemais* (photo by M. Bogacki).

Fig. 8. Parte centrale del Palazzo delle Colonne (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 8. Central part of the House of the Columns (photo by M. Bogacki).

civile e militare accelerò i processi della romanizzazione e l'imitazione del "modello" romano, come per esempio si può vedere nelle residenze private del IV secolo d.C. con grandi aule di rappresentanza.[44]

Le osservazioni storiche ed urbanistiche fin qui riportate suggeriscono i tre periodi dello sviluppo di *Ptolemais* nei quali si possono inquadrare le caratteristiche dell'edilizia residenziale: il primo dalla pianificazione definitiva della città nel II sec. a.C. fino alla rivolta giudaica, il secondo nel II-III sec. d.C. denotato dalle crescenti aspirazioni della città e il terzo di *Ptolemais* come capitale della provincia dal IV sec. d.C. fino alla prima metà del V sec. d.C.

Nel primo periodo la scarsa presenza dei Romani impedisce di considerare seriamente le influenze italiche nelle case come il Palazzo delle Colonne, almeno nella parte tardoellenistica del Grande Peristilio con la sontuosa facciata a pseudoportico del lato sud e l'*oecus aegyptius* di fronte (Fig. 8),[45] naturalmente tenendo presente che la residenza cambiò il suo aspetto nel periodo romano anche con aggiunte di strutture nuove come le terme e le botteghe.[46] Il Palazzo delle Colonne, paragonato spesso alla Casa del Fauno a Pompei[47] con dettagli architettonici riscontrati nelle città vesuviane e nella pittura pompeiana del II stile, dimostra piuttosto il suo debito verso l'architettura alessandrina, testimoniata anche nelle case recentemente studiate a Marina el-Alamein.[48] In questo senso le analogie con le realtà in Italia nel I sec. a.C. dimostrano l'impatto dell'arte alessandrina nel Mediterraneo occidentale e non viceversa, come suggeriscono anche le

[44] Baldini Lippolis 2001, 315-319; Gasparini 2009, 159-169; Żelazowski, Gasparini 2014, 306-310 (E. Gasparini).
[45] Lauter 1971, 169-176; 1999, 130-131; Wilson 2005, 134-137; Bonacasa 2009, 93-98.
[46] Stucchi 1975, 300-305.
[47] Dickmann 1997, 123-124; Gros 2001, 48-51.
[48] Czerner 2017, 48-52; Bąkowska-Czerner, Czerner 2019, 28-32; Pensabene, Gasparini 2019.

Fig. 9. Parte centrale della Casa di Leukaktios a *Ptolemais* (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 9. Central part of the House of Leukaktios at *Ptolemais* (photo by M. Bogacki).

discussioni sulle direzioni delle influenze culturali ed artistiche nel caso della Sicilia.[49]

Condividendo l'opinione di S. Stucchi sullo sviluppo delle case a *Ptolemais* nel periodo romano, che di solito inglobavano le abitazioni precedenti nei limiti dell'isolato, tuttavia bisogna anche osservare che esse continuavano sempre a sfruttare le tipologie della casa di tipo greco a cortile centrale, con il vestibolo che porta direttamente nel peristilio circondato dagli ambienti su due o tre lati e con la tendenza a monumentalizzare la parte rappresentativa, spesso nell'asse della residenza. L'evoluzione delle fasi edilizie delle case S. Stucchi le considerava in senso cronologico, ma comunque nei potenziali cambiamenti si vede sempre l'impronta degli schemi tradizionali, indipendenti dalle influenze romane.[50]

Nel II sec. d. C. la situazione cominciò a cambiare, anche se bisogna sempre ricordare i processi di globalizzazione presenti nell'Impero Romano. Nella già menzionata Casa di Leukaktios d'epoca severiana, fu utilizzato l'atrio tetrastilo con impluvio, attorno al quale era organizzata la parte rappresentativa della residenza (Fig. 9).[51] Questo peristilio di origine greca, assimilato dai Romani, e poi trasmesso nell'Impero Romano, spesso viene considerato come esempio delle influenze romane, ma anche dei problemi interpretativi dei canali di trasmissione culturale.[52] Dunque l'atrio tetrastilo segna l'evoluzione dell'architettura domestica greca, oppure prova l'impatto dell'architettura romana? Come nel caso dell'arte alessandrina assimilata dai ceti elevati della società greco-romana, che si diffuse nell'Impero Romano grazie all'intermediario imperiale, bisognerebbe escludere le influenze più dirette e l'evoluzione regionale? Nel caso della Casa di Leukaktios a favore dei processi di romanizzazione deporrebbe la concezione generale dello spazio pubblico in questa residenza,

[49] Osanna, Torelli 2006.
[50] Stucchi 1975, 142-149; Bejor 1998.
[51] Żelazowski 2012a, 121-139.
[52] Bonini 2006, 56-59.

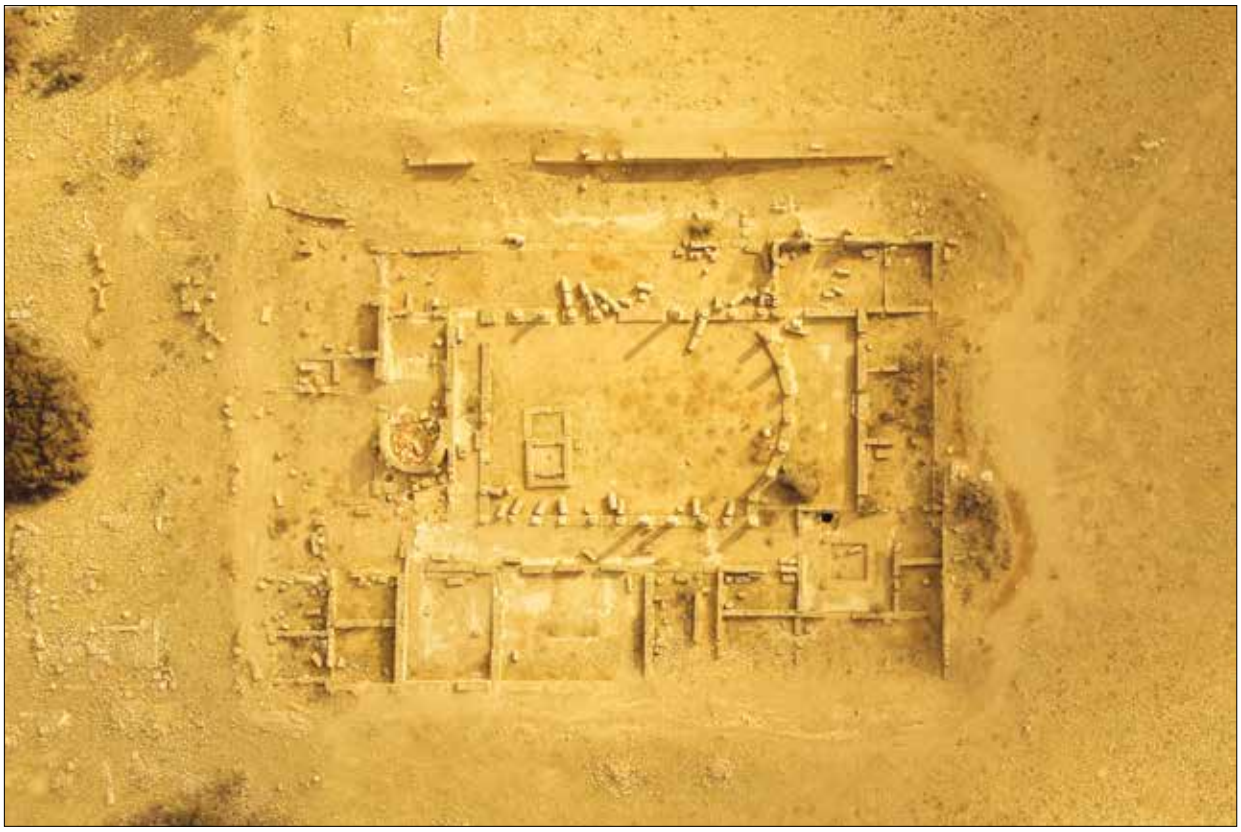

Fig. 10. Casa delle Quattro Stagioni (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 10. Roman Villa (photo by M. Bogacki).

che prevedeva una diversificazione sociale nell'accesso alle varie parti della casa e non ammetteva il passaggio immediato agli ambienti più rappresentavi.[53]

L'atrio tetrastilo è stato individuato anche nella Casa delle Quattro Stagioni, datata da C.H. Kraeling sulla base della decorazione pittorica delle pareti al I sec. a.C. con fasi successive fino al III sec. d.C. (Fig. 10).[54] Questa cronologia ha creato un certo imbarazzo, perchè sembra che il grande peristilio, quindi la sistemazione definitiva della Casa delle Quattro Stagioni fosse avvenuta soltanto nel II sec. d.C., anche se ciò non precluderebbe la fase tardoellenistica visibile negli ambienti nel lato sud.[55] In questo contesto l'atrio tetrastilo che organizzava il nucleo abitativo nell'angolo sud-ovest della casa si presentava a H. Lauter come esempio dell'influsso architettonico proveniente dall'Italia nel I sec. a.C., anche se S. Stucchi preferiva parlare di "un peristilio ridotto al minimo" e diminuire il valore delle analogie pompeiane.[56] In questa prospettiva la dinamica dello sviluppo di questa residenza pone diversi dubbi, per esempio per quanto riguarda le pitture parietali e il peristilio rodio, oppure la grande aula absidata, e non è da escludere che il nucleo abitativo attorno all'atrio tetrastilo potrebbe costituire una sistemazione nuova e non una riminiscenza della fase precedente, anche per l'uso dell'architrave curvilineo di sapore alessandrino, il c.d. arco siriaco che decorava una monumentale entrata, a quel che sembra al cubiculo, diffuso in Cirenaica dal II sec. d.C. e testimoniato anche nella Casa di Leukaktios.[57]

Comunque la Casa delle Quattro Stagioni si presenta come una residenza che partendo dal modello tradizionale della casa a grande peristilio subì in seguito diversi adattamenti. L'entrata ortogonale rispetto agli ambienti principali[58] nel lato sud richiama la situazione nel Palazzo delle Colonne, pure provvisto di diversi nuclei abitativi. Tuttavia la scelta dell'atrio tetrastilo potrebbe suggerire

[53] Bonini 2006, 170-178; Żelazowski, Chmielewski 2013.
[54] Kraeling 1962, 119-139; Stucchi 1975, 222-224.
[55] Lauter 1971, 160; Pensabene, Gasparini 2019, 189.
[56] Lauter 1971, 162; Stucchi 1975, 224; Bejor 1998, 39.
[57] Stucchi 1975, 321-322; Rekowska 2012, 171-176; 2013; Pensabene, Gasparini 2014, 220-221, 232.
[58] Bonini 2006, 176-177.

Fig. 11. Cortile della Casa ad Atrio a *Ptolemais* (visto dal nord) (foto di J. Żelazowski).
Fig. 11. Courtyard of the House of the Atrium at *Ptolemais* (photo by J. Żelazowski).

un'impronta ormai romana e forse anche la sistemazione delle sale di rapresentanza con *opus sectile* e noto mosaico sul lato occidentale del grande peristilio potrebbe essere vista come la volontà di allontanare la zona di ricevimento dall'entrata principale della casa e in questo modo di accentuare la diversificazione dello spazio come nella Casa di Leukaktios.[59] D'altronde questo tipo di assialità è presente anche nella piccola casa situata a sud della Casa di Leukaktios, dalla forma caratteristica di atrio con impluvio e una sorta di tablino in asse sul lato corto, in funzione fino alla metà del III sec. d.C. (Fig. 11).[60]

Nella Casa delle Quattro Stagioni nel grande peristilio conviene notare un ulteriore adattamento alle nuove esigenze con una grande aula absidata e riscaldata, costruita sul lato nord del cortile. C.H. Kraeling la considerava una parte dell'impianto termale, anche se sembrano mancare delle istallazioni idrauliche.[61] Il ragionamento dello studioso era condizionato dalla datazione della fine della residenza verso la metà del III sec. d.C., indubbiamente troppo alta per diverse ragioni, e quest'aula s'inserisce bene nelle ristrutturazioni delle case di *Ptolemais* del IV-V sec. d.C. Queste nuove strutture di ricevimento riscontrate anche nella Casa della Triconchos e nella Casa della Piccola Triconchos sul *cardo* orientale (Fig. 12), oppure nella Casa di Paulo nelle vicinanze dell'Arco di Costantino (Fig. 13), rispondevano alle esigenze di audienze articolate diversamente rispetto al passato. Esse sottolineavano le nuove differenze e gerarchie sociali che richiedevano adeguate forme di autorappresentazione dei proprietari, oppure degli ufficiali.[62]

Di solito queste aule venivano organizzate vicino alle entrate aperte direttamente sulle strade con spazi d'attesa per i clienti, ma praticamente senza la possibilità o la necessità di attraversare le zone più interne delle residenze, come dimostra l'esempio della ristrutturata Casa di Paulo con una grande sala di udienze rettangolare, nella quale

[59] Vedi M. Rekowska in questo vol.
[60] Żelazowski 2012a, 138-140.
[61] Kraeling 1962, 133-134; Stucchi 1975, 499.
[62] Baldini Lippolis 2001, 47-94, 315-319; Gasparini 2009, 159-169.

Fig. 12. Case sul *cardo* orientale di *Ptolemais* presso l'incroccio con Via Monumentale (Casa della Triconchos in alto, Casa del Peristilio Ionico in basso, Casa della Piccola Triconchos a destra) (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 12. Houses alongside the East Avenue of *Ptolemais* near the junction with the Monumental Street (House of the Triapsidal Hall at the top, House G below, and the North-east Quadrant on the right) (photo by M. Bogacki).

questo ufficiale con il titolo di *megaloprepestatos* (*magnificentissimus*) si è commemorato nell'iscrizione incisa sul pavimento lastricato (Fig. 14).[63] L'incontro solenne con il padrone o l'ufficiale veniva anche articolato dalla decorazione architettonica e dalla diversificazione dei pavimenti, come nel caso della Casa della Triconchos, dove nell'aula absidata nel lato sud del peristilio l'accesso veniva marcato dal passaggio tripartito da due colonne tortili con il c.d. arco siriaco (Fig. 15).[64] Quest'ambiente di prestigio col tempo subì ulteriori modifiche e chiusure, forse a causa di un terremoto del IV sec. d.C., e probabilmente nella fase successiva la zona di rappresentanza fu spostata più all'indietro nella residenza con la sistemazione del nuovo triclinio trilobato, abbinato a un'altra aula absidata con l'entrata più riservata e provvista del sontuoso l'*opus sectile*. Tale sistemazione permetteva di gestire gli ospiti secondo la volontà del padrone di casa, il quale, non rinunciando alla zona di ricevimento vicina alla porta principale della residenza anche con un'altra sala rettangolare nel lato sud, poteva prolungare l'itinerario dei visitatori fino all'aula tricora oppure all'altra sala di ricevimento, facendogli vedere anche una sorta di ninfeo ricavato nel peristilio.[65] D'altronde già nella Casa di Leukaktios si vede la stessa gerarchizzazione degli ambienti con gli ospiti che potevano essere ricevuti in un'esedra vicina all'entrata principale della casa, oppure ammessi attraverso una stretta porta nel cuore della residenza con diverse sale di ricevimento attorno all'atrio tetrastilo (Fig. 16).[66]

[63] Kraeling 1962, 140-160, 211-212, no. 14; Roques 1987, 89-90, 172-173; Lavan 1999, 158-159; Gasparini 2009, 170-171.
[64] Ward-Perkins *et al*. 1986, 132-134; Ermeti 2007, 261-263.
[65] Gasparini 2009, 159-164.
[66] Vedi *supra*.

Fig. 13. Aula di udienza nella Casa di Paolo presso l'Arco di Costantino a *Ptolemais* (foto di J. Żelazowski).
Fig. 13. Reception hall in the House of Paulos near the Arch of Constantine at *Ptolemais* (photo by J. Żelazowski).

Tuttavia tale organizzazione dello spazio, pur tradizionale e nota bene già nelle città vesuviane, nelle case con fasi tardoantiche come la Casa della Triconchos, la Casa delle Quattro Stagioni, oppure la Casa di Paulo si serviva sempre meno dei peristili che sembrano aver perso il ruolo nell'autorappresentazione dei proprietari a beneficio dei percorsi più articolati e intricati.[67]

Bisogna però ammettere che la dinamica delle ristrutturazioni nelle residenze di *Ptolemais* è poco chiara dal punto di vista cronologico, e la mancanza di precisi dati archeologici permette soltanto di tracciare delle linee generali dello sviluppo. Tuttavia per capire meglio i cambiamenti dell'edilizia privata e completare la periodizzazione della storia della città conviene anche aggiungere un ulteriore periodo di sviluppo di *Ptolemais* nel VI sec. d.C. fino alla conquista araba verso la metà del VII sec. d.C., che segnò la fine della città antica. Per questi tempi l'immagine della città è fortemente condizionata dalla testimonianza di Procopio di Cesarea nella sua opera *Peri ktismaton*, scritta negli anni 50 del VI secolo d.C. in onore di Giustiniano e della sua attività edilizia.[68] Nel sesto libro dedicato all'Africa, tra le scarse informazioni riguardanti la Cirenaica,[69] viene menzionata anche *Ptolemais* come città una volta florida e popolata, poi però col tempo abbandonata a causa della scarsità d'acqua, ma ai tempi di Giustiniano nuovamente prospera grazie alla riparazione dell'acquedotto da parte dell'imperatore (VI, 2, 9-11).[70]

Quest'informazione fa nascere dubbi se si prende in considerazione che a *Ptolemais* sono stati trovati numerosi pozzi e cisterne, a volte di enormi dimensioni e alimentate dall'acqua piovana che nella stagione invernale scendeva dai pendi del Gebel Akhdar direttamente dentro le mura, oppure con i due wadi che delimitavano la città a est ed ovest.[71] È come se Procopio avesse unito le informazioni ottenute alla corte imperiale da un lato

[67] Baldini Lippolis 2001, 55-56, 68-72; 2005, 33-42; Gasparini 2009, 164.
[68] Cameron 1996, 3-18, 84-86.
[69] Roques 1996, 406-409; 2000, 37; Reynolds 2000.
[70] Roques 1996, 401; Wipszycka 2015, 412-415; Żelazowski 2015.
[71] Kraeling 1962, 68-73; Stucchi 1975, 350, 487-488.

Fig. 14. Iscrizione greca sul pavimento dell'aula di udienza nella Casa di Paulo a *Ptolemais* (foto di J. Żelazowski).
Fig. 14. Greek inscription on the paving stone of the reception hall in the House of Paulos at *Ptolemais* (photo by J. Żelazowski).

Fig. 15. Casa della Triconchos a *Ptolemais* (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 15. House of Triapsidal Hall at *Ptolemais* (photo by M. Bogacki).

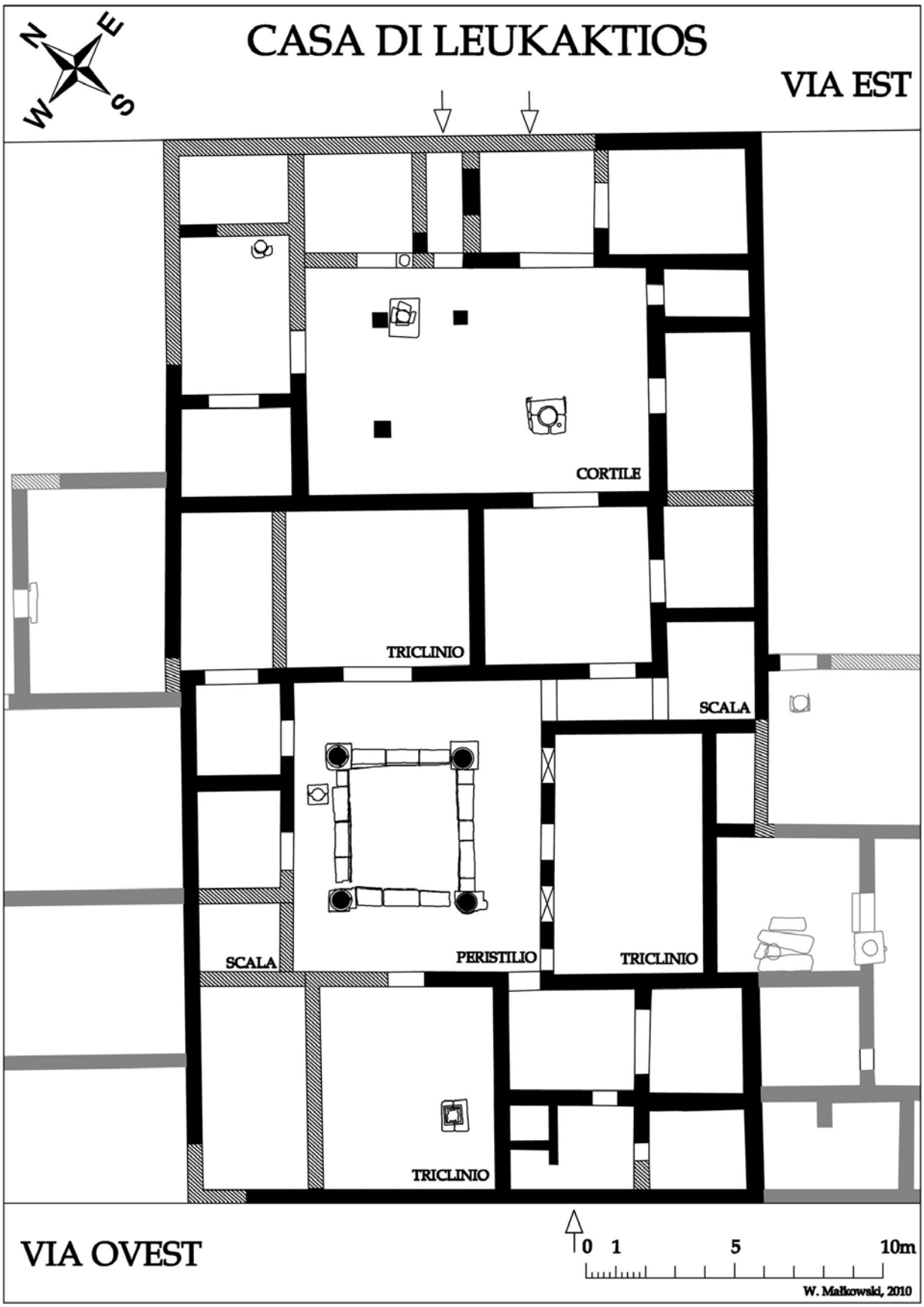


Fig. 16. Pianta della Casa di Leukaktios (elaborata da W. Małkowski).
Fig. 16. Plan of the House of Leukaktios (elaborated by W. Małkowski).

sulla decadenza della città dopo il trasferimento dell'amministrazione civile e militare ad *Apollonia*-Sozusa nella Cirenaica orientale e dall'altro sulla rottura dell'acquedotto ripristinato in seguito da Giustiniano, supponendo che esso fosse stato la fonte principale del rifornimento dell'acqua nella città, senza però orientarsi bene nelle condizioni idrologiche locali.[72] D'altronde l'unico acquedotto identificato meglio a *Ptolemais* portava l'acqua da Wadi Habbun, distante dalla città circa venti chilometri verso est, e mostrando segni di riparazioni in un certo senso conferma l'informazione di Procopio.[73]

Indubbiamente il funzionamento del lungo acquedotto richiedeva pace nella regione e assenza di incursioni barbare. La comparsa di Mazikes e Austuriani ai tempi di Sinesio, noto vescovo di *Ptolemais*, e la necessità della difesa contro di loro inaugurò all'inizio del V secolo d.C. un periodo di destabilizzazione in una regione che non aveva mai disposto di considerevoli truppe imperiali.[74] Anche se i barbari non conquistavano le città, i loro saccheggi costituivano una minaccia per i campi agricoli degli abitanti, per le ville e le tenute rurali e di conseguenza distruggevano le basi economiche della regione per lo più agricola. In questa prospettiva il ragionamento di Procopio sarebbe plausibile se si ammettesse che la città si spopolò non a causa della mancanza dell'acqua potabile, ma di quella destinata all'irrigazione dei campi circostanti, visto che quelli sul Gebel Akhdar non erano più sicuri. Di conseguenza il ripristino dell'acquedotto da parte di Giustiniano doveva significare che nella regione la minaccia delle incursioni era diminuita, permettendo agli abitanti di ritornare sui campi coltivati più lontani. Questo sarebbe stato possibile grazie al sistema di forti nella Cirenaica meridionale e occidentale suggerito da Procopio, il cui esempio emblematico potrebbe anche costituire la *polis nea Theodorias* (Gasr el-Lebia) con le sue due chiese, situata nella zona dove cominciava l'acquedotto di *Ptolemais*, d'altronde non menzionata da Procopio.[75]

Tuttavia perchè Giustiniano si sarebbe limitato nella città soltanto alla ricostruzione dell'acquedotto e Procopio non menziona alcune terme, chiese e tace delle mura? Perchè Giustiniano fortificò *Tauchira* (Tocra) e *Berenice* (Benghazi),[76] città costiere della Cirenaica occidentale, ma non fece niente nel caso di *Ptolemais*? La città, una volta spopolata, ma di nuovo prospera, non aveva bisogno di fortificazioni, oppure le mura precedenti avevano in qualche modo resistito? Quindi si potrebbe considerare il silenzio di Procopio come argomento valido e ammettere, come sostiene D. Roques,[77] che allora le vecchie mura esistevano ancora e la città manteneva il suo territorio intero?

La questione sembra piuttosto complessa, ma sorprende che nel paesaggio delle rovine di *Ptolemais*, con numerosi edifici conservati in superficie fino a notevole altezza e quindi provenienti dall'ultimo periodo dell'esistenza della città antica, si nota però la scomparsa totale delle mura, il cui carattere monumentale viene testimoniato dalla Porta di Tauchira parzialmente ricostruita dagli archeologi italiani (Fig. 17).[78] Il loro tracciato lo si può vedere sulla mappa geofisica, nelle zone più lontane e sui pendi del Gebel Akhdar se ne scorgono ancora piccoli tratti, ma sarebbe facile ammettere che le mura gradualmente e scrupolosamente siano state smantellate, fornendo pietre già tagliate per le costruzioni successive, per esempio nella zona portuale, dove successivamente sorse l'insediamento italiano e poi quello libico.[79] Tuttavia esse sembrano sopravvivere almeno fino all'inizio del V secolo d.C., perchè è difficile immaginare che, di fronte alle incursioni dei nomadi, Sinesio di Cirene nelle sue lettere non accennasse alla loro distruzione, quando come vescovo di *Ptolemais* alludeva al suo coinvolgimento personale nella difesa della città.[80] L'intensificazione del pericolo durante il V secolo d.C. poteva alla fine provocare una situazione in cui gli abitanti si resero conto che la città non avrebbe resistito ad un assedio più pressante con una linea di difesa così estesa.

Il graduale abbandono delle mure spiegherebbe il fatto che gli edifici nuovi in questo periodo assumessero forma decisamente difensiva. Un esempio lo fornisce il cosiddetto Quartiere del Dux, un enorme complesso a più piani con un grande cortile situato lungo il tratto orientale della Via Monumentale (Fig. 18). Nelle vicinanze, dall'altra parte della via, è comparsa una struttura analoga, la cosiddetta Fortezza Orientale e nella città si notano più edifici fortificati fino a dare l'idea di un sistema difensivo compatto, come tempo fa aveva suggerito C.H. Kraeling (Fig. 19).[81] Sarebbe però difficile ammettere che la vita della città si fosse ritirata dentro le mura massicce degli edifici e piuttosto questi forti avrebbero svolto il ruolo di rifugio per gli abitanti nei momenti di pericolo e permesso una difesa efficace ma temporanea.

Conviene sottolineare che gli edifici fortificati sono sparsi nella città su una vasta area e non si concentrano

[72] Roques 1987, 91; 1996, 426-427; Wipszycka 2011, 66.
[73] Małkowski 2012.
[74] Roques 1987, 235-253; Wipszycka 2009.
[75] Feissel 2000, 101, no. 70; Reynolds 2000, 170–173; Ward-Perkins *et al.* 2003, 267-286.
[76] Roques 1996, 422-425; Ward-Perkins *et al.* 2003, 114-115, 201.
[77] Roques 1987, 87; Ward-Perkins *et al.* 2003, 179; Michel 2012, 272.
[78] Kraeling 1962, 51-62.
[79] Małkowski *et al.* 2012, 20-24; Żelazowski, Misiewicz 2015, 40-41.
[80] Caputo 1987; Roques 1987, 87.
[81] Kraeling 1962, 100-107.

Fig. 17. Porta di Tauchira a *Ptolemais* (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 17. Tauchira Gate at *Ptolemais* (photo by M. Bogacki).

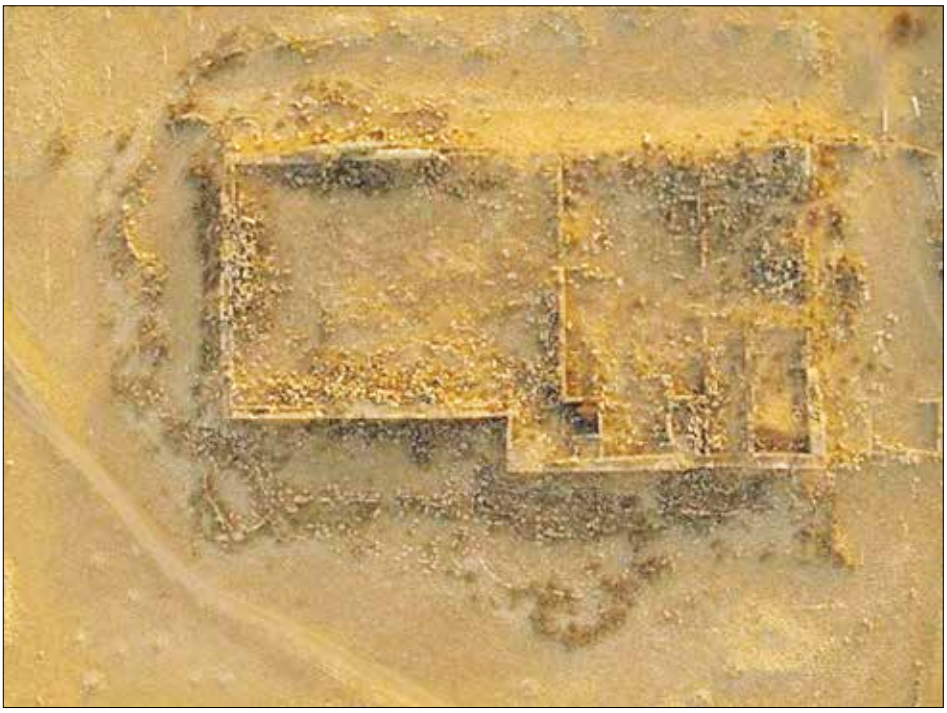

Fig. 18. Quartiere del Dux a *Ptolemais* (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 18. Headquarters of the Dux at *Ptolemais* (photo by M. Bogacki).

Fig. 19. Quartiere del Dux e Fortezza Orientale a *Ptolemais* (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 19. Headquarters of the Dux and the East Fortress (photo by M. Bogacki).

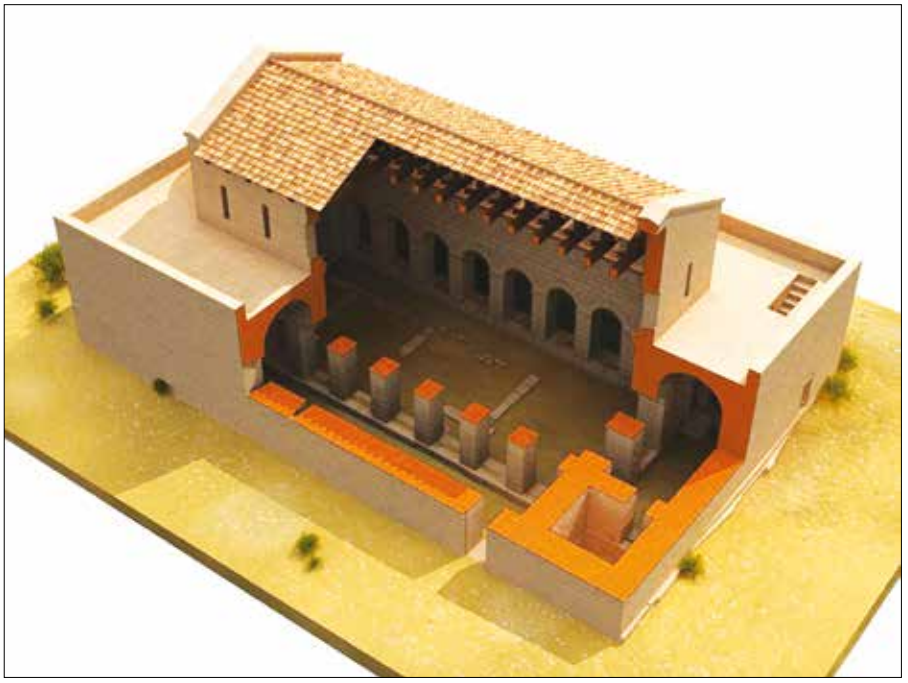

Fig. 20. Ricostruzione della Chiesa Occidentale a *Ptolemais* (elaborata da J. Kaniszewski).
Fig. 20. Reconstruction of the West Church at *Ptolemais* (elaborated by J. Kaniszewski).

soltanto in una parte. D'altronde essi non hanno soltanto carattere difensivo e nel caso del Quartiere del Dux, dove probabilmente era sistemato l'esercito imperiale, si tratta di una residenza e della sede dell'amministrazione locale (*praetorium*). Un esempio specifico lo fornisce anche la Chiesa Occidentale, la cui ultima ricostruzione ne conferma il carattere difensivo, a volte contestato (Fig. 20).[82] Si può pensare che queste strutture massicce fossero state

[82] Ward-Perkins *et al.* 2003, 181-191; Bonacasa Carra 2009; Kaniszewski 2011; Jastrzębowska 2015, 222-224; Michel 2018, 315-322.

Fig. 21. Mosaico di Orfeo dall'omonima casa a *Ptolemais* (foto di J. Żelazowski).
Fig. 21. Orpheus mosaic from a house with the same name at *Ptolemais* (photo by J. Żelazowski).

costruite in gran parte con pietre pronte prelevate dalle mura ormai abbandonate, il che trova conferma nelle terme lungo la Via Monumentale.[83]

Si profila dunque un quadro della città che non difende più il suo territorio intero, ma soltanto alcune costruzioni. Va però osservato che la Chiesa Occidentale si trova nella parte opposta della città rispetto al Quartiere del Dux, il che suggerisce che la vita in città non fosse confinata a una zona del territorio, ma si svolgesse nello spazio tradizionalmente delimitato dal tracciato della cinta. Magari erano diminuiti gli abitanti, ma la città sembra funzionare ancora nei suoi limiti storici, fatto che suggerisce cautela nella valutazione del pericolo dei nomadi nel V-VI secolo d.C., ma anche nell'idea del graduale restringimento del territorio, spesso richiesto per "late Late Ancient City".[84]

Il quadro di *Ptolemais* con edifici sparsi adattati alla difesa richiede, però, l'aggiunta di un muro difensivo che chiudeva la zona portuale. La sua presenza sembra piuttosto evidente considerate le diverse tracce visibili sulla superficie, anche se a volte esse furono messe in dubbio, perchè il muro fu sfruttato e sopraeleveto nel periodo della colonizzazione italiana all'inizio del Novecento. Conviene ricordare che al muro si congiunge dalla parte del mare la Casa del Mosaico di Orfeo, scoperta in piccola parte nel 1960.[85] I mosaici trovati all'interno, compreso quello più noto con l'immagine di Orfeo (Fig. 21), le loro qualità stilistiche, ma anche le ragioni storiche, suggeriscono agli studiosi l'uso della residenza nella seconda metà del IV o nella prima metà del V secolo d.C., indicando anche i tempi di Sinesio, comunque prima della perdita da parte della città del ruolo di capitale provinciale.[86] Il mosaico con la rappresentazione di Orfeo, anche se conosciuto dalle associazioni cristiane, non fu oggetto di approfondimenti cronologici, ma indubbiamente sembra differire dai mosaici cirenaici dell'epoca giustianiana, confermando così i suggerimenti espressi per la datazione della residenza.[87]

Tuttavia bisogna tener presente nel contesto storico che la Casa del Mosaico di Orfeo sembra occupare il *cardo* orientale della città, che conduceva dal mare verso il teatro sul pendio del Gebel Akhdar, e che a quel tempo doveva ormai perdere almeno una parte delle sue funzioni di via di comunicazione per il traffico, tagliato sulla costa dal muro che chiudeva la zona portuale. Questa situazione determinò notevole intralcio nel sistema viario della città, fatto di cui però non c'è traccia nella corrispondenza di Sinesio. Il muro portuale non soltanto taglia il *cardo* orientale dal mare, ma passa anche attraverso gli isolati in modo irregolare, il che suggerirebbe la sua costruzione in tempi in cui ormai era possibile allontanarsi dal sistema urbanistico di *Ptolemais*, quando il pericolo esterno provocò la rovina della città almeno parziale. Sembra che ai tempi di Sinesio, vescovo della capitale della provincia, sarebbe stato ancora troppo presto per questo e probabilmente la costruzione delle nuove fortificazioni fu una reazione al pericolo subito. Tuttavia gli edifici fortificati sparsi verso il Gebel Akhdar dimostrano che il muro

[83] Kraeling 1962, 160-175; Yegül 1992, 397-400, 471.
[84] Liebeschuetz 2001, 1-11.
[85] Harrison 1962.
[86] Harrison 1962, 16, note 20; Roques 1987, 88-89.
[87] Alföldi-Rosenbaum, Ward-Perkins 1980, 4; Gasparini 2009, 179.

Fig. 22. Quartiere del Dux visto dal nord-ovest (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 22. Headquarters of the Dux seen from the north-west (photo by M. Bogacki).

portuale non disegnava un nuovo territorio ristretto della città volta al declino.

Le osservazioni precedenti suggeriscono che nel V secolo d.C. *Ptolemais* visse momenti difficili e cadde in rovina secondo l'immagine di Procopio. Sembra però che la caduta, per quanto clamorosa e persino sentita a Costantinopoli, fosse piuttosto breve e per la ricostruzione non bisognasse aspettare i tempi di Giustiniano. Anche senza entrare nel dibattito sulla datazione delle basiliche cristiane a *Ptolemais*,[88] questo viene testimoniato pure dalla copia del decreto di Anastasio (491-518 d.C.) *de rebus Libycis*, scoperta ancora nell'Ottocento nel muro settentrionale del Quartiere del Dux (Fig. 22),[89] dimostrando che questa struttura plurifase fu costruita ancora nel V secolo d.C., al più tardi sotto il governo di questo imperatore.[90] Analogamente si datano al V/VI secolo d.C. i capitelli del tetrastilo costruito all'incrocio tra il *cardo* orientale e la Via Monumentale,[91] come d'altronde la menzionata Casa del Mosaico di Orfeo sembra in funzione nel periodo pre-giustiniano. In un certo senso il tetrastilo di marmo imperiale proconnesio con il suo bagaglio di significato, piuttosto politico che religioso, poteva marcare un capitolo nuovo nella storia della città, similmente all'Arco di Costantino in precedenza. Tuttavia si fa notare anche che i quattro basamenti delle colonne, sistemati in modo un po' provvisorio, per quanto allineati con i marciapiedi della Via Monumentale senza diminuire lo specchio del passaggio, ingombrano notevolmente il *cardo* orientale,[92] suggerendo, insieme con la Casa del Mosaico di Orfeo ed altre abitazioni nelle vicinanze, che questa importante strada per i veicoli aveva perso il suo ruolo precedente almeno in certi tratti e non limitava più l'edilizia, come dimostrano anche gli ambienti della Casa della Piccola Triconchos (Fig. 23).[93] Forse anche a quei tempi non conduceva più gli spettatori al teatro sul Gebel Akhdar, diventato ormai cava di

[88] Jastrzębowska 2009; 2015; 2019; Wipszycka 2011; Michel 2012, 284-285.
[89] Romanelli 1943, 167-178; Roques 1987, 225-226.
[90] Kraeling 1962, 100-102; Stucchi 1975, 455-457.
[91] Kraeling 1962, 82-83; Stucchi 1975, 269-270, 445-447; Pensabene 2009.
[92] Stucchi 1975, 445, fig. 452.
[93] Ward-Perkins *et al*. 1986, 144-149; Gasparini 2009, 167-169.

Fig. 23. *Cardo* orientale di *Ptolemais* con la Casa della Piccola Triconchos (foto di J. Żelazowski).
Fig. 23. East Avenue of *Ptolemais* with the North-east Quadrant on the street (photo by J. Żelazowski).

Fig. 24. Tratto del *cardo* orientale con il Palazzo delle Colonne (a sinistra) e tre case nei pressi dell'incroccio con Via Monumentale (foto elaborata da M. Bogacki).
Fig. 24. Fragment of the East Avenue with the House of the Columns (on the left) and three houses near the junction with the Monumental Street (photo elaborated by M. Bogacki).

pietra da costruzione, e sostituito dal piccolo teatro nel centro della città (Fig. 24).[94]

Quindi proprio nel periodo di Anastasio si potrebbe vedere una certa vivacità della città e la sua ricostruzione secondo principi nuovi con il porto fortificato e il sistema degli edifici di carattere difensivo, conservando però almeno in parte la viabilità tradizionale, come testimonia l'ulteriore funzionamento della Via Monumentale con le terme, a quanto pare ancora in funzione nel VI sec. d.C.[95] L'ipotesi della ricostruzione di *Ptolemais* ancor prima dei tempi di Giustiniano solo apparentemente contrasta con il quadro di Procopio, perchè nel suo panegirico non

[94] Stucchi 1975, 465.

[95] Reynolds 2000, 173.

tenne tanto nascosto il fatto che per motivi propagandistici rientrarono nell'attività di Giustiniano i numerosi edifici costruiti o almeno cominciati ai tempi di Giustino oppure di Anastasio, ormai fatto ben noto e verificato più volte dalle ricerche archeologiche in diverse regioni.[96] Ma come si può ipotizzare che la crisi fosse stata superata già prima, non ci sono ragioni per affermare che subito dopo il regno di Giustiniano cominciasse il declino e di conseguenza datare gli edifici meglio conservati proprio ai suoi tempi. Essi pure potevano essere stati costruiti o ristrutturati dopo, almeno fino alla fine del VI secolo d.C. come suggerisce la discussione sulle diverse fasi della Chiesa Occidentale.[97]

Conviene notare che *Ptolemais* ci offre un quadro sorprendente della fine di una città antica, che resiste sul suo territorio malgrado l'abbandono delle mura, con sparsi edifici fortificati in diverse zone, e con il porto difeso dalla cinta muraria. Inoltre nel V-VI sec. d.C. si osserva il fenomeno dell'invasione nei complessi domestici degli impianti produttivi, soprattutto legati alla produzione dell'olio e del vino.[98] Il caso emblematico lo fornisce la Casa del Peristilio Ionico, situata sul *cardo* orientale di fronte alla Casa della Triconchos (Fig. 25). Nata come una casa a grande peristilio, distrutta dal terremoto nel IV sec. d.C., essa è stata abbandonata a lungo per poi essere rioccupata con diverse presse olearie e vasche negli ambienti frazionati secondo esigenze abitative e produttive nuove.[99] É sintomatico che questa residenza nel periodo di *Ptolemais* – capitale provinciale non mostrasse segni di ristrutturazione, ma venisse occupata soltanto dopo. Lo stesso vale per il Palazzo delle Colonne, crollato e abbandonato nel IV sec. d.C., ma anche per la Casa di Leukaktios con un simile destino.[100] Quindi in un periodo di grande importanza per *Ptolemais* non mancavano in città le zone rovinate e abbandonate, che però a volte vennero rioccupate in seguito non più dall'edilizia residenziale, ma dall'attività artigianale, come si vede anche nell'isolato indagato dalla missione polacca.[101] Ai margini di queste residenze, come anche nella Casa delle Quattro Stagioni, oppure nella Casa della Triconchos si nota continuità dell'occupazione di carattere produttivo,[102] come se gli abitanti di *Ptolemais* a un certo momento decidessero di tornare dalla *chora* alla città e di occupare gli spazi disponibili dentro il tracciato delle mura cittadine.

Questo fenomeno però non dovrebbe significare un declino irrevocabile di *Ptolemais* come suggerisce la Casa della Piccola Triconchos, situata nel cuore della città tardoantica presso il menzionato tetrastilo.[103] Nata come una residenza a peristilio, dopo il periodo di abbandono venne sfruttata per la produzione dell'olio, invadendo anche il *cardo* orientale, ma questo non impedì la sistemazione dell'aula tricora nella terza fase di vita della casa, in funzione fino al periodo arabo, fatto testimoniato dall'iscrizione cufica reimpiegata nella pavimentazione dell'aula trilobata.[104] Similmente nella Casa del Peristilio Ionico ci sono segni di continuità di vita fino al VII-VIII sec. d.C. prima dell'abbandono definitivo.[105] Quindi la sopravvivenza delle case riguardava a volte anche le forme residenziali ed è sintomatico che nell'isolato con la Casa di Leukaktios in rovina, occupato ormai in gran parte dall'attività artigianale nascesse nell'ultimo periodo della città una residenza con aula absidata e colonne tortili nella parte settentrionale dell'isolato, pare ancora in funzione nel VI sec. d.C. (Fig. 26).[106] Sembra che malgrado l'invasione dell'attività produttiva nelle zone residenziali, resistesse l'idea della casa tardoantica con le aule absidate e trilobate nell'ultimo periodo della città, dando impressione di forte continuità nei cambiamenti dell'edilizia residenziale.

Tutto sommato non ci sono indizi per ipotizzare una fine traumatica di *Ptolemais* a causa dell'invasione araba, oppure di eventi sismici. La città non fu distrutta e si spense lentamente con lo stabilirsi dell'amministrazione araba a Barce, chiudendo così il cerchio della sua storia millenaria.[107] Sembra che alla fine si possano conciliare le opinioni di D. Roques, che difendeva la vivacità della città nella tarda antichità, con quelle più convincenti di C.H. Kraeling e degli altri studiosi britannici che suggerivano la graduale riduzione dell'area urbana di *Ptolemais* in un periodo finale della sua storia antica.[108] Tuttavia l'edilizia residenziale presenta un quadro di evoluzione che dimostra non le rotture con il passato, ma il sovrapporsi di esperienze della cultura antica. Partendo dalle case a peristilio di tipo greco nel periodo ellenistico si cercò soltanto di adattare queste alle esigenze politico-sociali dell'Impero Romano con nuovi percorsi per gli ospiti e nuove sale di ricevimento con adeguati sistemi decorativi, senza però rinunciare ai modelli tradizionali. Il pericolo esterno costrinse l'amministrazione politico-ecclesiastica

[96] Roques 2000, 39-40.
[97] Stucchi 1975, 365-366, 409-412, 434-437; Ward-Perkins *et al*. 2003, 189-191, Bonacasa Carra 2009.
[98] Gasparini 2010.
[99] Ward-Perkins *et al*. 1986, 111-126; Gasparini 2010, 681-690.
[100] Fabbricotti 2013; Jastrzębowska 2019.
[101] Kowarska, Lenarczyk 2011; Żelazowski *et al*. 2011, 9-26 (Z. Kowarska, S. Lenarczyk, J. Żelazowski).
[102] Gasparini 2010, 693-694.
[103] Ward-Perkins *et al*. 1986, 144-149; Gasparini 2009, 167-169.
[104] Ward-Perkins *et al*. 1986, 147; Gasparini 2010, 690-693; Jastrzębowska 2009, 237; 2015, 236.
[105] Gasparini 2010, 684.
[106] Jastrzębowska 2019.
[107] Kennet 1991.
[108] Ward-Perkins *et al*. 2003, 179; Wilson 2004; Wipszycka 2011, 65-66; 2015, 407-414; Michel 2012, 300; 2018, 325-326.

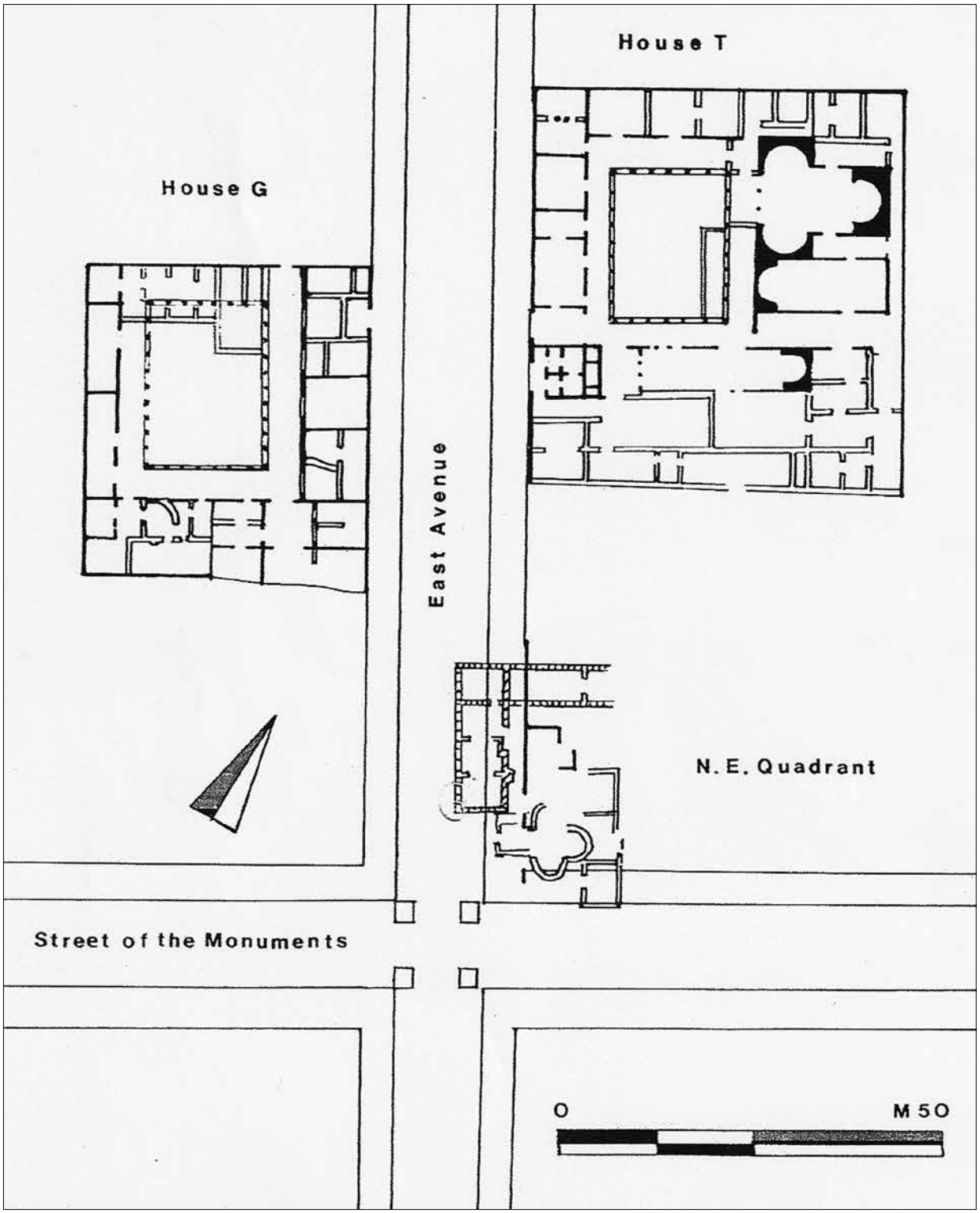


Fig. 25. Pianta generale della Casa della Triconchos, Casa del Peristilio Ionico, Casa della Piccola Triconchos nei pressi dell'incroccio del *cardo* orientale e Via Monumentale (da Ward-Perkins *et al.* 1986, 110, fig. 1).
Fig. 25. General plan of the House of the Triapsidal Hall (House T), House G, and the North-east Quadrant near the crossroads of the Monumental Street and the East Avenue (after Ward-Perkins *et al.* 1986, 110, fig. 1).

Fig. 26. Aula absidata scavata in parte dalla Missione polacca (foto di M. Bogacki).
Fig. 26. Apsidal Hall partly excavated by the Polish Mission (photo by M. Bogacki).

e gli abitanti più agiati negli edifici difensivi, prototipi dei castelli alto-medioevali, senza però rinunciare a sfruttare le strutture delle residenze precedenti a scopi abitativi e produttivi, anche con l'aggiunta di nuove aule di rappresentanza. Quindi ancora una volta emerge la necessità di considerare lo sviluppo delle forme residenziali piuttosto come l'accumulo delle esperienze culturali e non come scelte alternative.

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# Floors, Architectural Elevations, and Statuary in Late Antique Residences from Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus: Some Remarks[1]

Abstract

This paper is focused on the decoration of some late antique residences in Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus. All of them show common forms of self-presentation of urban elites across the eastern Mediterranean between the 4th and 6th centuries AD. The analysis is based on a global vision of social life in a world that was deeply influenced by a transition from old to new models and by forms of syncretism between various backgrounds which merged in new decorative systems. By recognising their owners' cultural environment, associations between décor and power can be elucidated in a comparative study of the main elements of these luxury residences. In this context, Christianity is one of the principal issues to be taken into account, along with deep pagan roots of the aristocratic *paideia* during the investigated period. In fact, the specific choice of the iconographies in the mosaics or the subjects for the statues displayed in these houses can be understood only if contextualised against the spiritual life of the period. In the discussed residences, cultural identity is also manifested by forms of continuity in the architectural elevations. The fact that local traditions developed during the Hellenistic Period were still in use – both as reused building elements and as newly created decoration – can be interpreted as a manifestation of the antiquity and prestige of the families who owned the dwellings. These phenomena are studied through a review of the contexts and their comparative analysis in order to highlight similar developments and their meanings.

**Keywords:** late antique housing, eastern Mediterranean, elite identity, pagan and Christian aristocracies

## Introduction

When one has a look at the history of residences in the eastern Mediterranean during late Antiquity, then the most immediate sensation to emerge is continuity, as if the material signs and ideas behind them were predefined by a deep groove of the vital past in terms of both local traditions and Graeco-Roman *koinè*.

Nevertheless, a historical analysis shows that the crucial changes that had affected the political and cultural situation were not without consequences. We are dealing with a time when the political and economic weight o f the eastern part of the Empire increased as a result of the foundation of Constantinople, the new capital, and its effects on the cultural level. Moreover, Christianity is one of the principal issues to be taken into account, especially by the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century.[2]

Nowadays, in general, the historical consensus about the end of paganism in late Antiquity is to consider the process 'as more of an internal evolution rather than as a violent extinction' and to believe that forms of survival existed even though paganism lost its public role.[3] However, it seems that the disappearance of the Graeco-Roman civic cults had a fundamental role in the process which eventually led to the conversion of many members

[1] This paper is a part of the investigation carried out within the framework of the Project 'Residence as self-presentation of urban elites. Architecture and decoration of the House of Orpheus in *Nea Paphos*, the ancient capital of Cyprus' (National Science Centre in Poland 2017/27/B/HS3/01131) under the direction of M. Rekowska, to whom I wish to address the most heartfelt thanks for her constant support and helpful discussions on the issues under consideration.

[2] Bowes 2008; 2010; 2018.

[3] Lavan 2011, XV–LVI; for regional studies, see Mulryan 2011.

of the urban elites, who, at that time, started to manifest their social role through the Christian faith.[4]

Therefore, the manifestation of identity that we find in luxury housing can be linked to an Empire-wide fashion – both in the towns and in the countryside – since the 4th century onwards, related to deep economic and political changes.[5] In this respect, the residences have to be considered a 'building-block' of self-identity of late antique elites and not just a mirror of it.[6] As a matter of fact, late antique housing resulted from a mixture of conscious or unconscious choices of the owners and what we could call the independent essence of the residences. This essence had many implications for the life of those who lived in them, as illustrated, for instance, by the role played by the antiquity and prestige of the families that owned the dwellings. This was one of the reasons why these residences continued to follow models established already during the early and mid-Imperial periods or even earlier, in the Hellenistic Period. Nevertheless, some aspects of this tradition were modified, implemented, or abandoned. Particularly between the end of the 5th and the 7th century, the building environments and the ancient towns themselves were changing, going through the processes of deconstruction, contraction, but also reorganisation in new, often poly-nucleated forms.[7]

Some remarks can be formulated by looking at a range of select case studies. The residences in the present study come from late antique Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus, *i.e.* regions which shared socio-cultural models, tastes, and habits between the 4th and 6th centuries AD due to their geographic vicinity to each other and their common past under the Ptolemaic and, later, the Roman rule.

## Private architecture at *Salamis*: the *Huilerie*

At *Salamis*, Cyprus, the so-called *Huilerie* is a large *domus* in a residential area which saw a great growth in the second half of the 5th century (Fig. 1).[8] However, excavations revealed the presence of a Hellenistic phase, to which the entablatures with *travicello* modillions and other architectural elements reused in the walls should probably be linked.[9]

The Hellenistic language is still alive in the apsidal reception room in the north-eastern corner. The walls were still decorated in the tradition known from the Second Style architectural paintings. In fact, the colonnades on the wall were not real, but rendered in stucco, and entablatures showed *travicello* modillions.[10] On the other hand, the usage of Corinthian-like capitals imitating late antique marble types[11] confirms the eclecticism of the owner who was not indifferent to the architectural tastes of his time.

The presence of a large reception room with an apse (Fig. 2) can be compared to the arrangement of the main wall in the *triclinium* of the House of Aion at *Nea Paphos* (Fig. 3).[12] The semi-circular niches, reminiscent of a long Egyptian tradition, from the housing in Marina el-Alamein to the Coptic monasteries, were particularly important in the reception room of the *Huilerie*: two of them flanked the entrance and the other two were placed opposite it, along the sides, while three windows were set in the apse.[13]

The Hellenistic scheme of the *oecus Aegyptius* is still alive in another hall on the upper storey, where Corinthian stucco pilasters were topped by a frieze with hunting scenes and an entablature with *travicello* modillions (Fig. 4). A series of arches were set between the pilasters: they were surmounted by arcuated lintels and another cornice with *travicello* modillions. The upper level was composed of fluted and spiral-fluted colonnettes supporting Corinthian-like capitals topped with another cornice with *travicello* modillions.[14]

## Visual dialogue between various media: the Villa of Theseus

Architectural decoration is a good indicator of the uses and meanings of spaces, but it is worth noting that it was embedded in a broader visual dialogue between various media, such as mosaics, wall-paintings, marble

[4] Cameron 2011.

[5] On this topic, among others, see Ellis 1991; 1997; 2000; Gazda 1991; Wallace-Hadrill 1994; Christie, Loseby 1996; Baldini Lippolis 2001; Grassigli 2001; De Albentiis 2003; Sfameni 2006; Gasparini 2009; Bowes 2010; Tuori, Nissin 2015; Métraux 2018.

[6] See Bowes 2018 (458–459), where the definition of the villa as a self-display of the owner is convincingly challenged.

[7] As an example, see the transformations that occurred in housing at *Ptolemais* in Cyrenaica (Gasparini 2010; Żelazowski, Gasparini 2014).

[8] Callot 1980; Argoud *et al*. 1980; Sodini 1997, 496–497; Baldini Lippolis 2001, 278–281.

[9] Argoud *et al*. 1980, 28; Callot 1980, 342; Sodini 1997, 496.

[10] Argoud *et al*. 1980, pl. XXIV c.

[11] Roux 1993, 203, fig. 4.

[12] See below.

[13] Callot 1980, 343–344, figs 2–3.

[14] Callot 1980, 345–346, 350, fig. 25.


Fig. 1. *Salamis*, the so-called *Huilerie*, a general plan (after Callot 1980, fig. 2a).

veneer, statuary, textiles, and in transversal connections between the parts of the household.[15]

Ideological claims can be seen particularly clearly in the choice of specific iconographic themes for the mosaic floors whose meaning, beyond their merely decorative purpose, often indicated a hierarchical progression of rooms toward the heart of the complex.

Amongst the most common subjects and themes of the late antique domestic decorations one finds divinities, mythological figures, and heroes intended as allegories through which the owners wanted to underline their *virtus*, that is their moral values and culture. Widespread were also themes connected to the Dionysiac repertoire, which were often represented in the dining or living rooms – these themes became a convention synonymous with the ideals of hospitality and conviviality, for joy of life and earthly happiness.

If mosaics are one of the most explicit languages through which we can trace the communication choices of the owners, it seems appropriate to quote other residences in Cyprus where the prosperity of the towns from the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century is testified by a blooming period of figural mosaics.[16] The phenomenon has raised the question of the existence of local workshops, which would have given rise to uniform production, perhaps starting from the arrival of mosaicists from abroad or through the continuation of a local tradition.[17] The vitality of the classical past can be clearly identified in two rich residences of *Nea Paphos* investigated by the Polish Archaeological Mission: the Villa of Theseus and the House of Aion.[18]

These buildings are connected through their topographical proximity and share some chronological phases. Nevertheless, they also exhibit deep differences

[15] About mosaics, see Bergmann 1994, 254. Less exploited is the informative potential of paintings, often due to their bad preservation. As an exception, the study of the paintings from the House of Aion can be mentioned (Jastrzębowska 2018, 527–597).

[16] For a general overview on *Paphos* mosaics, see Daszewski, Michaelides 1988.

[17] Michaelides 1987a, 3; 1987b.

[18] Excavation reports were annually published in *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* and *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus*; then, since 1989 until the present day, in *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*. Lastly, a general overview can be found in Meyza *et al.* 2015. On the Villa of Theseus, see also Daszewski 1977; Medeksza 1992; on the House of Aion, see Mikocki 1992, 135–150. More generally, see Daszewski 1987; Christou 2008, 96–105.

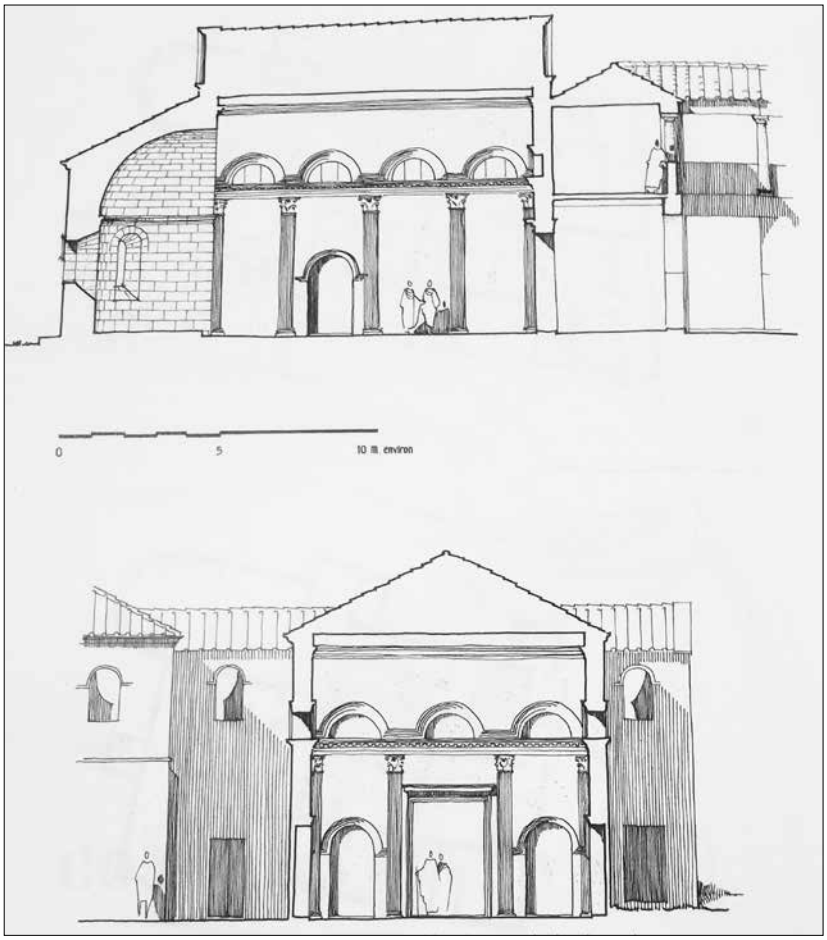


Fig. 2. *Huilerie*, sections of the apsed hall (after Callot 1980, fig. 3).

Fig. 3. *Nea Paphos*, House of Aion, the niche and entablature on the western wall seen from below (photo by E. Gasparini).

in the planimetric development, which in the case of the Villa of Theseus represents one of its most distinctive features, with its 120 × 80 m extension (Fig. 5).

The Villa of Theseus shows a complex history with several building phases until the end of the 5th century AD, on which we shall not dwell, and a continuity of exploitation until the beginning of the 7th century, but it has been ascertained that at least the internal colonnade of *bigio lumachellato* shafts can be referred to its first phase.[19] Very important is also the fact that its southern sector was developed on the remains of the so-called 'Hellenistic' House, which was still in use at the beginning of the 2nd century AD.[20] Here, we can recognise the widespread phenomenon of merging previous domestic

[19] Meyza *et al.* 2008, 291. More recently, the history of studies has been recapitulated in Panayides 2016a, 228–229.

[20] For more on this building, see the Annual Reports in *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*.

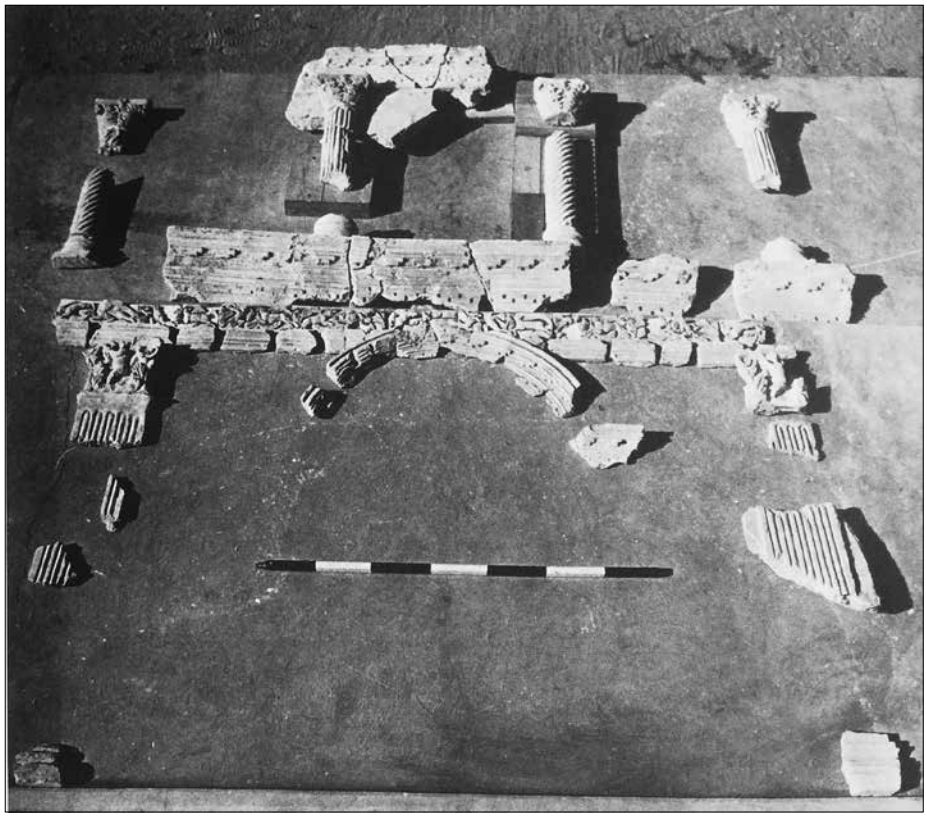

Fig. 4. *Huilerie*, the stucco elements from the walls of the upper-storey hall (after Callot 1980, fig. 25).

Fig. 5. *Nea Paphos*, Villa of Theseus, a general view from the north-eastern corner (photo by E. Gasparini).

units, which, together with the opposite case of subdivisions or the case of changing ownership, has been a part of the archaeological debate on the limits of properties in a given phase.[21]

The entrance to the Villa was marked by two Corinthian columns surmounted by a *tympanum*.[22] Then, the typical forceps vestibule gave access to the atrium, which by that time can be seen as a sort of an architectural relict.

Identification of the function of the rooms is related to the general interpretation of this complex as a palace of a high-ranking official and maybe of the governor himself.[23] However, the idea that the owner was one of the major landlords of the island and that the series of reception halls were used for administration and audiences cannot be excluded.

Generally speaking, apart from the entrance to the east, we can identify a wide peristyle, whose quadrangular sector measures 10.60 × 9.30 m, a public sector in its southern side arranged in a symmetrical fashion, a thermal complex in the south-eastern corner, *cubicula* and a dining room to the west, and a service area in the northern and the north-eastern sector.

The great reception hall can be identified in one of the interiors in the southern front, in a perfect alignment with the axis of the peristyle. Its apse, 8.80 m wide, is raised by a step above the rest of the room and is paved with reused marble slabs.[24] It can be interpreted as a space where the *dominus epiphania* had place, even if it is also possible to see it as a setting for banqueting with wooden *stibadia*.[25] Secondary reception halls had to be recognised in those on the sides and were preceded by antechambers and closed by apses or quadrangular *exedrae*. An apse is also present in the room measuring *c*. 6.0 × 5.50 m which closes the eastern side of the southern peristyle range. Its decoration comprised marble veneering on the walls

Fig. 6. *Nea Paphos*, Villa of Theseus, the mosaic of Theseus in the labyrinth (photo by E. Gasparini).

[21] In regard to Roman Cyrenaica, the issue is discussed explicitly in Gasparini, Pensabene forthcoming. A similar approach should be developed for the Cypriot domestic architecture, for instance in the case of the so-called 'Hellenistic' House and the Early Roman House, for the House of Aion and the North-Eastern House at *Paphos*, or the House of the Gladiators and the House of the Apsed *Triclinium* at *Kourion*.

[22] Meyza *et al.* 2008, 287, fig. 3.

[23] Daszewski argues that the presence of a statue of Aphrodite with a sword is an evidence of a syncretism with the Roman *Venus Victrix*, thus positing that the owner was an imperial official of the time of Marcus Aurelius or Septimius Severus; Daszewski 1982, 195–200. See also Panayides 2016a, 228–229.

[24] Daszewski 1972, 208–209.

[25] Sodini 1997, 493.

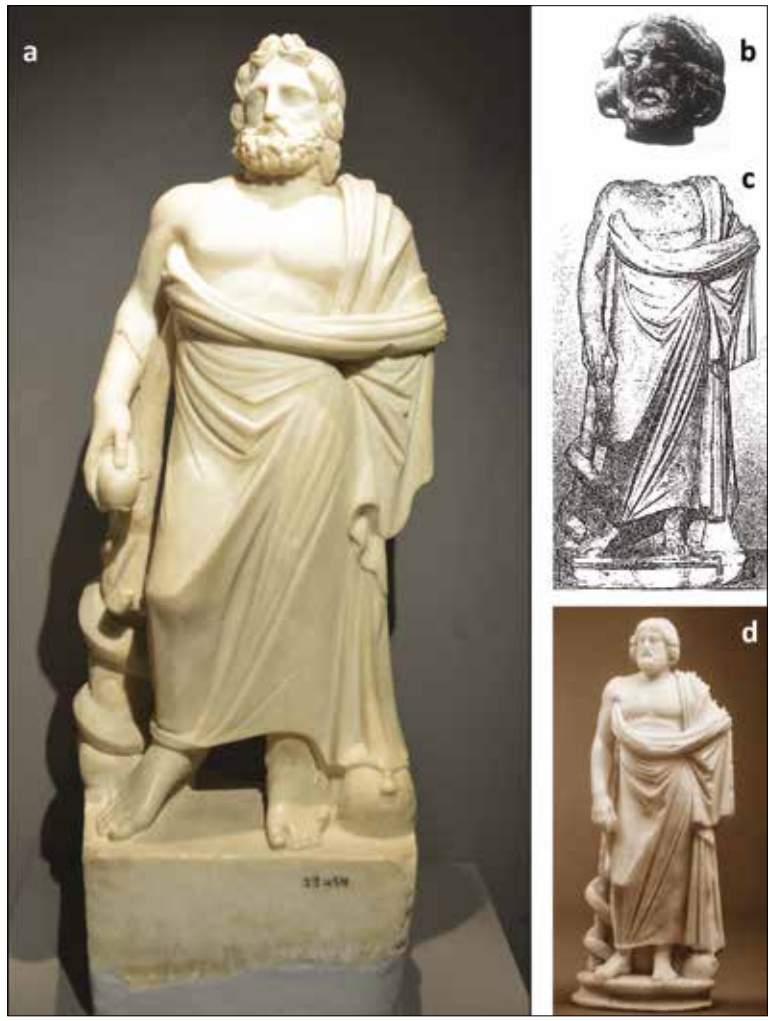


Fig. 7.a. Bibliotheca Alexandrina Antiquities Museum, Asclepius from Sidi Bishr (Alexandria) (photo by P. Pensabene); b. Trier University, Archaeological Collection, the small head of Asclepius (after Grimm 1989, 178, fig. 5); c. Trier University, Archaeological Collection, the headless statuette of Asclepius (after Grimm 1989, 177, fig. 4); d. *Nea Paphos*, Villa of Theseus, the statuette of Asclepius (after Grimm 1989, 174, fig. 1).

and the figural mosaic dated to the end of the 3rd century which gave name to the residence (Fig. 6).

In the Villa of Theseus, an important collection came to light, consisting of more than twenty mythological statues and statuettes which refer to the traditional mythological background.[26] Initially dated to the end of the 2nd (as per Asclepius or Heracles) or the beginning of the 3rd century (as per Dionysus),[27] later they have been reconsidered in the light of new findings regarding the late antique statuary, especially in private contexts, and have been dated to the 4th century.[28] They seem to be intended for an arrangement in niches or apses, and the thermal complex seems particularly appropriate for marine subjects.

We shall dwell on the Asclepius a little more, since, as already observed in the history of the studies, the parallel with an exemplar found in Alexandria, in the Villa of Sidi Bishr,[29] and with other fragmentary statuettes of Alexandrian provenance is really close (Fig. 7).[30] This association may well symbolise the vicinity and the circulation of ideas between the regions we are looking at here.[31]

[26] Daszewski 1982, 195 with previous bibliography. The subject is also widely discussed by Panayides; Panayides 2016a; 2016b.

[27] Daszewski 1968, 52–56, pl. XIII,6, XIV 1–6; 1976, pl. XXXVI, 1–4.

[28] Hannestad 1994; Bergmann 1999; Stirling 2005; Panayides 2016b.

[29] See below.

[30] Grimm 1989, 168–181. Despite some similarities, the dimensions of the mentioned sculptures vary significantly: the one from Sidi Bishr is 118.5 cm high (without the base); the one from *Paphos* and the headless statuette from Trier are 48.0 cm high, while the head from Trier belongs to a statuette measuring 20.0 cm in height.

[31] See Sirano 1994, 204–231 for a wider discussion on these statues and a chronology of the end of the 2nd century AD. The trade of statues matches the commercial links between these regions as highlighted in Marangou, Marchand 2009.

Fig. 8. *Nea Paphos*, House of Aion, the *triclinium*, a detail of the mosaic with the birth of Dionysus (photo by E. Gasparini).

## *Nea Paphos, Cyrene, Curium* and Christianity

The iconographic repertoire of the decoration of *domus* and villas in the 4th and 5th centuries AD shows a clear prevalence of themes belonging to the Graeco-Roman figurative tradition, and perhaps in some cases symbolic and philosophical interpretations have to be presumed behind it. Conversely, figurative elements clearly referable to Christianity are rarer. Nevertheless, typically 'pagan' iconographies sometimes cohabit with Christian images and symbols, therefore putting the religious identity of the owners into question.[32]

In the second half of the 4th century, Christianity was deeply rooted in Cyprus and big churches were under construction across the island. Nevertheless, in the *Life of Saint Epiphanius* pagans are often presented as members of the urban elites and stories of conversions are mentioned as well.[33]

The strong presence of the pagan culture is testified especially by the learned mythological themes represented in mosaics and statuary displayed in the richest dwellings. As an example, we can quote the fact that at the end of the 4th century in the Villa of Theseus mosaics, such as the one with Neptune and Amphitrite, were created or, like the mosaic of Theseus, restored.[34]

The clearest evidence for how the rising Christian art drew inspiration from the pagan repertoire can be found in the mosaic floor of the *triclinium* of the House of Aion (Fig. 8). This piece of art has sparked a long discussion, which we are not going to follow here.[35] However, we can just mention that in this mosaic Hermes – and all the contemporary and succeeding Christian representations comparable to it – exhibits the Ptolemaic union of iconic and narrative art, thus being a legacy of, respectively, the Pharaonic and the Graeco-Roman traditions.[36]

But we can also find some explicitly Christian mosaics, as in the House of Hesychius at *Cyrene*.[37] The southern and western peristyle ranges of this residence, dated to the late 4th–early 5th centuries AD, were paved with polychrome mosaics both geometric and figural.[38] Together with the *opus sectile* in the northern range,[39] they are of great historical importance, because, thanks to the inscriptions and the mosaic figurations, it has been

[32] Sfameni 2014, 99–113 and 151–186, with detailed bibliography.

[33] Hadjichristophi 2006, 207–216. For a summary on the spread of Christianity in Cyprus, see Deligiannakis 2018, 23–39; Michaelides 2018, 213–214.

[34] Daszewski 1985a, 285.

[35] See Daszewski *et al.* 1984; Daszewski 1984; 1985b; Deckers 1986; Balty 1995; Olszewski 2013; Bowersock 1990, 49–53; Quet 2006. The discussion is resumed by Michaelides (Michaelides 2018, 217–218). Lastly, see the interpretation in Musso, La Rocca 2018, 132–144.

[36] Musso, La Rocca 2018, 145. More observations have been proposed by Eugenio La Rocca during a conference held at the Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia in November 2017. On the general topic of 'old images and new meanings', see also Bisconti 2000; Török 2005. Finally, on late antique images, iconography, and style, see Kiilerich 2009; 2015.

[37] On topography and housing at *Cyrene* during late Antiquity see also Spinola 1996; Ermeti 1998; 2007.

[38] Alföldi Rosenbaum, Ward-Perkins 1980, 5; Bonacasa Carra 2005; 2009, 180; Venturini 2013, 44.

[39] Gasparini 2012.

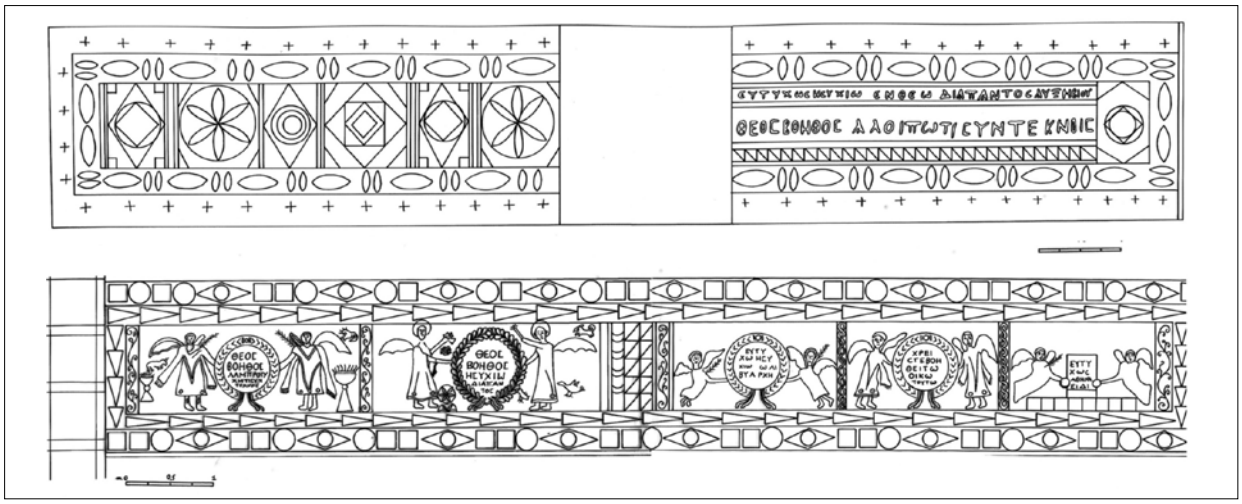

Fig. 9. *Cyrene*, House of Hesychius, the mosaics in the southern and western peristyle ranges (after Venturini 2013, pl. LXII).

possible to identify the owner of the building (Fig. 9). Hesychius was the progenitor of a Christian family and a member of the urban curial class. He held the office of Libiarches (Ησυχίωτῶ Λιβυάρχη), that is a great priest of *Libya Superior*, presiding over the provincial *koinon* as well as being in charge of conducting the imperial cult and organising *ludi* at the end of his office.[40]

With the advent of Christianity under Theodosius, and even more so under Honorius and Arcadius, this position, which had survived as an archaism, had to be assumed by the new Christian clergy. The mosaics inform us about his wife, Alypo, and two sons, Lamprotyches and Athenais, while the fourth person, Esichios the Younger, could be the third child and is mentioned in the marble inscription with a typical good luck greeting of ἐυτυχώς Ἡσύχιωνέω on the *opus sectile* floor.[41]

This name corresponds to the one of the addressee of Letter 93 in the Correspondence of Synesios, the bishop of *Ptolemais* between the 4th and 5th centuries. Synesios and Hesychius were fellow students in Alexandria and both descended from wealthy Cyrenaican families.[42]

The social and architectural context of this house is similar to that of the Annex of Eustolios in *Kourion* (*Curium*).[43] The latter building, dated to between the 4th and 5th centuries, consists of more than thirty rooms and a bath (Fig. 10). The mosaics are as important as those of the above-mentioned Cyrenaican example, as they provide information on the identity of the founder and his social standing. Moreover, they are a clear testimony of how the Christian culture would approach the pagan iconographic language and transform it.

The complex underwent a late renovation during or immediately following the mid-5th century AD, when rooms were subdivided and two latrines were constructed in the western end of the reception hall.[44] It remained in use, likely as a public guest house, until the Arab raids in the 7th century AD. Epigraphic evidence, however, suggests that the structure served a more public function and was presumably intended to act as a replacement for the ruined public structures around the agora.[45]

At the entrance to the dining room, we find an honorific mention about Eustolios as the one who brought 'baths to the town' (Fig. 11.a).[46] Moreover, at the southern end of the eastern portico, there is evidence for Christian worship: 'In place of big stones and solid iron, gleaming bronze and even adamant, this house is girt by the much

[40] Roques 1987, 209–212.

[41] Syn. *Epist.,* 9, par. 4–7; Goodchild 1971, 89–90; Reynolds 1959, 100–101, tav. VII, 2; Alföldi Rosenbaum, Ward-Perkins 1980, 150; Roques 1987, 209–212; Bonacasa Carra 2005; 2009.

[42] Cultural links between late Roman Cyrenaica and Egypt find a parallel in commercial exchanges as attested in Mazou, Caillou 2012; Mazou 2017. For a broader economic framework about late antique Cyrenaica, see also Wilson 2001.

[43] Daniel 1938; De Coursey 1950; Wylde Swiny 1982, 132–139; Christou 1985; 1996, 26–33; Michaelides 1987a, 40–41; 2001, 316–319; lastly, see Mavrojannis 2019, 233–234.

[44] Wylde Swiny 1982, 133.

[45] Wylde Swiny 1982, 134; Costello 2014, 16. See also Sodini 1997, 495, who debates the domestic nature of the complex. Most recently, the public rather than private nature of the House-Annex of Eustolios has been discussed in Mavrojannis 2019, 234–236.

[46] Mitford 1971, 356–358, n. 204; Mitford's interpretation has been strongly rejected in Bagnall, Drew-Bear 1973, 239–241. For the latest discussion, see Mavrojannis 2019, 238–239, 248–249.

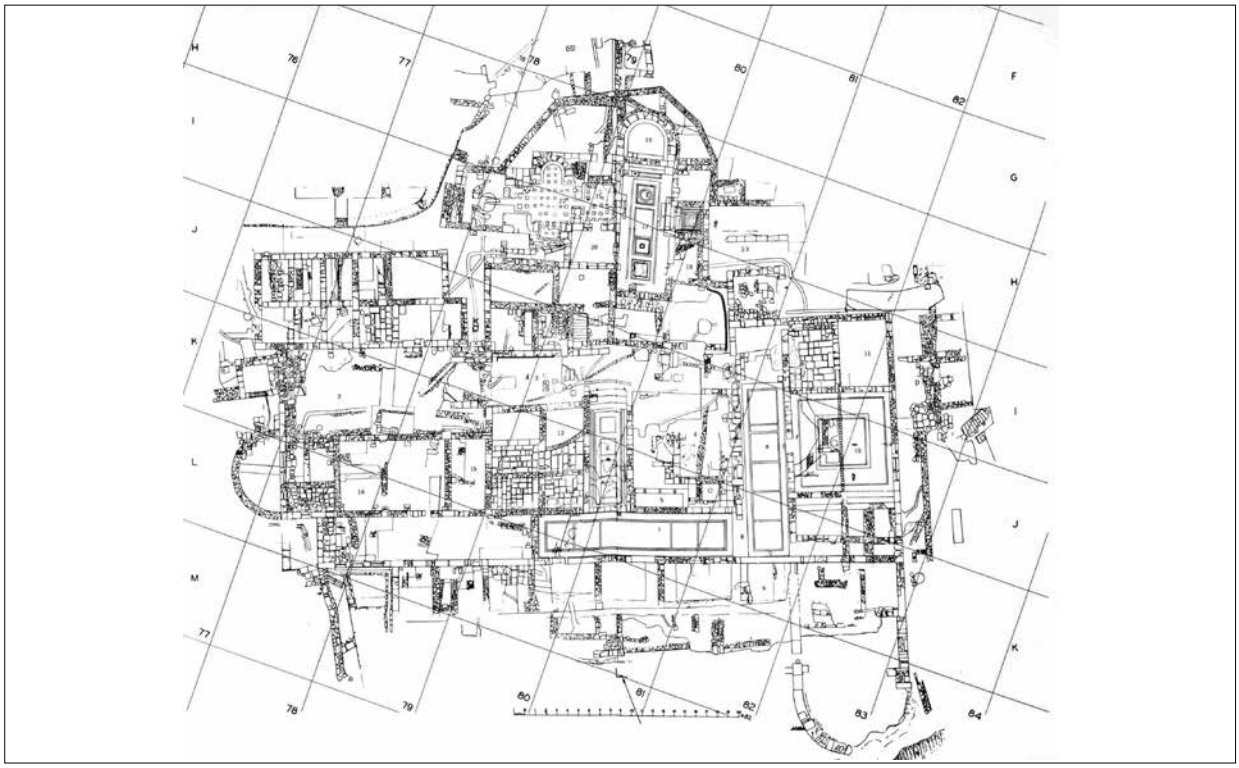

Fig. 10. *Kourion/Curium*, Annex of Eustolios, a general plan (after Mitford 1971, pl. 4).

venerated signs of Christ' (Fig. 11.b).[47] Lastly, before the entrance to the rooms in the southern wing, there is an invocation to Reverence, Temperance, and Obedience to the law, which thus should be seen as protecting the exedra and the hall.[48]

The bath complex to the north has a large *frigidarium* flanked by two pools (one apsidal and the other rectangular) and by two *apodyteria*. In the *frigidarium*, an *opus sectile* and a mosaic pavement are preserved, which include a bust and an indication of the name of Ktisis, the allegorical representation of the power of creation – even Creation of the world – which could be read as an allusion to the foundation of the baths.[49]

The mosaic inscriptions of this house inform us about Eustolios' belonging to the Christian community of *Kourion*,[50] but at the same time they paint a picture of a personality which had been deeply moulded by the pagan *paideia*, evidently still a part of the aristocratic education at the dawn of the 5th century.

Moreover, the public character that parts of late antique houses assumed in a Christian milieu has to be interpreted as a charity action towards the local community. At Patras, in Greece, this is enhanced by the honorific inscription of Basilios Oxylides that is dated to between the 4th and the 5th century. He is thanked because 'he built baths, which were a delight to all citizens and strangers' and because he offered to people 'banquets, gold and cloths' and goods from his estates. He opened his house for public receptions and 'people in return for his beneficence, chanted in his mansion all day and offered him gifts and erected a statue representing his image'.[51]

## Statuary and *sectilia* in late antique housing: Alexandria and its surroundings

Another piece of evidence for the complexity of late antique society is the so-called 'international distribution of late antique mythological statuettes'.[52] Over the last decades, this phenomenon has been better defined, with close attention paid to the decorative programmes

[47] Mitford 1971, 353–354, n. 202; Mavrojannis 2019, 246.
[48] Mitford 1971, 354–355, n. 203.
[49] Mitford 1971, 358–359, n. 205.
[50] Mavrojannis (2019, 242) states that 'the inscriptions of the "House of Eustolius" reveal the phase of consolidation of Christianity in Cyprus'.
[51] Saradi 2018, 268, 270.
[52] Stirling 2005, 165.

Fig. 11. Annex of Eustolios, the mosaic inscriptions: a. Dedication of the building to the town (after Mitford 1971, n. 204); b. Christian expression (after Mitford 1971, n. 202).

expressed through statuary collections composed of both late antique and older sculptures. In this respect, important issues are the modalities of burying and destruction of the statues, as they provide clues on their possible religious meaning and conflicts between Pagans and Christians.[53]

Some information comes from the traces of residences, probably suburban villas, found in a peripheral section of ancient Alexandria, near the present Sidi Bishr – an area renowned for the findings of private houses from the Roman Period.[54] One of these has been documented almost solely through the discovery of its sculptures, which were collected and then probably buried to prevent their destruction.[55]

This group, known as the 'Mehamara group', consists of thirteen objects. Ten of them are small-scale statues of deities (Aphrodite, Dionysus, Harpocrates, Asclepius, and Hygeia), a 'pastiche' reproduction of the god Mars or a portrait of a Hellenistic king in a retrospective style, personifications (Nilus, Euthenia), and two female portrait sculptures which can be linked to the family of the owner (Fig. 12). Finally, three remaining objects – the only ones not in white marble – are a table stand, a sphinx, and a small statue of Isis.

This collection reproduces divinities belonging mainly to the Graeco-Roman and Alexandrian pantheon, while only a minority belongs to the Egyptian one. It is evident that the owners of these houses had living

[53] On the topic of the attitudes toward mythological statues during late Antiquity, see the recent overview in Sfameni 2019, 227–236.

[54] Daszewski *et al.* 1990, 86–105.

[55] Gąssowska 1977, 99–118; Kristensen 2009; Pensabene, Gasparini 2018a, 101–108; 2019, 181–182.

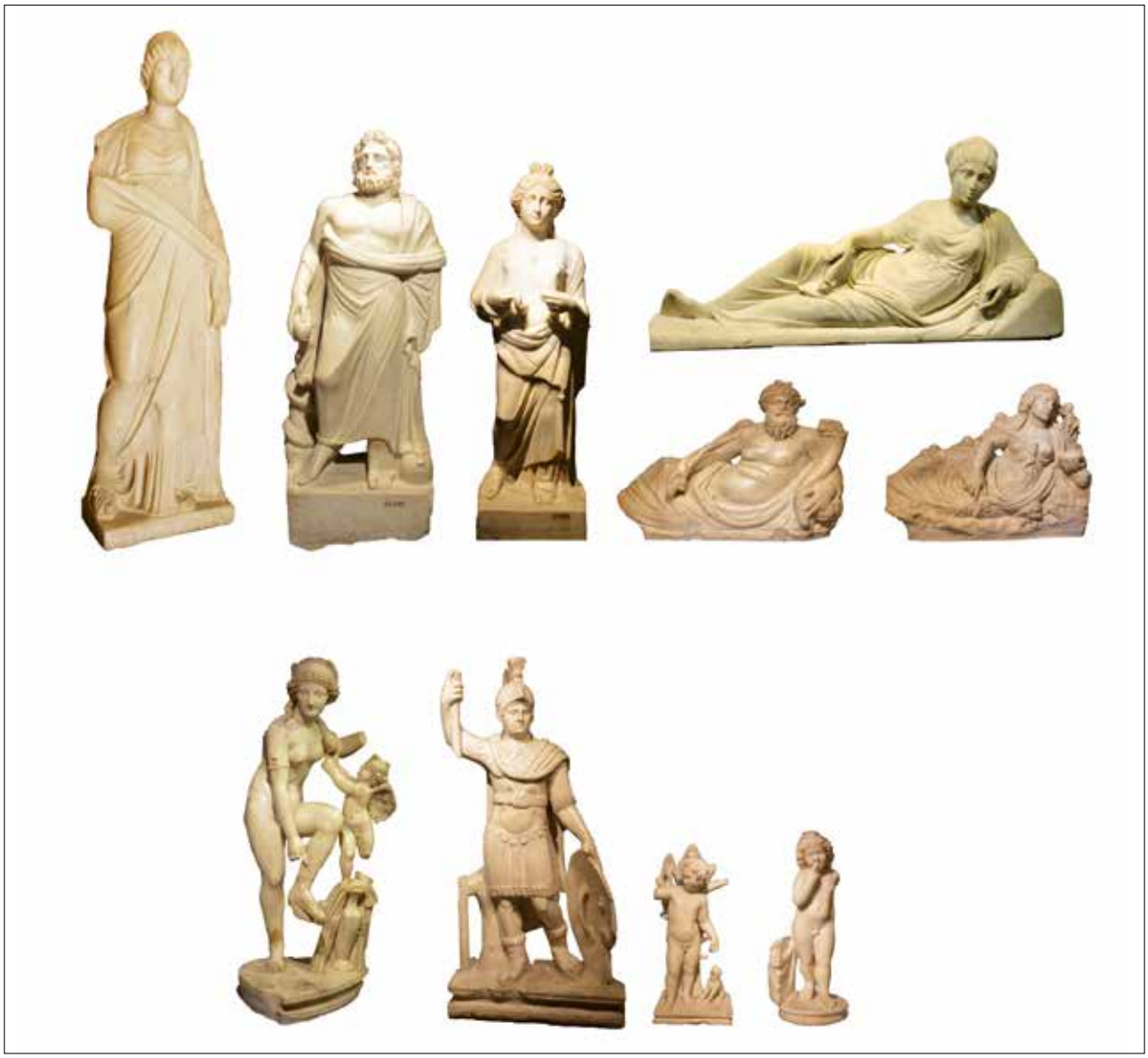

Fig. 12. Bibliotheca Alexandrina Antiquities Museum and Alexandria National Museum, the Mehamara group (photo by P. Pensabene).

habits firmly rooted in the Graeco-Roman culture, only partially influenced by the Egyptian tradition.[56] It has been already pointed out that they might have been high-level officials, but also *mercatores*, as can be inferred from the significant presence of imported marbles, which could be a part of return cargoes.[57]

Overseas transports attest to the existence of maritime commercial routes along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast, as well as internal fluvial routes in connection with Mareotis Lake.

Two kilometres away from the lake shores, near the modern village of Hawariyah, there lies a complex, 1500 $m^2$ wide, discovered in the 1970s and immediately identified as a 5$^{th}$/6$^{th}$ century AD villa.[58] The plan, arranged around a double peristyle court, still echoes Hellenistic Alexandria. But, at the same time, we must stress the centrality and the emphasis, in the space between the two peristyles, of a long church, which has been interpreted as a later addition resulting from a transformation of the building (Fig. 13).[59]

[56] On housing and identity in late antique Egypt, see also Bagnall 1993; Alston 2002; Rowlandson 2013.

[57] Pensabene 2014, 571–591.

[58] El-Fakharani 1983. A synthesis is in Rodziewicz 2010, 69; more recently, the building has been subjected to a study; see Pensabene, Gasparini 2018b, 93–104.

[59] Rodziewicz 1983; 1988a; 1988b.

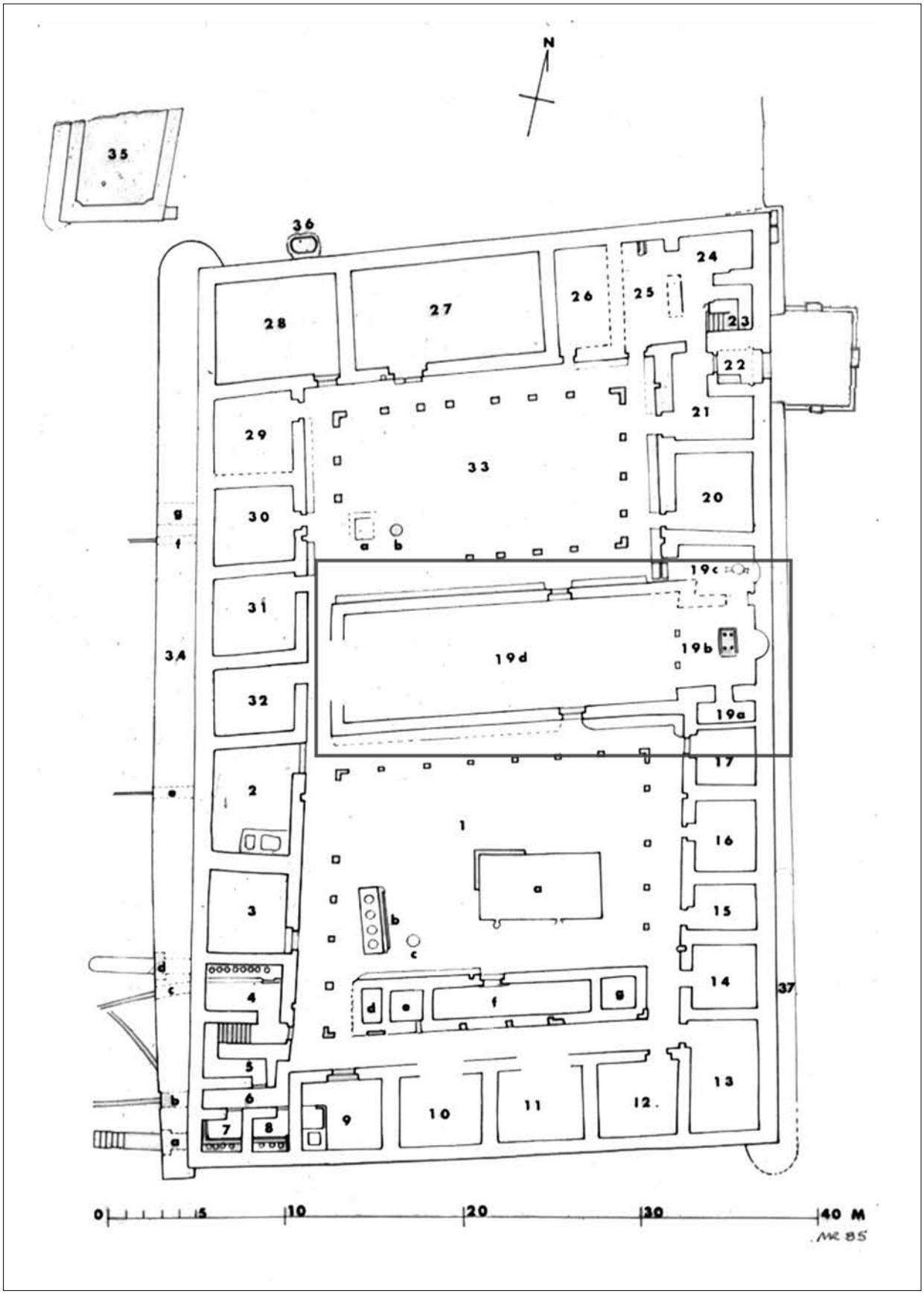


Fig. 13. Hawariyah (Mareotis, Egypt), the rural villa, a general plan; the localisation of the church is indicated with a rectangle (after Rodziewicz 1988a, 274, fig. 2).

This hall can be placed within a series of apsidal rooms which in late antique residences could combine the role of audience chambers and that of public meeting places, for instance for lectures and conferences, as exemplified by the functions of the halls of Auditoria at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria. A broad and blurred spectrum of purposes of such reception spaces can be traced also thanks to a passage in which St. Augustine explains that in some houses there were big halls which would host those who flocked to hear sermons of bishops visiting the towns.[60]

This small Christian hall was decorated with a luxury *opus sectile* floor similar to those in the big Justinian basilicas at *Apollonia* and Ras el-Hilal in Cyrenaica. The pavement is composed of reused elements, which can be compared to marble floors from the mid-Imperial elite residential housing discovered at Kom el-Dikka.[61]

## Conclusion

Concluding, this overview shows that during the last centuries of the Empire, and within the investigated area, the great prestige of the Hellenistic and Roman traditions was still influencing the elite residential housing. At *Salamis*, in the *Huilerie*, the architectural choices followed fashions rooted in the regional tradition and incorporated some newly-acquired elements. The classic repertoire of the mosaics and statuary, as highlighted by the finds from the Villa of Theseus at *Nea Paphos* and the Villa of Sidi Bishr at Alexandria, is still functioning as a medium expressing the living habits in the aristocratic *domus*.

Particularly, the Villa of Theseus witnesses all the crucial points of late antique urban residential housing in the quoted regions:

- forms of continuity of domestic installations from previous buildings from the late Hellenistic and early Imperial periods;
- recurring new elements within the houses and their symbolic and functional meanings;
- decorative displays composed of mosaic floors and marble elements, intended as statuary and wall veneering;
- distinction between public and private nature of living spaces;
- changes across time and the invasion of domestic space by agricultural and artisanal production.

At the same time, the dawn of the Christian iconography can be recognised in the youngest pagan images, as indicated by the mosaic in the *triclinium* of the House of Aion at *Nea Paphos*.

Christianity, as a social as well as religious phenomenon, played a crucial role in both biographies and houses of Eustolios and Hesychius, respectively at *Kourion* and *Cyrene*. However, even where a church appeared, as in the Villa at Hawariyah in Mareotis, the new canons of luxury housing coexisted with the Hellenistic heritage.[62]

Therefore, during late Antiquity the elites of Egypt, Cyprus, and Cyrenaica, even if Christianised, clearly show the pagan roots of the aristocratic *paideia*. The transition from old to new models and the forms of syncretism between various backgrounds, merged in the new decorative systems, seem to be the features illustrating both the local developments and those which spanned the whole Mediterranean region. They reflect the owner's cultural environment and the spiritual life of the period.

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[60] Aug., *Epist.* 44,1. On the cultic use of the halls of *domus* and villas as well as on the origin of churches in residential buildings, see the recent syntheses in Sfameni 2014, 99–113; Bowes 2018, 453–464.

[61] Rodziewicz 1991, 204–214; Rodziewicz 2002, 1–22. See Pensabene, Gasparini 2018b, 93–104 for a complete bibliography.

[62] Other Egyptian examples of this phenomenon come from excavations of *Trimitis* in Dakhla Oasis (Boozer 2005; Alfarano 2018).

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# Unearthing Houses in *Porphyreon* and Chhim. Structure, Spatial Development, and Decoration of Domestic Spaces in Late Antique *Phoenicia*

Abstract

*Porphyreon* (Jiyeh/Nebi Younis) and Chhim were large rural settlements situated on the coast of modern-day Lebanon, north of the *Phoenician* city of *Sidon*. As attested by the remains of residential architecture, they were thriving during the Roman Period and late Antiquity (1st–7th centuries AD). This article presents the preliminary observations on the domestic architecture uncovered at both sites, their spatial and social structure, as well as their furnishing and decoration, based on the fieldwork carried out in recent years by the joint Polish-Lebanese research team. The focus will be put on the wall painting fragments found in considerable numbers in *Porphyreon*. The iconographical and functional study of the paintings betrays to what extent the inhabitants of rural settlements in the coastal zone of the Levant were inclined to imitate the decoration of the urban houses known to them from the nearby towns, such as *Berytus*, but also from religious contexts represented by churches.

**Keywords:** domestic architecture, house furnishing, wall paintings, rural agglomeration, late Antiquity, *Porphyreon*, Chhim, *Phoenicia*

## What do we know about the residential architecture in Roman and late antique *Phoenicia*?

Until quite recently, the only reference to the residential architecture from the Hellenistic and Roman *Phoenicia* was Strabo writing about Tyre in such words: 'The houses here, it is said, have many storeys, even more than the houses at Rome, and on this account, when an earthquake took place, it lacked but little of utterly wiping out the town' (Strabo, *Geographika* XVI2.23).

Those interested in the residential architecture of the Graeco-Roman eastern Mediterranean rarely turned their attention to the central part of the Levant. A brief summary of the situation, as shown on the map, reveals that only 13 sites dated roughly to the Roman Period and late Antiquity contain structures identified as remains of residential housing (Fig. 1).[1] In most cases, these structures were only surveyed, not excavated, and their function and chronology are elusive and published poorly, if at all. The picture emerging from this summary is rather gloomy and encourages us to describe the

[1] Housing remains in Lebanon dated to the Graeco-Roman Period have been so far identified at Tell Arqa, Qasr Naous, Byblos, el-Jaouze, Deir el-Qala'a, *Berytus*, Jenah, Awza'i, Khan Khalde, *Porphyreon* (Jiyeh), Chhim, Tyre, and Umm el-'Amed.

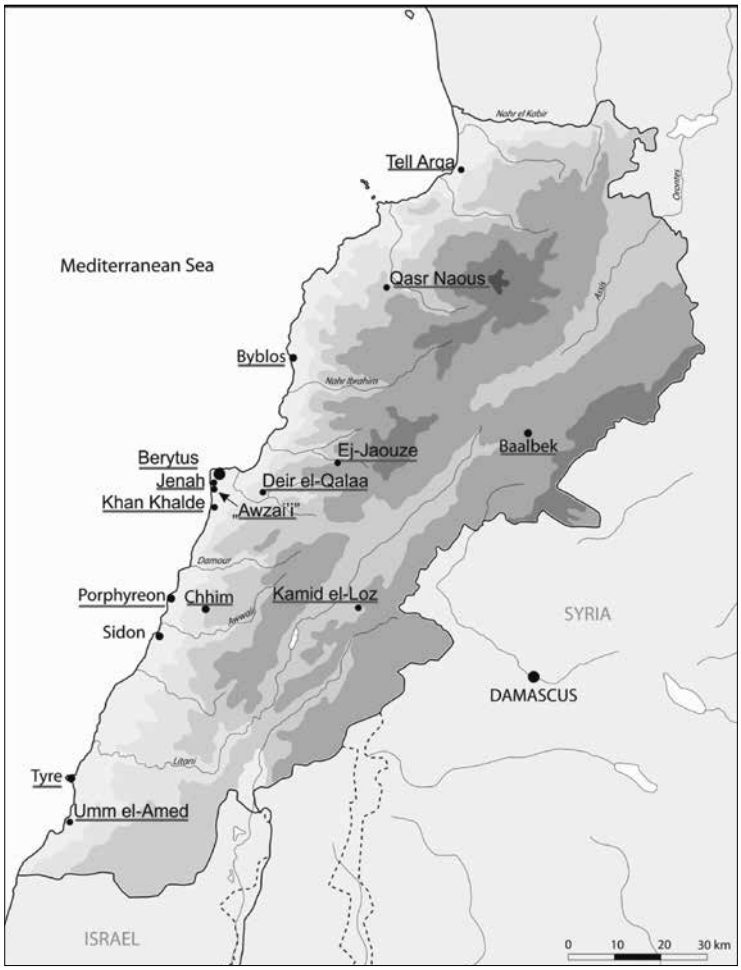


Fig. 1. Map of Lebanon showing the position of *Porphyreon* and Chhim and other sites where the remains of housing architecture from the Roman Period and late Antiquity were recorded (drawing by M. Puszkarski and M. Gwiazda; courtesy of PCMA UW).

state of research on the residential architecture in Roman *Phoenicia* as close to non-existent.

The only exception to this rule was offered in the last decades by the salvage excavation program conducted in the town centre of Beirut.[2] We should mention in this context a rare example of the so-called insula of the House of the Fountains, published by a team from the American University in Beirut.[3] These examples, however, shed light on the town architecture, whereas the aim of our brief presentation is rather to introduce new and little-known evidence that pertains to the residential architecture uncovered recently in rural areas of central *Phoenicia*.

In this context, we would like to mention the results of excavations conducted in recent years by the Polish-Lebanese team working under the auspices of the Directorate General of Antiquities and the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw on two sites situated close to one another: *Porphyreon* (modern Jiyeh) and Chhim, only some 15 km to the north of modern Saida (Fig. 1).[4] Both settlements were part of the *Sidon* hinterland, occupying important positions in its northern section, closer to ancient *Berytus*. Both settlements reveal also undisturbed stratigraphy stretching, in the case of *Porphyreon*, from the Iron Age II, between the 8th century BC and the 7th century AD,

[2] See *e.g.* Saghieh 1996; Aubert 2001–2002; Perring *et al.* 2003.
[3] Perring 2007.
[4] Authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to the representatives of the Lebanese Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA), and especially to its Director General, Mr. Sarkis Khoury, and Mrs. Myriam Ziade, the head of DGA Saida office. Without their efforts this work could not have been done. The joint project in Chhim and *Porphyreon*, led by Tomasz Waliszewski, is supported by the Directorate General of Antiquities and the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw.

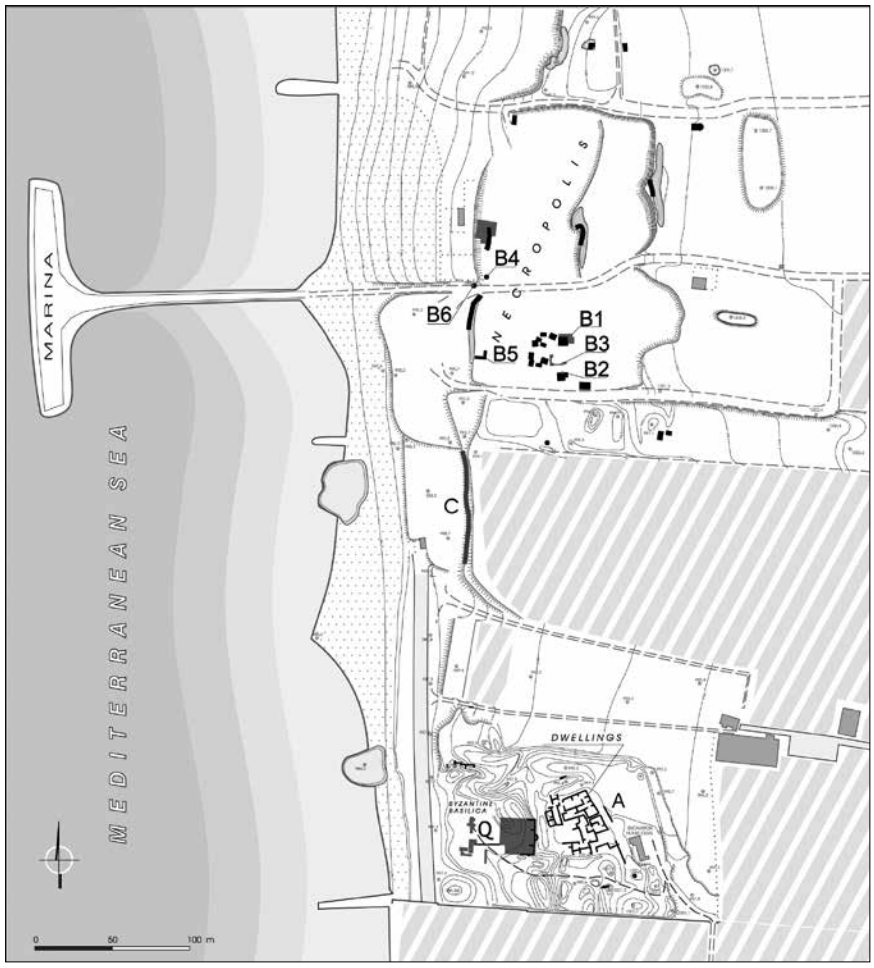


Fig. 2. Plan of the archaeological site of *Porphyreon* (Jiyeh) in Lebanon (drawing by M. Puszkarski; courtesy of PCMA UW).

and in the case of Chhim – between the 1st century AD and the 7th century AD – with the remains of residential architecture from the Roman and late antique phases being best-preserved. Chhim was a village equipped with a sanctuary, while *Porphyreon* showed a mixed rural-urban character and was much bigger.

Both sites, as we have already mentioned, are large settlements, separated by a distance of only 7 or 8 km. Evidence gathered during the consecutive seasons of archaeological fieldwork at Chhim and Jiyeh not only allows us to describe in details how the rural or rural-urban houses in this particular region of the Levant looked like but also, perhaps more importantly, shows how building traditions could be different on sites situated so close to one another in geographical terms.

## Housing at *Porphyreon* and Chhim and the impact of geographical setting

Ancient *Porphyreon* (Jiyeh/Nebi Younis) was a large agglomeration located on the Mediterranean coast only 15 km to the north of the *Phoenician* city of *Sidon* (modern Saida). An in-depth analysis of the subsistence economy of the site's inhabitants leads to the conclusion that it was a significant element of the local economic system – on the one hand providing for the city of *Sidon* and, on the other, mediating the exchange of goods with rural settlements, such as Chhim, scattered across the mountainous hinterland.

The area that stretches to the east of the Christian basilica comprises substantial remains of a residential quarter, discovered and excavated already in 1975 by Roger Saidah on behalf of the Lebanese Directorate General of Antiquities, with the latest phase of occupation dated to late Antiquity (Fig. 2). Explorations in this area, conducted by our team, concentrated on clearing previously excavated rooms and digging test trenches to determine the earlier history of the site. The area cleared during the seasons of 2008 to 2014 (*c.* 40 m by 35 m) encompassed some 100 rooms or other units forming a residential complex criss-crossed by narrow winding lanes (Fig. 3). The street grid followed no regular plan and was erratic on the surface level. The lanes were rather narrow (1–2 m) and paved in the parts overlying the sewage canals (Fig. 4).

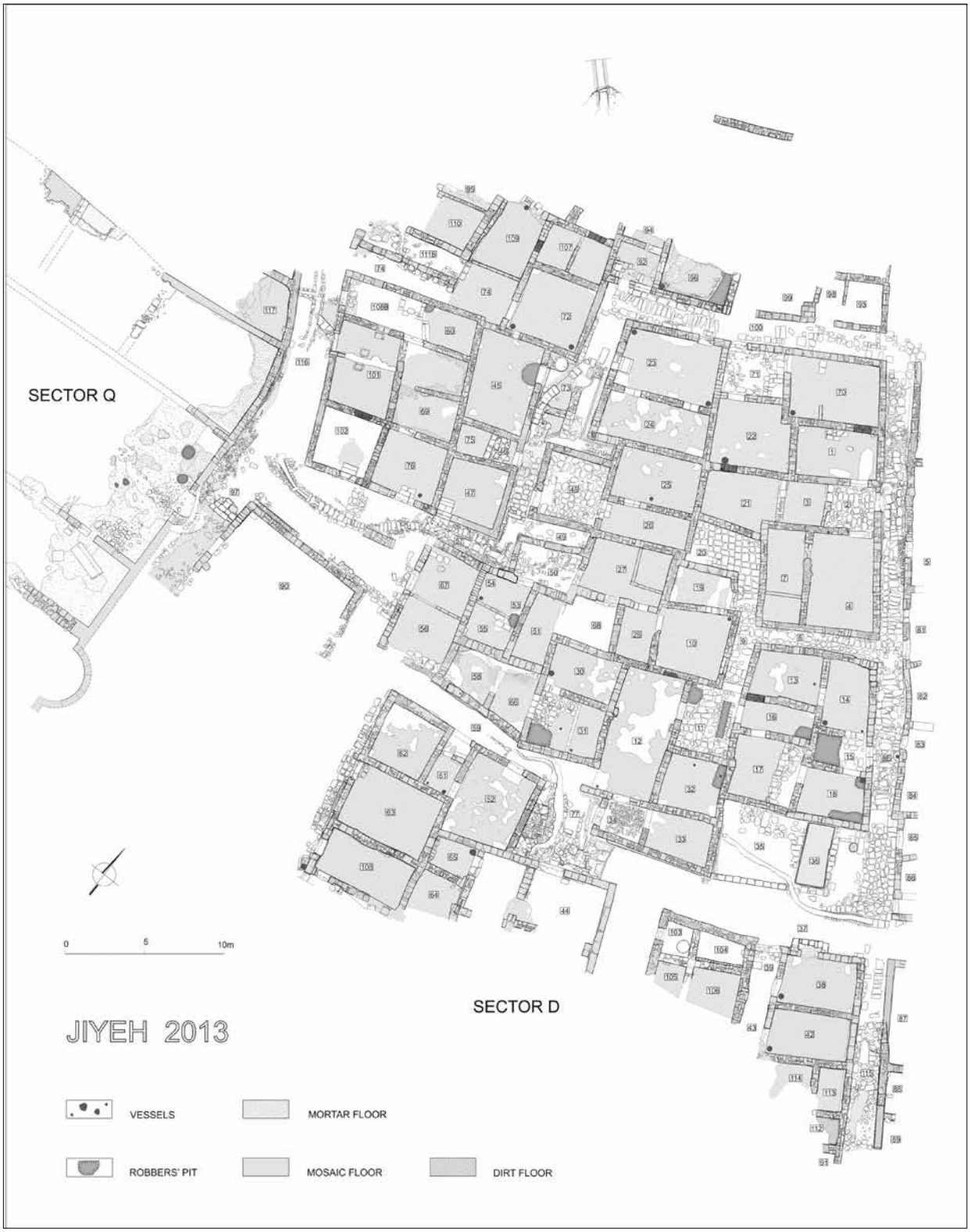


Fig. 3. Plan of the residential area in Sector D in *Porphyreon* (Jiyeh) (drawing by M. Puszkarski; courtesy of PCMA UW).

Fig. 4. Housing remains in *Porphyreon* (photo by M. Bogacki; courtesy of PCMA UW).

Ruins of the ancient village of Chhim, covering an area of *c*. 1 ha, located in the mountains to the north of *Sidon*, constitute an exceptional case of a well-preserved rural archaeological site in Lebanon (Fig. 5). The sanctuary from the Roman Period, the Christian basilica, the residential buildings, and the numerous oil presses provide an account of a settlement whose livelihood was based on agriculture and animal husbandry, yet all the while maintaining close relations with other coastal Mediterranean settlements (Fig. 6). The relatively high and stable level of prosperity of Chhim's inhabitants contrasted with technological stagnation on the site and the attachment to traditional forms in construction, both features characteristic of the mountainous regions of ancient *Phoenicia*.

In our opinion, the layout of both settlements was largely influenced by their geographical setting. The *Phoenician* coast between *Berytus* and *Sidon* is interspersed with numerous shallow bays (see Fig. 1). The coastal belt is followed to the east by a chain of hills rarely exceeding 800–900 m a.s.l. Mount Lebanon, visible in the background, was a natural barrier between *Phoenicia* and Syria, including the Beka'a Valley.

The layout of the buildings at Chhim, situated *c*. 450 m a.s.l., shows that it was carefully adapted to the natural landform. The narrow streets, no wider than 1.5 m, ran along or crosswise to the slope, creating intersections at a straight angle. Some of them were dead ends creating cul-de-sacs accessible to the inhabitants of the nearest house. It is worth noting that throughout the entire village it is possible to observe efforts made to ensure the intimacy and privacy of the families living in houses. For example, none of the houses' doors would face the doors of the neighbouring buildings (Fig. 7).

In the case of *Porphyreon* (Jiyeh), situated in a wide alluvial bay, the inhabitants had simply much more space for construction, being limited only by the sea to the west and slopes of the hills to the east.

It is interesting to note that there was a close connection between the architecture and the local climate conditions. The walls of the houses at Chhim are thick (*c*. 0.90 m), providing better isolation during the summer from the heat and during the winter from the cold. The walls of the houses at *Porphyreon*, where more forgiving weather conditions were expected, were half as thick (*c*. 0.48 m).

The problem of rainwater evacuation was also addressed in both villages. In *Porphyreon*, the streets of the densely inhabited residential quarter, built initially between the mid-4$^{th}$ and mid-5$^{th}$ centuries AD, were provided with a canal system connected with terracotta pipes that gathered rainwater from the roofs. The street

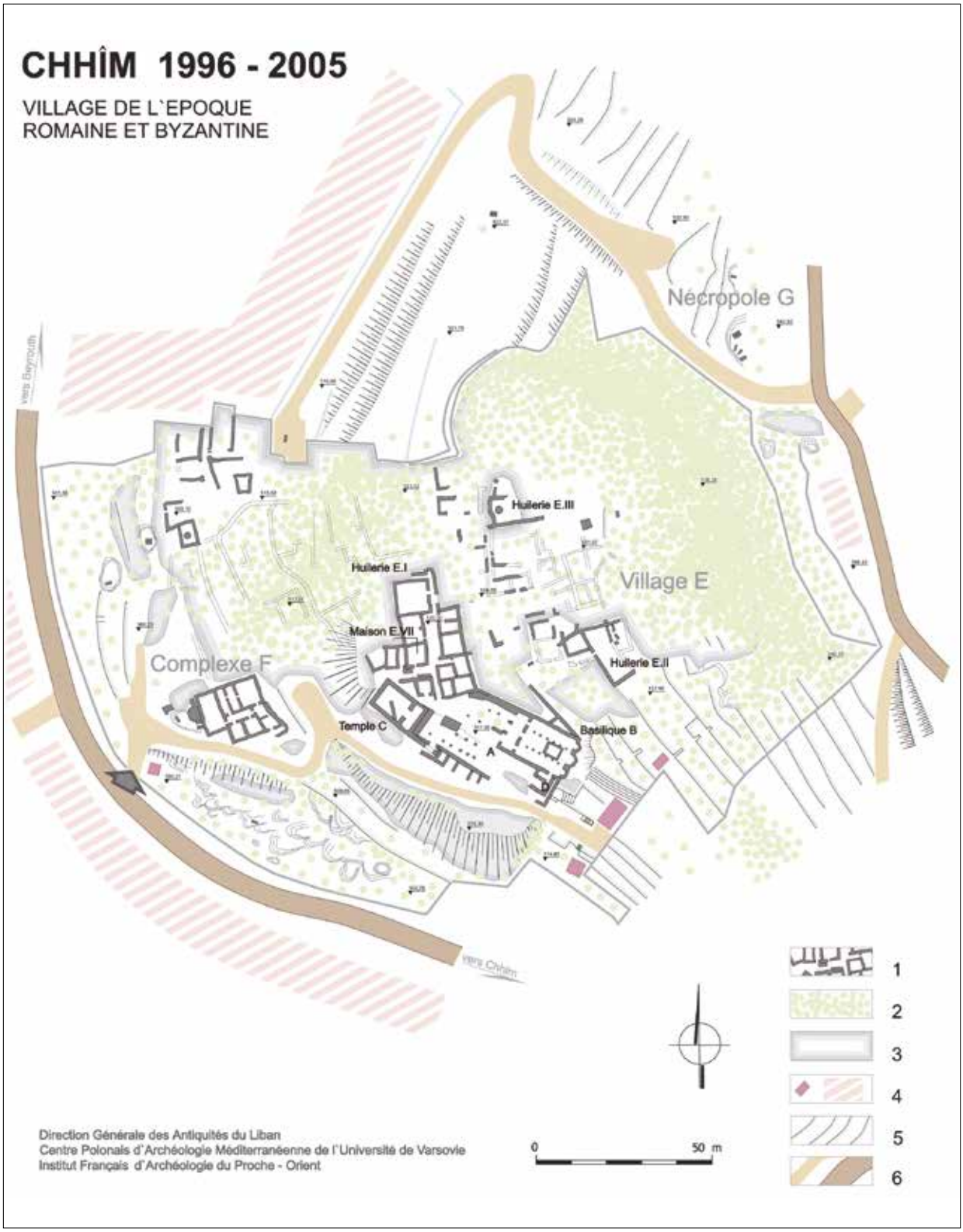


Fig. 5. Archaeological site at Chhim. Map key: 1. archaeological remains, 2. greenery, 3. artificial terraces, 4. modern installations, 5. levels, 6. modern roads and paths (drawing by M. Puszkarski; courtesy of PCMA UW).

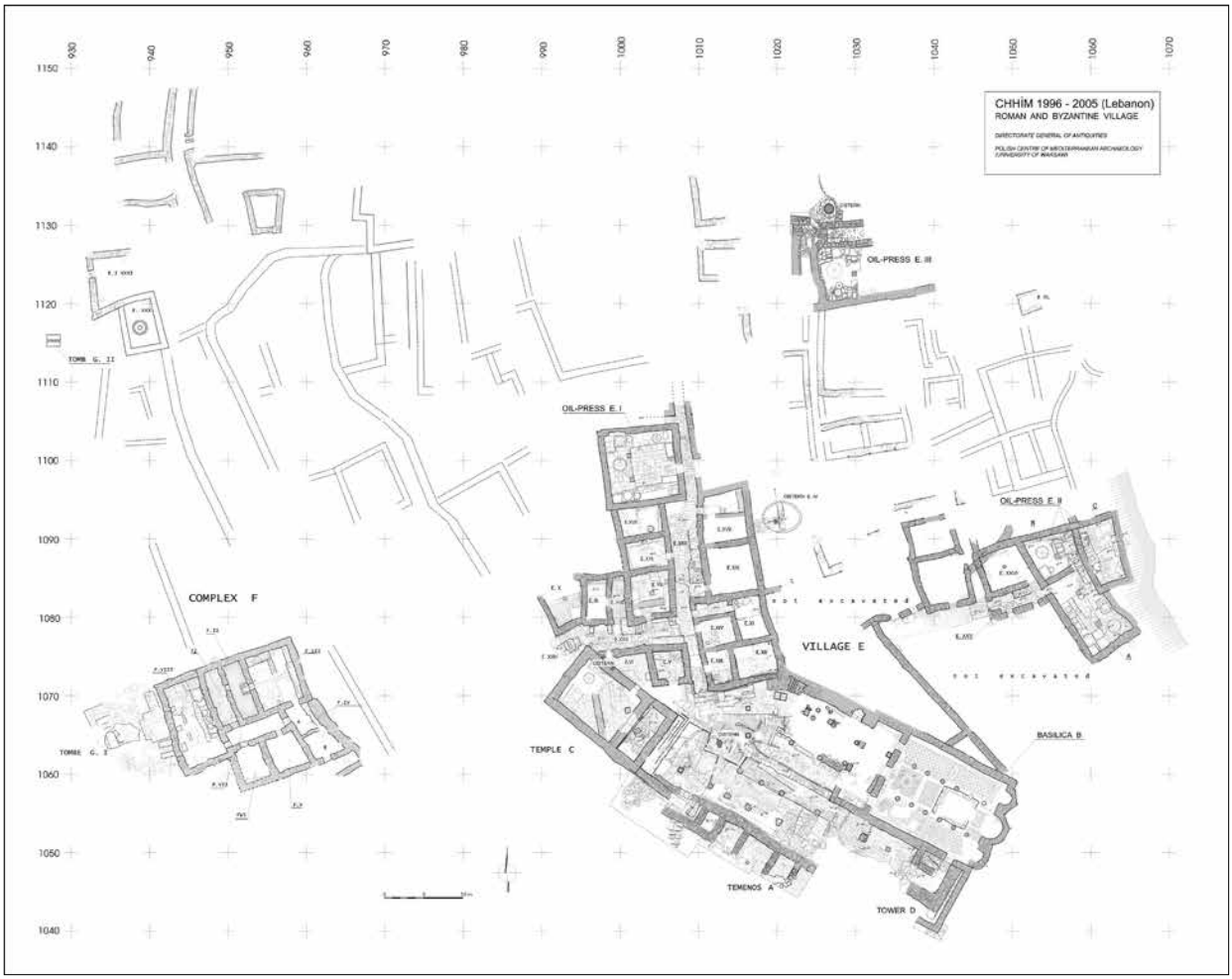


Fig. 6. Plan of the Roman and late antique village at Chhim (drawing by M. Puszkarski; courtesy of PCMA UW).

stratigraphy, as well as a ceramic analysis and numismatic finds, suggest that these structures, encompassing several streets, were constructed between the late 5th and 6th centuries AD. Moreover, during the same period, the streets were provided with parallel lines of high stone blocks along the walls of the buildings, which resemble sidewalks in Roman towns. Clearly, their purpose was to make it possible for the inhabitants to move around without becoming completely wet during periods of excessive rain. Similar pavements, also dated to late Antiquity, have been identified in Chhim.

There is a well-pronounced difference between both settlements in terms of building material used for the construction of houses. In Chhim, hard limestone was used, quarried locally and probably not far from the village. In *Porphyreon* (Jiyeh), local sandstone (known as *ramleh*), found directly on the beach, was widely used in all cases, including the construction of a huge Christian basilica. The walls were built with stone ashlars set using the header-and-stretcher bond, which made use of large amounts of lime mortar. Their internal and external faces were covered with various types of plaster. Limestone was used rarely in thresholds, slabs covering sewage system, or simple pavements in houses.

## Structure of the houses and their spatio-temporal development

An average housing unit at *Porphyreon*, in use during late Antiquity, had a complex history, as in the case of rooms 1-2-3-4-7-21-22-70-71.[5] A house comprising initially three interconnected units developed into a complex comprising at least 14 rooms and was at some

[5] The residential area excavated in *Porphyreon* is presented in details by Gwiazda, Waliszewski 2014.

Fig. 7. Residential quarter in Sector E in Chhim (photo by T. Waliszewski; courtesy of PCMA UW).

unspecified point in time divided into separate complexes by blocking the doorways between units 21 and 22 as well as 1 and 70. The four houses were subsequently entered through separate street entrances (Fig. 8).

It is also interesting to note that Chhim's houses lack any courtyards or backyards, even though they are so typical of the residential architecture of the Near East, as well as Greek and Roman housing. This may, however, have resulted from the limited amount of space available for the buildings rather than a specific choice to exclude these features. The roofs, which could be accessed by stone staircases incorporated into the external walls of the houses, seem to have been the only spaces used for storing tools and agricultural products, drying fruit, or doing various household chores.

The house walls in *Porphyreon* were coated on the inside with off-white plaster, seldom adorned with crosses and inscriptions painted in red, mostly quotations in Greek from the Psalms. Exterior walls were plastered and, along Street 59, additionally reinforced and protected by gravel covered with plaster, the coating being thicker along the bottom of the wall.

The uncovered residential architecture in *Porphyreon* is characterised by the presence of small vestibules with stairways allowing passage to subsequent rooms on the ground floor, as well as to higher levels. Remains of staircases (rooms 61 and 46) as well as fragments of decorated mosaics, which had obviously fallen down from the upper levels, indicate that these were multi-storeyed houses (Fig. 9). The housing at *Porphyreon*, contrary to the tradition known from Chhim, follows the tendency to imitate mosaic decoration known from the urban residential architecture, like in *Berytus*, with widely-used geometric and figural motifs (Fig. 10).[6] The presence of upper storeys is also attested by cornices found in the rubble inside rooms and openings for the beams supporting floors.

## House furnishing: benches and floors, mosaic pavements, and ovens

A typical house in Chhim had a simple layout. One such example (labelled E.XIX), located at the crossroads in the sector directly to the north-east of the Roman

[6] Saghieh 1996, 40. For a wider discussion of this issue, see Gwiazda, Waliszewski 2014, 17–18.

Fig. 8. Residential quarter in the north-eastern part of Sector D in *Porphyreon* (photo by K. Trela; courtesy of PCMA UW).

Fig. 9. Room D63 in *Porphyreon* with its mosaic pavement (photo by T. Waliszewski; courtesy of PCMA UW).

Fig. 10. Decorated fragment of a mosaic pavement from the upper storey found in Room D13 in *Porphyreon* (photo by A. Pawlikowska; courtesy of PCMA UW).

temple, has a square floor plan with an internal surface of *c*. 25 m$^2$ (Fig. 11). It was composed of a single room intended for the entire family, although in the initial phase the house comprised two large rooms. During late Antiquity, the furnishings in this building consisted of a stone bench standing along the northern wall and a hearth in the corner to the left from the entrance. In the middle of the square room, a column drum provided support for a pillar holding up the roof. The roof itself seems to have been a construction typical for the ancient Near East. It was flat, with a wooden substructure sealed with branches and covered with beaten earth. Limestone cylinders of 0.25 m in diameter found in the backfill of the majority of the houses of the antique village testify to such a roof construction. These cylinders, known in the Arab world as '*mahdaleh*', fitted with wooden handles, were used to level the earth and seal the roof after any major rainfall (Fig. 12).

In *Porphyreon*, the floors were either simple mortar surfaces on a pebble substrate or mosaic pavements made of white cubes in the *opus tessellatum* technique. The house ground plans, while not standard, shared features such as a main room with a mosaic floor, smaller mortar-floored rooms, and presumably also open stone-paved courtyards organised around it. The mosaics were simple, made of large white cubes with sides of *c*. 1.3 cm, laid in mortar mixed with gravel on a pebble substrate (Figs 13–16).

A clay bread oven, known in the Middle East as a '*tannur*', was found in a few houses at Chhim. In contrast, it seems that the inhabitants of the settlement at *Porphyreon* tended to use portable ovens, as attested by numerous terracotta finds. Perhaps the dark oval

Fig. 11. House E.XIX in Chhim (photo by T. Waliszewski; courtesy of PCMA UW).

Fig. 12. *Mahdaleh* in front of the entrance to House E.VII in Chhim (photo by T. Waliszewski; courtesy of PCMA UW).


Fig. 13. Mortar floor of Room D13 in *Porphyreon* (photo by K. Trela; courtesy of PCMA UW).

Fig. 14. Stone-paved floor of Room D48 in *Porphyreon* (photo by K. Trela; courtesy of PCMA UW).

Fig. 15. Mosaic pavement of Room D101 in *Porphyreon* (photo by M. Gwiazda; courtesy of PCMA UW).

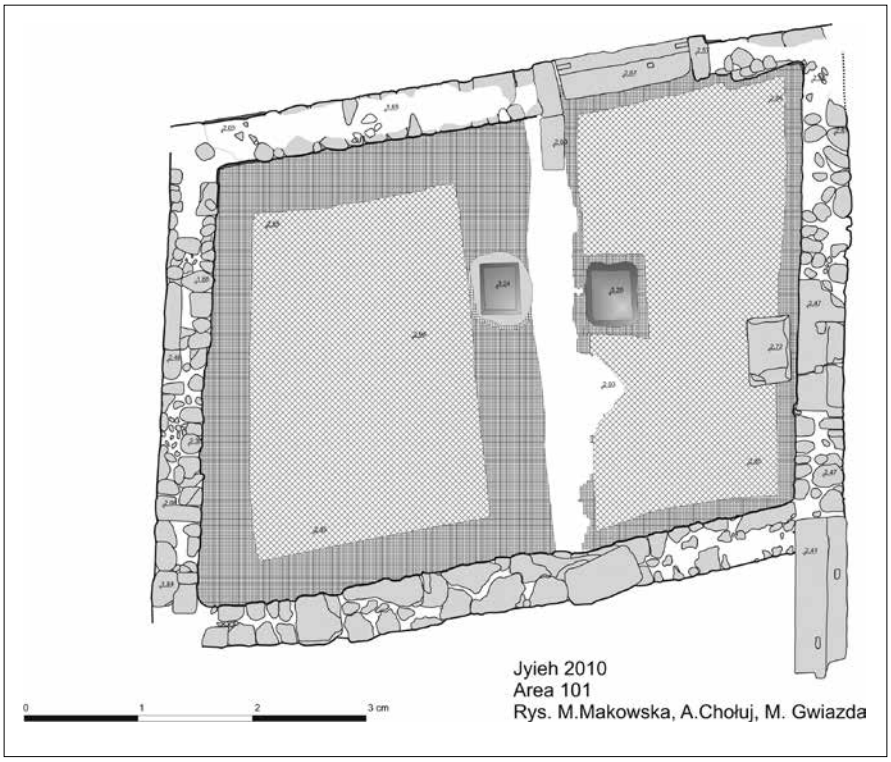


Fig. 16. Plan of Room D101 in *Porphyreon* (drawing by M. Makowska, A. Chołuj, M. Gwiazda; courtesy of PCMA UW).

discolorations seen on many mosaic floors also attest to the use of such installations.

Stone or pottery vessels sunken into the mortar or mosaic floors are another common feature at *Porphyreon*. Located usually close to the entrances or in the middle of the rooms, their function remains elusive. However, careful measurements indicate that floors in all cases were inclined towards such vessels, suggesting their use in the process of house cleaning with water, so well embedded in the Levantine tradition until today (Fig. 17).[7]

Houses at Chhim and Jiyeh are surprisingly similar to one another in terms of the number of rooms, surface, or furnishing. This phenomenon might indicate a certain level of social equality but also prosperity, as indicated by finds of goods imported from various locations in the eastern Mediterranean as well as North Africa, Egypt, or Italy. The exception to this rule is provided by complex (F) from Chhim, located on the outskirts of the village, to the west of the Roman temple. This grand house was probably the home of a prominent local family.

## Wall painting decoration of the houses at *Porphyreon*

The interiors of the houses at *Porphyreon* were decorated with wall paintings, whose numerous fragments were brought to light in 1975 by Roger Saidah and, more recently, by the Polish-Lebanese mission. The paintings survived as patches of colourful, painted plaster fixed to the faces of individual ashlars and stones from the collapsed walls of the houses; a couple of fragments were found *in situ*.

The paintings constitute an unparalleled finding, since examples of mural decorations in late antique residential contexts are extremely rare and usually confined to few unidentifiable fragments that hardly ever make their way to publications.[8] Meanwhile, altogether *c.* 160 specimens were recovered from the houses at Jiyeh. The collection of colour slides from the 1975 campaign[9] alongside photographs illustrating Saidah's short account of the excavations[10] and the illustrations in an article on

[7] The problem of the sunken vessels in *Porphyreon* was discussed by M. Gwiazda in Waliszewski *et al*. 2012, 439–440.

[8] Fragments of crosses and Greek inscriptions were found at Tall Madaba (Foran *et al.* 2004, 89, fig. 9). A fragment of a cross and colourful pieces of plaster come from a house at Tall Jawa (Johnson 2010a; 2010b, 358–360, fig. 11.1:3). Unidentifiable fragments of wall paintings were also found in houses in Pella (Walmsley 2007, 520) and Gerasa (Lichtenberger, Raja 2016, 332). In Egypt, a large representation of an enthroned Virgin decorated a courtyard of a house at Kom el-Dikka, Alexandria (Rodziewicz 1984, figs 228, 236).

[9] The slides were kindly handed over to the Polish-Lebanese team by Claude Doumet-Serhal, the Director of the British Museum Archaeological Expedition to Saida.

[10] Saidah 1977.

Fig. 17. Sunken stone vessels in Room D101 in *Porphyreon* (photo by M. Gwiazda; courtesy of PCMA UW).

Fig. 18. Passage from a courtyard to the presumed reception room in residential Complex 8 flanked by two crosses with inscriptions. The inscription on the left reads 'Jesus Christ reigns' while the one on the right – 'In this you shall conquer' (archival slide from the excavations of R. Saidah).

inscriptions by Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais[11] reveal the appearance of 59 fragments that have, unfortunately, disappeared since then. Further 102 pieces were unearthed by the Polish-Lebanese mission.

Numerous colourful fragments were recovered from the debris of the houses, yet the ground floor rooms were hardly decorated. The photographic documentation from the time of Saidah's excavations shows high-standing walls (according to the excavator, preserved up to the height of 2 m) coated with plain, off-white plaster. Altogether, only three depictions of simple crosses executed with red paint were found on the ground floor, still *in situ*.[12] Two of them flanked a passage from a courtyard to a large room, possibly a reception of one of the complexes (Figs 18, 19). These twin crosses were accompanied by letters '*alpha*' and '*omega*' and inscriptions, also painted in red.[13]

[11] Rey-Coquais 1982.

[12] Rey-Coquais 1982, figs 3–5; Gwiazda, Waliszewski 2014, 44, fig. 11.

[13] Rey-Coquais 1982, 399–400. The inscriptions read 'Jesus Christ reigns' and 'In this you shall conquer'.


Fig. 19. Simple red cross with letters '*alpha*' and '*omega*' and the accompanying inscription on the right side of the passage to the presumed reception room in residential Complex 8 (archival slide from the excavations of R. Saidah).

Therefore, the *c*. 160 ashlars and stones with plaster featuring colourful and, as we shall see, iconographically complex decorations must have belonged to the upper floors. Moreover, the painted decoration of the upper rooms seems to have been complemented in some cases by floor mosaics. During the most recent works by the Polish-Lebanese mission, a mosaic with the depiction of a lion was found on the upper floor of one of the houses.[14] In addition, Saidah noted remains of colourful *tesserae* adhering to the bedding at the level where the floor of the upper room would have been.[15] These findings conjure up a picture of austere ground floor rooms with occasional representations of crosses and religious inscriptions, and a *piano nobile* decorated with paintings and mosaics.[16]

The distribution of the iconographic motifs of the wall paintings between the different floors of the houses at Jiyeh point to an important change that occurred in the decoration of the post-Roman domestic interiors. In a Roman house, the complexity and quality of wall paintings would be graded according to the importance of the space they decorated. The major spaces where social interactions would take place, such as the atrium, the peristyles and *triclinia*, would display the most refined decorations. Besides the private rooms of the proprietors, other private spaces and rooms of lesser importance received less elaborated treatment.[17] The simplicity and austerity of the decoration of the ground floor rooms at *Porphyreon*, which likely had a semi-public role of reception rooms, indicate that their role was to manifest their owners' faith, not to impress the visitors with their artistry or rich repertoire of subjects. Meanwhile, the rooms of the upper floors, perhaps accessible only to the inhabitants, housed colourful decoration featuring a variety of motifs.

Among the recovered pieces of wall paintings, the most numerous group, amounting to 57, comprises fragments of representations of crosses. We find both simple crosses flanked by '*alpha*' and '*omega*', executed solely with red paint (20 fragments; *cf.* Figs 18, 19), and colourful jewelled crosses, oftentimes surrounded by wreaths or medallions (37 fragments; *cf.* Figs 20, 21). Eighteen fragments of Greek religious inscriptions painted with red likely accompanied the simple red crosses. While the simple crosses appeared in the ground floor rooms, it seems that the more elaborate jewelled crosses inside decorative medallions and wreaths came only from the upper floors.

The second most numerous group are depictions of nature: 20 fragments of the representations of animals, 19 of plants, and two elements of a frieze featuring the 'inhabited scrolls' motif. The animal kingdom is represented by peacocks, partridges, wading birds, a parakeet-like

[14] Gwiazda, Waliszewski 2014, 44, 51–52, fig. 12.
[15] Saidah 1977, 40.
[16] A similar arrangement was observed in the Umayyad houses at Pella, where the decorated living rooms were located on the upper floor. The ground floors provided space for workshops and stabling for animals (Walmsley 2007, 520). Also in Gerasa, the recovered fragments of painted plaster came from the upper floor (Lichtenberger, Raja 2016, 332).
[17] Ling 1991, 2, 175, 219–220.


Fig. 20. Fragment of a wall painting representing a jewelled cross set against green background and surrounded by a wreath (photo by J. Burdajewicz).

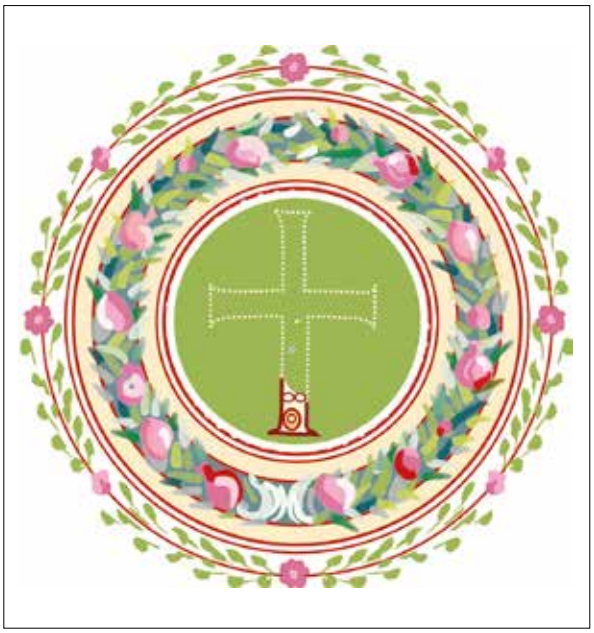

Fig. 21. Hypothetical reconstruction of the representation showed in Fig. 20 (drawing by J. Burdajewicz).

bird, a fish, hoofed animals, possibly gazelles, a lion, and a lioness (Figs 22–24). The flora consists of non-specific plants growing from strips of ground, generic red flowers, foliage with flowers and pomegranates, and a palm tree (Figs 25, 26). This repertoire of nature-derived images is further complemented by simple, monochrome red depictions of running and pacing animals and possibly of genre scenes, such as peasants at work.

Finally, four fragments of paintings show depictions of humans, clearly religious in character: an *imago clipeata* with a haloed, bearded man, two *orans* figures, and a young haloed man (Fig. 27).

Unfortunately, the wall paintings from the houses of *Porphyreon* resemble an incomplete jigsaw puzzle. Too many pieces are missing to permit even a partial reconstruction of the compositional schemes and spatial relations between the particular depictions. Only in one case was it possible to restore a fragmentary representation of two partridges adoring a jewelled cross set on a decorative base from four elements, but its broader context remains unknown.

Nevertheless, the assemblage as a whole conveys the impression of a decorative programme steeped in religious and apotropaic content. The omnipresent sign of the cross, either its simple, monochrome version or an imitation of *crux gemmata*, was used extensively by the inhabitants of *Porphyreon* to express their faith, to manifest the triumph of Christ, and as an apotropaic symbol to ward off evil from the dwellings. The practice of placing a cross on personal items, public buildings, 'both on house, and walls, and windows, and upon our forehead' was encouraged by St. John Chrysostom[18] and is widely attested by numerous late antique monuments and objects.[19]

In *Porphyreon*, the representations of crosses were supplemented with painted laudatory and apotropaic inscriptions. Among the recovered fragments, we find several laudatory appellations ('Emmanuel, God is with us'; 'Jesus Christ reigns'; 'Our God, glory to you'; 'In this you shall conquer'; 'Protection of the faithful'; the latter two are referring directly to the accompanying depictions of crosses) as well as incipits of psalms 26 and 90.[20] The apotropaic tenor of the first verses of Psalm 90 made it one of the most commonly inscribed passages on personal items and private buildings in the late antique East.[21] The verb 'κατοικέω'('to dwell', 'to reside'), which appears in its incipit, made it especially suitable for a domestic setting.

A similar, apotropaic and intercessory, role could have been assumed by the representations of saints and

[18] St. John, Homilies, 54.7.

[19] For example, on Christograms on lamps, see Goodson 2017; on cross graffiti as a means to Christianise a classical town, as well as further references on the sign of the cross, see Jacobs 2017.

[20] Septuagint numbering is used here.

[21] Kraus 2005; 2009; Felle 2006, 421–422.

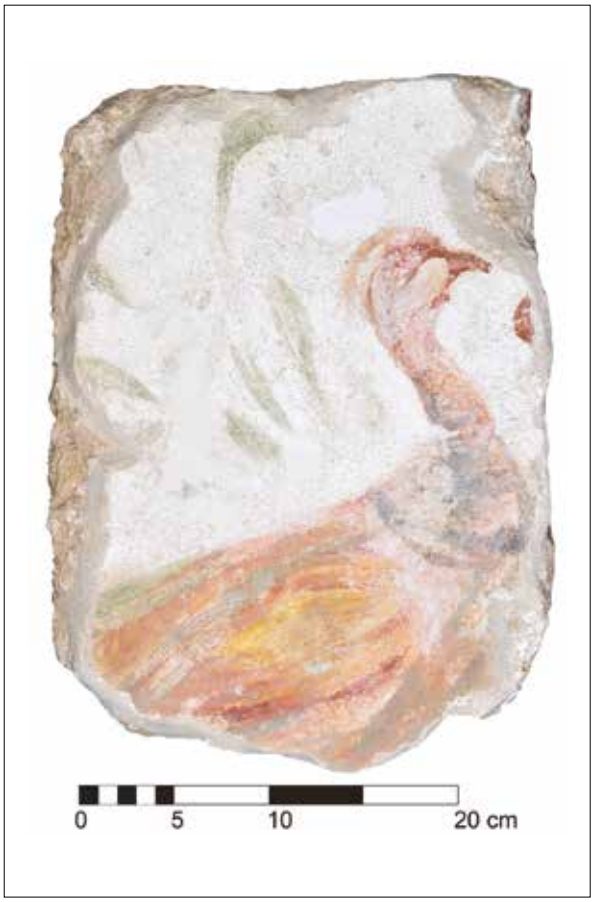


Fig. 22. Representation of a peacock (?) (photo by J. Burdajewicz).

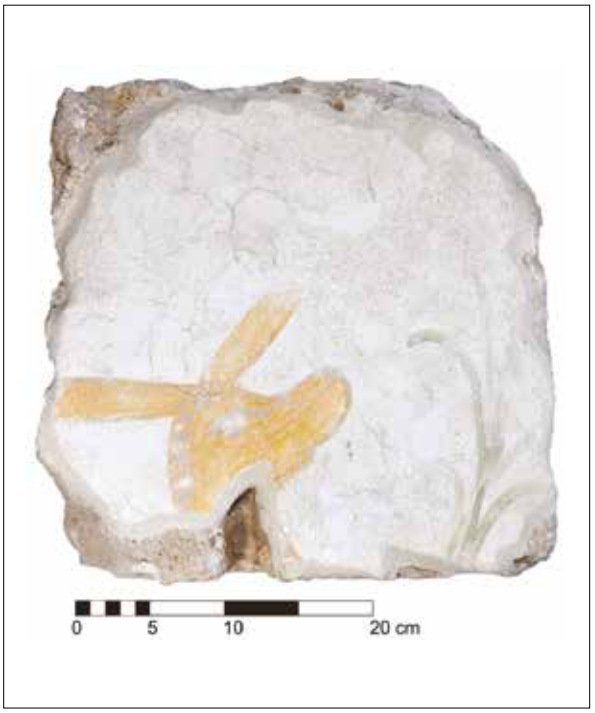


Fig. 23. Representation of a gazelle (?) (photo by J. Burdajewicz).

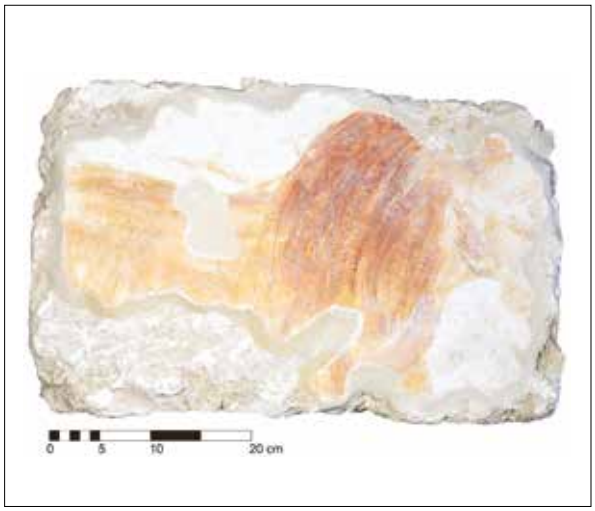


Fig. 24. Representation of a lion (photo by J. Burdajewicz).


Fig. 25. Generic plants with red flowers (?) (photo by J. Burdajewicz).

Fig. 26. Palm tree (archival slide from the excavations of R. Saidah).

Fig. 27. *Imago clipeata* with a haloed, bearded man, likely a saint (archival slide from the excavations of R. Saidah).

figures of *orans* attested in *Porphyreon* on four fragments. So far, only one interpretable religious painting is known from residential contexts in the East, namely the nearly life-sized enthroned Madonna with Child accompanied by an archangel and a supplicant depicted in the courtyard of a house at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria.[22] Nevertheless, the practice of representing holy personages inside houses, either as icons or as wall paintings, may have been more common in late Antiquity than the scarcity of archaeological evidence seems to suggest. The intercessory role of such images is illustrated by Miracle no. 15 in the collection *Miracula SS. Cosmae et Damiani* from the 6th–7th century, which tells a story of a woman who had saints Cosmas and Damian depicted on the walls of her house. When she fell ill, she scraped some plaster from their images, mixed it with water, drank, and was immediately healed.

Finally, even the representations of nature, at first sight neutral and disconnected from religion, coincide, in fact, with the religious character of the decorations. Various species of animals, often depicted among trees and plants, populate countless floor mosaics of late antique churches.[23] These representations allude to and were sanctioned by several biblical texts, which endowed them with a symbolic, religious dimension. They may refer to the diversity and abundance of Creation and the garden of Eden described in the book of Genesis (Gen. 2: 8–9), or to 'the land of promise' from the apocalyptic prophecies from the Book of Enoch (10: 18–19, 24: 3–4, 25: 5, 32: 3–6), the Book of Revelations (22: 1–2), and the apocalypses that followed it.[24] The Book of Isaiah (Is. 11: 7, 65: 25) inspired many mosaic representations of the motif of *philia*, the friendship between animals symbolising the peaceful heavenly kingdom.[25] Finally, certain specific types of plants and animals, such as a pomegranate or peacock, could have been depicted due to their strong symbolic charge, often predating the advent of Christianity.

Even though the fragmentary state of the representations of nature from *Porphyreon* does not allow us to piece them together, identify specific compositions, or anchor them in the overall decorative program, it seems probable that, similarly to such motifs on floor mosaics of the churches, their role was to evoke the earthly paradise and to remind of the heavenly kingdom to come. If we are correct, the depictions of nature constituted an important component of the religious content conveyed by the painted decorations of the houses.

The religious character of the wall paintings from the houses brings us to the question of the similarities and differences between the painted decoration of the dwellings and the basilica of *Porphyreon*. The excavations in the

[22] Rodziewicz 1984, 195–208, figs 228, 236.

[23] For example, see a paradise-like landscape in Basilica A at Resafa, Syria (Ulbert 1986, 100–101, pl. 39.1); in the church at Houeidjit Halaoua, Syria (Donceel-Voûte 1988, 149–150, fig. 121); or a procession of tame animals in the ambulatory of the so-called Martyrion church at *Seleucia Pieria*, Syria (Donceel-Voûte 1988, 290–296, figs 272–278). On the representations of nature in Early Byzantine art, see Maguire 1987, 2012.

[24] Kyrtatas 1998, 340–344.

[25] Campbell 1995; Talgam 2014, 219–227.

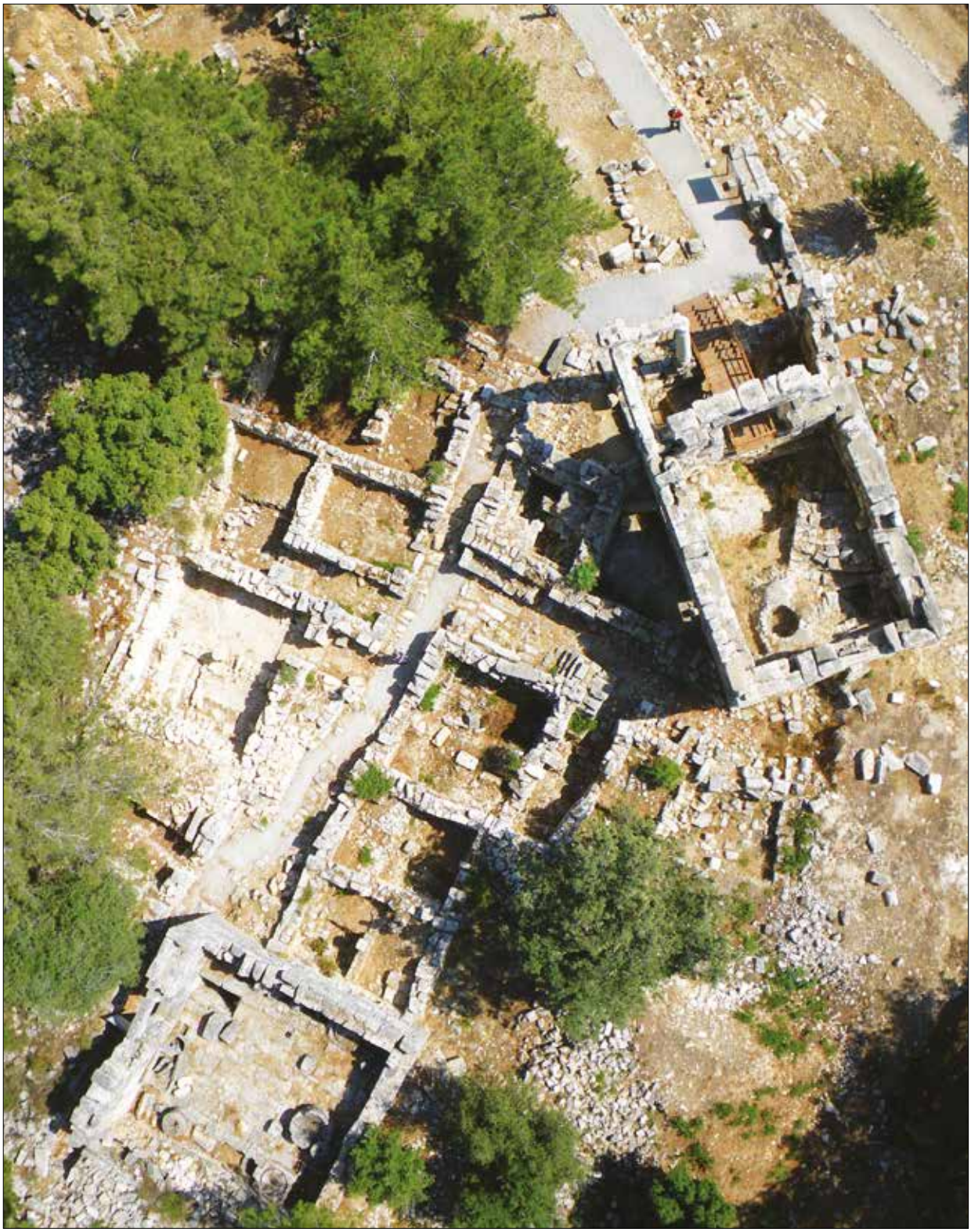

Fig. 28. Aerial view of Sector E in Chhim (photo by Ch. Krug; courtesy of PCMA UW).

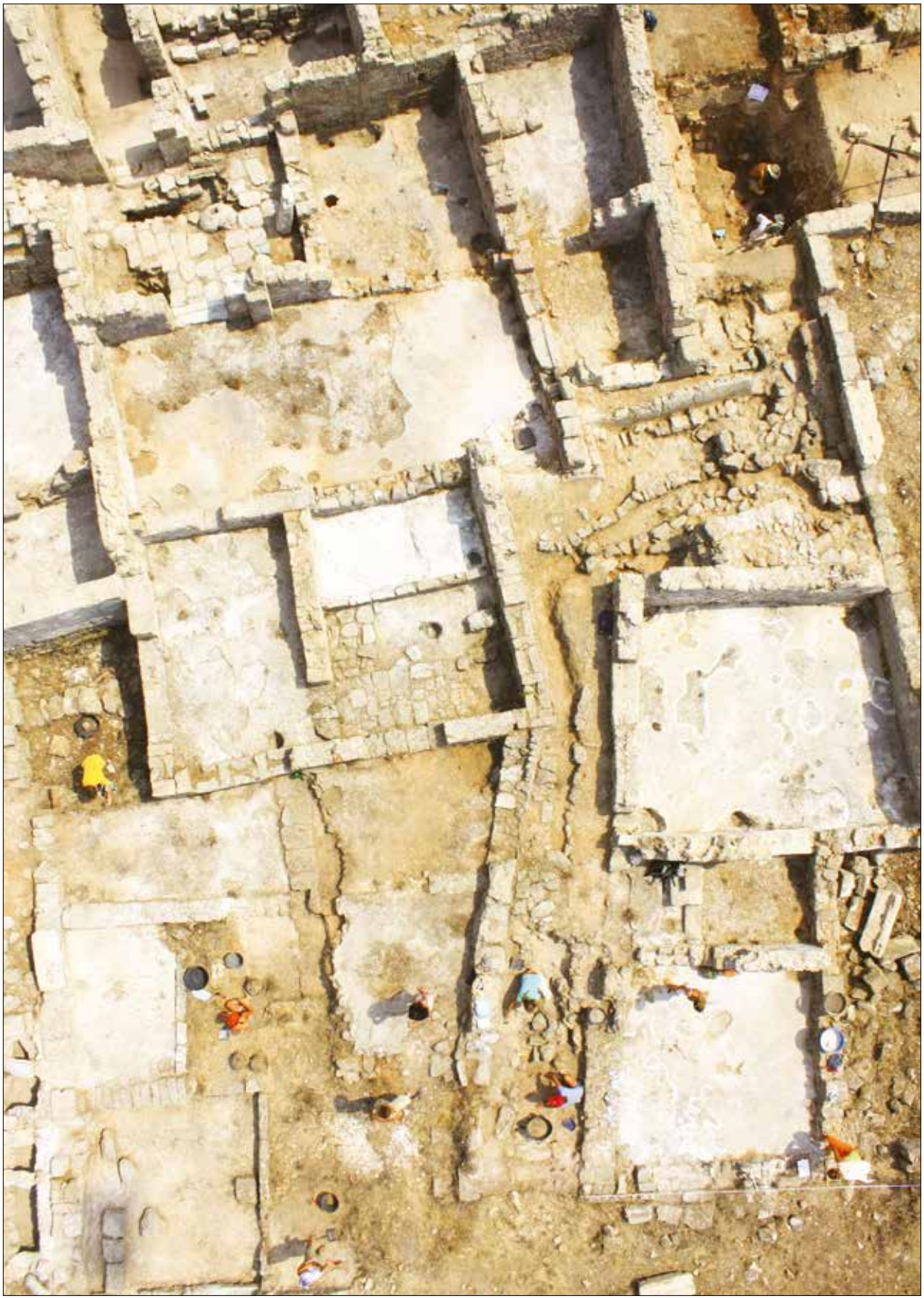

Fig. 29. Aerial view of the south-western part of Sector D in *Porphyreon* (photo by K. Trela; courtesy of PCMA UW).

basilica[26] have yielded over 150 fragments of wall paintings, also preserved as patches of painted plaster fixed to the faces of stones and ashlars.[27] They display a similar iconographic repertoire as those from the residential district. Just as in the houses, the images of crosses and nature (animals, plants, and inhabited scrolls) predominate. Moreover, the floor mosaics of the basilica correspond to some extent to the representations of nature found in the houses.[28] Several of the largest mosaic carpets feature depictions of various birds and beasts arranged in a catalogue-like manner inside geometric grids of interlaced medallions and polygons. Such a compositional solution was adapted by the mosaicists to capture the diversity and abundance of Creation, a notion presumably represented also in the houses.[29]

The main discrepancy between the painted decorations of the houses and the basilica is that among the wall paintings from the latter we find only one representation of a human figure, probably an *orans*, and no depictions of genre scenes, such as those attested in the houses. Naturally, the lack or underrepresentation of certain motifs in the basilica may result from the poor condition of its architectural remains and the turbulent circumstances of its exploration in the late 1980s. We should not, therefore, build conclusions upon these two differences but rather on the similarities. The fact that the repertoire of the painted motifs in the houses is so well mirrored by the motifs from the basilica confirms the strong religious character of the former. Furthermore, the consistency of these two iconographic programs illustrates the broader phenomenon of permeation of both the sacred and secular, public and private late antique spaces with religious symbols and contents.

Finally, the presence of wall paintings and figural floor mosaics in both the church and the houses proves that the activity of artists was not confined to or reserved only for sacred spaces – a mistaken, albeit common, notion built upon the imbalance of evidence: an abundance of surviving floor and, to some extent, wall decorations from early Christian churches and the lack of corresponding finds from residential, private contexts. The fact that our wall paintings come from a middle-sized settlement of a mixed rural and urban character offers us an insight into how some of the late antique dwellings could have looked like. We get a glance at a decent, yet provincial, level of artistry and craftsmanship and a common type and quality of decorations.

## Towards conclusions: regional perspective on late antique Phoenician residential architecture

So far, we have identified two parallel types of building traditions characteristic of, respectively, the coastal and mountainous residential architecture. Chhim seems to have been a typical rural settlement in the Phoenician mountains from the Roman and late Antiquity, similar to other rural settlements of the southern part of *Phoenicia*, such as Horvat Karkara or Horvat Dinila, located to the north-east of Akko-*Ptolemais*.[30] The example of Chhim is fascinating in that for centuries it continued to remain true to the same building tradition based on the locally-quarried hard limestone. This testifies to the longevity of the techniques employed, which, once introduced, turned out to be well adapted to the local climatic conditions and to the needs of the inhabitants (Fig. 28).

As for *Porphyreon* (Jiyeh), the simple double masonry building technique used for the walls, their random structure, and the winding narrow streets demonstrate the general simplicity of the architecture, reminiscent of some of the present-day houses seen in villages and towns in the region (Fig. 29).The most striking similarities are provided by the nearby site at Khan Khalde, ancient *Heldua* (excavated by Roger Saidah in the early 1970s), situated some 20 km to the north of *Porphyreon*, or the site at Kfar Samir (probably ancient *Porphyreon* South), uncovered during the rescue excavations just southwards from modern Haifa, both within the limits of the late antique province of *Phoenicia Paralia*.[31]

[26] The basilica was first excavated in 1914 by a French explorer, George Contenau. At that time, only its western half was unearthed (Contenau 1920, 295–305). The basilica was excavated anew and in its entirety in 1987 or 1988 by a group organised by the then Minister of the Public Works, Transport, and Tourism, Mr. Walid Joumblatt (unpublished). During these works, the floor mosaics and fragments of wall paintings were removed from the site to the Beiteddine Museum. In the 21st century, the basilica was cleared and studied by the Polish-Lebanese mission (Waliszewski *et al.* 2006, 27–34).

[27] The paintings are yet to be published. For an article on travelling painters' workshops featuring a few paintings from the basilica of *Porphyreon*, see Burdajewicz 2020.

[28] Unfortunately, the mosaics from the basilica, transferred from the site to the Beiteddine Museum in 1988, remained unpublished for years save for a few reproductions in an album on the Beiteddine Palace by Jounblat *et al.* 1989. Only recently, Nada Hélou (2019, 84–95) devoted to them a chapter in her monumental work on Early Byzantine mosaics from Lebanon.

[29] Maguire 1987, 20.

[30] Frankel 1992.

[31] Finkielsztejn 2005.

The cases of *Porphyreon* and Chhim show to what extent seemingly similar settlements located within the sphere of influence of the same ancient city (*Sidon*) could be different in terms of their economic model, size, or even traditions of building construction and decoration. Their geographic location, access to land and sea transportation routes, and agricultural conditions seem to have been the decisive factors in their development.

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# A New Project in Progress: *Residence as Self-Presentation of Urban Elites. Architecture and Decoration of the House of Orpheus in* Nea Paphos, *the Ancient Capital of Cyprus*.[1] Potentials and Prospects

Abstract

The so-called House of Orpheus, explored under the direction of Demetrios Michaelides a few decades ago, has so far been studied only fragmentarily. Since 2018, a new project began whose objective is to complete the studies on the site. To this end, non-invasive fieldworks (at *Nea Paphos*) are currently performed as well as library and archival research focused on gathering all published and unpublished information on the House. The results of the new documentation made on the site, supplemented with archival data, will enable a virtual, three-dimensional reconstruction of selected architectural units. The collected material will serve to re-define the house's spaces from a historical perspective. The comprehensive evaluation of the architecture of the House of Orpheus will become an important point of reference in studies on the residential architecture of ancient Cyprus and other regions of the eastern Mediterranean.

**Keywords:** *Nea Paphos*, House of Orpheus, residential architecture, architectural decoration

## Introduction

*Nea Paphos*, situated on the south-western coast of Cyprus and founded towards the end of the 4th century BC, became the capital of the island under Ptolemaic rule.[2] The town grew rapidly in size and importance, going through a continuous period of prosperity up to the 4th century AD, when the capital was transferred from

[1] The project is financed by the National Science Centre in Poland (NCN UMO-2017/27/B/HS3/01131).

[2] On the foundation and urbanisation of *Nea Paphos* in the Hellenistic Period, see Młynarczyk 1990; Bekker-Nielsen 2000. For a recent discussion (with an extensive bibliography), see Balandier 2014; Vitas 2016; Balandier, Raptou 2019. On the transition from the Classical to the Hellenistic Period in Cyprus, see also Michaelides, Papantoniou 2018 (with a comprehensive bibliography).


Fig. 1. Maloutena district: a. Villa of Theseus; b. 'Hellenistic' House; c. House of Aion; d. House of Orpheus; f. House of Dionysos (after Brzozowska-Jawornicka in this volume, fig. 1; based on Młynarczyk 1990, 162, fig. 16).

*Paphos* to Constantia, the former *Salamis*. *Nea Paphos* experienced urban development throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods; however, the peak of its prosperity was during the late 2nd and the 3rd century, when the town received the most important title of its history: '*Sebaste Claudia Flavia Paphos*, the sacred metropolis of the towns of Cyprus'.[3] This obviously influenced the monumentalisation of the whole town within the well-established Hellenistic urban grid. The construction or renovation of public buildings was followed by an expansion of the residential area in the south-western part of the ancient town (Fig. 1).

The 'heart' of this district was the Villa of Theseus, a huge residence (*c*. 9600 m$^2$) with a complex construction history, which began during the second half of the 2nd century AD, replacing earlier dwellings. It was enlarged in the following decades, spreading beyond the limits of the insulae that were part of the regular street layout of the Ptolemaic Period. Due to its size (the largest building of its kind in Cyprus), its characteristic architecture, and location (the very central district, directly connected to the port by a main road), as well as some finds, it was interpreted as a seat of the Roman governor.[4] To the south of the villa, there are remains of earlier buildings: a set of three houses named (from west to east) the Roman House, the 'Hellenistic' House, and the Early Roman House. Although the construction of the Villa destroyed the northern part of these dwellings, their remains, in particular their decoration and some sophisticated architectural features, prove that they had belonged to wealthy and undoubtedly important citizens.[5] West of the Villa, in its immediate vicinity, excavations brought to light a sequence of buildings known as the House of Orpheus (Fig. 2). To the east of the Villa, along the main street leading to the harbour, another residential(?) complex decorated with mosaics, known today as the House of Aion and the North-eastern House, was erected at the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries AD.[6] Much earlier, four blocks further to the north, the House of Dionysos was built – a big residence (*c*. 2000 m$^2$

[3] There is an extensive bibliography on the Roman history of *Nea Paphos* as seen through (scarce) written sources and archaeological evidence which is not cited here, except for the basic works by Hill 1940 and Mitford 1980.

[4] On the architecture of the Villa of Theseus, see Medeksza 1992; 1998; on the mosaic decoration and function, see Daszewski 1977; 1998. See also the contributions of Brzozowska-Jawornicka (with bibliography) and Gasparini in this volume. Lastly, on the Villa and its role in the late Roman Period, see Mavrojannis 2016.

[5] Daszewski 2016; the contributions of Brzozowska-Jawornicka and Gasparini in this volume; Gasparini, Rekowska forthcoming.

[6] On the architecture and decoration, see Medeksza 1987; Mikocki 1992; Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2016; and her article in this volume; Gasparini, Rekowska forthcoming. On the mosaic, see Daszewski 1985; Olszewski 2013 with a summary of a long discussion and bibliography, and, more recently, Ladouceur 2018. On the dating, see Lichocka, Meyza 2001.


Fig. 2. Maloutena district, the House of Orpheus in the foreground (photo by M. Rekowska).

and over 40 rooms) decorated with mosaics.[7] All the above-mentioned residences demonstrate the wealth of Roman *Paphos* and were doubtlessly owned by members of the local elite. Thus, they were a clear manifestation of their wealth, social status, and enlightened education, as well as their cultural traditions. When discussing the problem of self-presentation of the local urban elites, we must not forget the position of the town in the provincial administrative system, because it was one of the fundamental aspects of the formation of these elites. It seems that living in *caput provinciae* – even if the province was a backwater of the Roman Empire – strengthened the urban elite's sense of belonging and being part of the system. *Nea Paphos* was inhabited by a number of people of high rank, coming from abroad, officials and their families, as well as the old local aristocracy. From the beginning of Roman rule, rich and well-educated members of the Greek-speaking population became the core of a newly-formed curial class whose members were obliged to shoulder the burdens of municipal offices.[8] It is well known that, in the Roman Period, residences were not only a sort of private sanctuary for their owner and his family but also a means of public display of success, dignity, and prestige.[9]

Despite decades of research, hitherto the houses at *Nea Paphos* have been subjected only to formal analyses, and their plans and decoration have been examined separately.[10] In the works concerning their interior, the emphasis was put on mosaics and wall paintings and their iconography,[11] the architectural decoration remaining almost completely overlooked.[12] Meanwhile, the residences of rich citizens, constituting the core of the new urban elite, reflected a trend among provincial notables in the Greek East to express their *Romanitas* through altering the plans and selecting design elements for their houses. During the Roman Imperial Period, the orders used in colonnaded courtyards, as well as forms of doors and window framing, show, on the one hand, both a continuity and a discontinuity of the Hellenistic tradition, and on the other, the birth and development of a new fashion. The choices made for the decoration of houses reflected the taste of their owners and families, but at

[7] Kondoleon 1994 with an extensive bibliography.

[8] Even if in Cyprus Roman citizenship was not common (for more on the incidence of Roman citizenship, see Mitford 1980, 1362–1365), local elites were willing to affirm their Romanness.

[9] Hales 2003; Wallace-Hadrill 2015; and more generally Tuori, Nissin (eds) 2015.

[10] Medeksza 1992; 1998.

[11] Kondoleon 1994; Daszewski 1997.

[12] The new perspectives appear thanks to recent studies: Brzozowska 2016; 2019; for a more general perspective, see Pensabene in this volume.

Fig. 3. Aerial view of the S-W part of the House of Orpheus towards the sea (photo by M. Gładki, P. Prejs).

the same time they also had to respond to the demands of the 'new' Roman society, being an expression of their political and cultural identity. It is in such a context that the excavated remains to the west of the Villa of Theseus should be considered.

## The House of Orpheus: potentials

The house has been known since 1942, when a mosaic panel depicting Heracles fighting a lion was accidentally uncovered. In 1963, thanks to a trial excavation, another mosaic (a panel depicting an Amazon standing by her horse) came to light. The area was reinvestigated in the summer of 1978, when it was realised that the two panels belonged to one and the same floor, which was photographed and then buried for protection.[13] A proper systematic exploration directed by Demetrios Michaelides on behalf of the Department of Antiquities began in 1982. After two seasons, another perfectly-preserved mosaic of outstanding quality was discovered depicting Orpheus and the beasts. This led to naming the building, in 1984, the House of Orpheus. The project was interrupted in 1992 and then continued from 2009 until 2013, always under the supervision of D. Michaelides, only now on behalf of the University of Cyprus.[14]

Over a dozen years of methodical work resulted in uncovering an architectural complex measuring *c*. 1200 m$^2$ (Fig. 3). It must be noted, however, that the limits of the entire excavated area cannot be taken as the boundaries of the insula, whose hypothetical range is known thanks to the reconstructed street grid. The northern and eastern limits are defined by public roads (the presumed eastern road has never been excavated; nevertheless, there is evidence confirming its course), while the western limit is undefined since the remains lying very close to the surface were erased when the land was under cultivation. The southern limit is as yet unknown because the area is not completely excavated (Fig. 4).

The exploration began in the north-western corner, later extending towards the south and east. As a result, over 60 rooms were gradually uncovered, *inter alia* the two rooms with figural mosaics mentioned above, a thermal complex, a colonnaded courtyard, a storage room with five *pithoi* in their original position, a room with a partially preserved monochrome geometric mosaic, stairs leading to an upper level, several rooms of generally small dimensions, the remains of a later workshop area, and, finally, a significant amount of architectural blocks still *in situ* in the southern part (the exploration of which has never been completed).

[13] Michaelides 1986a, 475.

[14] See the detailed bibliography of the House of Orpheus at the end of this article.

Fig. 4. Aerial photograph of the excavated area of the House of Orpheus (photo by M. Gładki, P. Prejs).

Besides the well-preserved pavements, many loose fragments of mosaic floor and painted wall plaster (multi-coloured, plain, or with geometric, vegetal, and figural motifs) were found within the excavated area (Fig. 5.a, b). Some traces of painting are still visible on the lower parts of the walls, and there is evidence of two different layers of decoration on the walls of a few rooms in the north-western part and on the blocks marking the tripartite entrance to the room decorated with the mosaic floor with two figural panels.

The excavations yielded enormous quantities of potsherds (including numerous amphorae with dipinti, graffiti, and stamped inscriptions), glass, lamps, terracotta figurines, and a few hoards of Hellenistic and Roman coins, as well as some precious and exceptional pieces. These include a gemstone with a satyr holding a bunch of grapes, a large multiple lamp (*polylychnon*) in the shape of a boat bearing an inscription which refers to Serapis, alabaster and onyx vessels, and objects of faience with Egyptianizing characteristics.

The multitude and variety of finds reflect the site's complex stratigraphy – the continuous sequence of layers dating back to the Hellenistic Period was also confirmed by the excavation of the layers under the mosaics, when these were lifted for conservation.

Interim reports on the excavations were published regularly,[15] and the mosaics as well as a number of the artefacts were the object of more detailed studies.[16] However, a comprehensive study of the House of Orpheus – its architecture and decoration – has not yet been attempted. It should be emphasised that the excavated remains deserve such a broad-based investigation. The eminent location (with a splendid view on the sea), the sophisticated decoration, as well as some luxury fittings (such as private baths), and the richness and quality of the finds, all testify to the wealth and high social standing of the owners. The main part of the wealthy, mosaic-decorated building has been interpreted as a private residence that reached its peak in the late 2nd/early 3rd century AD. However, this is just a fragment of the long-lived, multi-layered history of the insula with a history spanning the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

## The House of Orpheus: prospects

In 2018, a new project financed by the National Science Centre in Poland (NCN UMO-2017/27/B/HS3/01131) began, which aims to provide a comprehensive study of the House of Orpheus. We take up the

[15] [Karageorghis] 1983–1998; Michaelides 1983–1993; Symons 1986–1987 – see the bibliography at the end of this article.

[16] On the mosaics, see Nicolaou 1980–1981; 1983; Michaelides 1986b; 1987b, 246; 1991b; Michaelides, Daszewski 1988; on the technology of paintings, see Radpour *et al.* 2019; on some of the finds, see Nicolaou 1989, 311; Anastassiades 1998, 138, pl. XIV.4; Michaelides 2009; 2010; Kaldeli 2010; on terracotta figurines, see Michaelides 1992b; Michaelides, Papantoniou 2012; Papantoniou *et al.* 2012; 2017; Michaelides *et al.* 2014; 2015; Michaelides 2015.

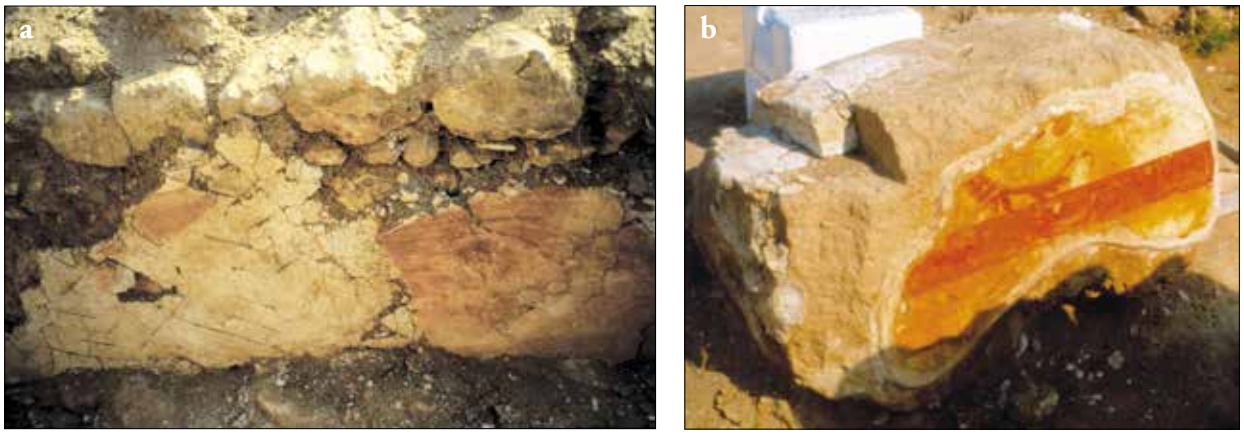


Fig. 5. a. Paintings on the wall south of the courtyard; b. Floral paintings on the block in 1992 (photos by D. Michaelides).

challenge of the 'holistic' approach and aspire to put it in practice by means of an in-depth study on the interplay between the layout, the architecture, and the decoration of the house. This research will be carried out with a simultaneous analysis of its plan and décor, with a special focus on the architectural decoration, in order to 'decode' the house. It should be noted that the architectural decoration was, next to the mosaics and paintings, a very important aspect of the décor of the complex, and, although registered, it was not studied in any detail.[17] More than a hundred decorated architectural elements were located throughout the entire excavated area. Their generally bad state of preservation is due to the destructive activity of stone robbers and the modern recycling of building material for military constructions. The majority of the registered stones were discovered in the southern part of the house, where the blocks were left *in situ*. Interpretation of several elements found within the insula is hampered by the fact that they were found loose in the debris filling the house or re-used in a secondary context. Nevertheless, this was a common practice in *Nea Paphos* throughout the ages, and the material from the excavations provides an exceptional possibility of attempting a credible reconstruction of the patterns of decoration of the peristyle, passageways, and windows.

As the final objective, we anticipate being able to interpret subsequent buildings and phases in a historical perspective. The intended goal requires extensive activities both in the field and in the archives. Therefore, to achieve this, we prepared new documentation at the archaeological site, and currently we are revisiting the documentation from former excavations.

The first phase of fieldwork started in 2019.[18] To register all the remains of architecture and the preserved decoration (paintings on the walls, decorated architectural blocks) within the entire insula, we used 3D laser scanning, digital ground photogrammetry, and aerial photography. These methods optimise the documentation process allowing quick retrieval of very precise spatial data. They serve as methods of illustration (providing a new, or even better, picture of the site). They are also used as methods of analysis, enabling the exploration of space and spatial relations, thus allowing a study on the socio-historical topography of the House.[19]

Documentation made by 103 separate scans containing billions of points with three dimensional data (x, y, z) and description of colours, the virtual equivalent of the actual geometry of the architectural structure (with levelling, linear and angular dimensions), is now the basis for updating the plan and elaborating the elevations of the walls and their cross-sections (Fig. 6). Hereafter, the 3D documentation may be the starting point for a three-dimensional model of the site, its static visualisation, or virtual tours. It also provides a possibility of printing a scale model or copies of architectural details.

In addition, over one hundred decorated stone blocks dispersed throughout the entire excavated area were documented. The collected data – detailed orthophotography with geo-references (GIS), photographs, and drawings – are used to create a database of all the

[17] Michaelides 1992, 823; Vanderstar 1997, vol. 2, 46–47 (cat. HCC 24–27).

[18] The research stay in *Paphos* from March 22 until April 4, 2019, involved: the author (as the main investigator), prof. Demetrios Michaelides, prof. Patrizio Pensabene, dr Eleonora Gasparini (co-investigators), Patrizio Filieri (archaeologist and draftsman), and Marcin Gładki and Piotr Prejs (archaeologists, technicians, and specialists in 3D documentation).

[19] For an illustration of the implications of such an approach and the new information they provide for understanding the Roman house, see Tuori, Nissin (eds) 2015, 101–118, 133–147, 161–176.

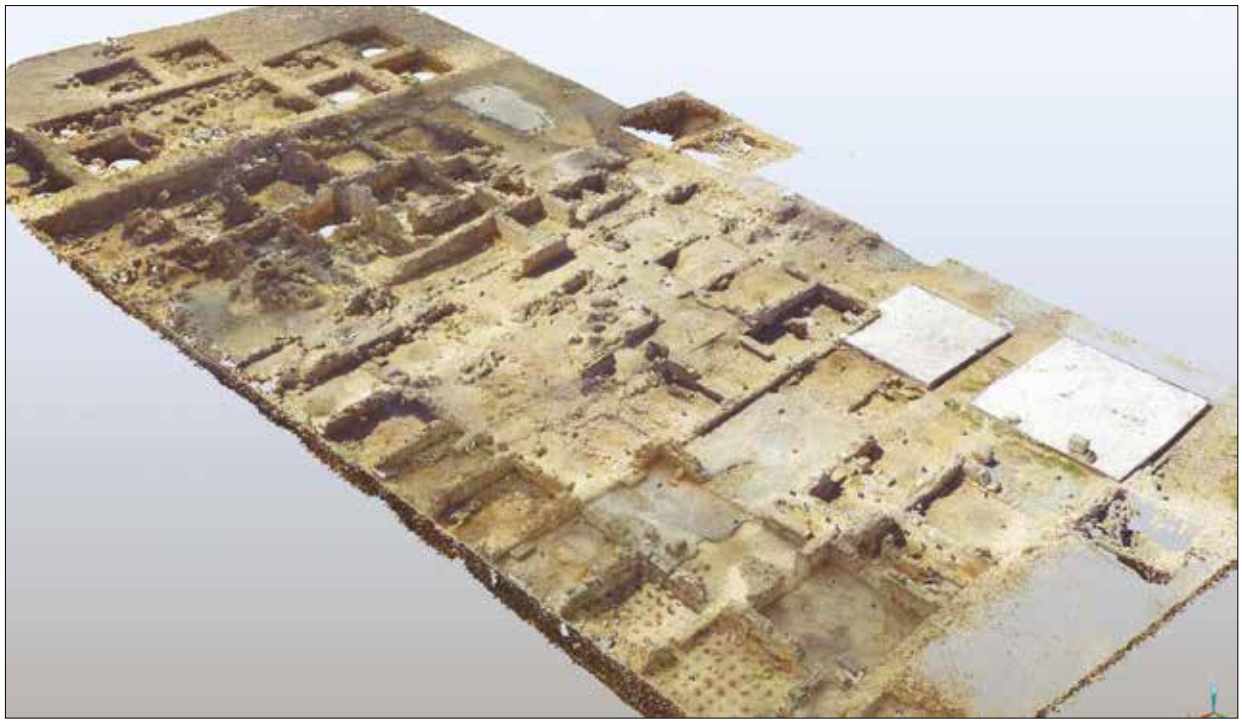

Fig. 6. Model of the House of Orpheus made of laser scan data (compiled by M. Gładki).

architectural elements (Fig. 7). The scanned architectural details are to be modelled in order to create a virtual reconstruction of the architectural structures. This is to help us in the interpretation of the layout of the house, because the architectural decoration, next to the mosaics and paintings, allowed contractors, or rather their commissioners, to highlight and refine the hierarchical organisation of the space, appropriate for an architectural design of a *domus romana*.

The field prospection is complemented by library and archival research at the University of Cyprus in Nicosia, allowing for a re-analysis of the published and, in particular, the unpublished documentation drawn during the excavations (drawings, field sketches, inventory cards, and photographs), which will enable the contextualisation of the finds.

## Early results of the research

After the first season of fieldwork, we are able to present some preliminary remarks, to be verified and developed in the course of further research.

There are several premises on the basis of which we can cautiously distinguish at least four stages in the development of the excavated remains: three of them can be defined as phases of gradual growth and development, the last one – as related to a decrease and change in the function of certain parts of the house.

1. It seems that in the earliest phase, the area was divided into smaller sections as witnessed by the four parallel E-W walls, which run perpendicularly towards the presumed eastern road (Fig. 8). The sections are of more or less equal width. Starting from the north: I: 14.40 m (within the walls); II: 14.31 m; III: 12.43 m; and IV: unknown, since it is not fully excavated. Even if it is not absolutely clear whether this division should be considered as an indication of different properties, an argument supporting such a hypothesis is offered by three thresholds – all found on the eastern wall, in the S-E corner of each section. Perhaps the now lost street with a sewer channel running E-W and separating residential units II and III belonged to this phase.

2. The new spatial arrangement of residential unit II is related to the second phase (Fig. 9). The main change consists in the elimination of the street by including it in the space to the east. This hypothesis would be supported by a large threshold implying the presence of a door almost 2 m wide along the axis of this street, which appears to be the largest of all of the thresholds along the eastern boundary of the excavated area. At that time, a rectangular colonnaded courtyard, of which a paved corner as well as a heart-shaped column (in the S-W corner) remain, was rebuilt (Fig. 10). While in the original layout the rooms flanked the courtyard only on three sides (W, N, E), the inclusion of an additional space allowed for the construction of a series of rooms to the west of the courtyard. At the moment, we lack enough data that would


Fig. 7. Database of architectural elements (compiled by M. Rekowska).

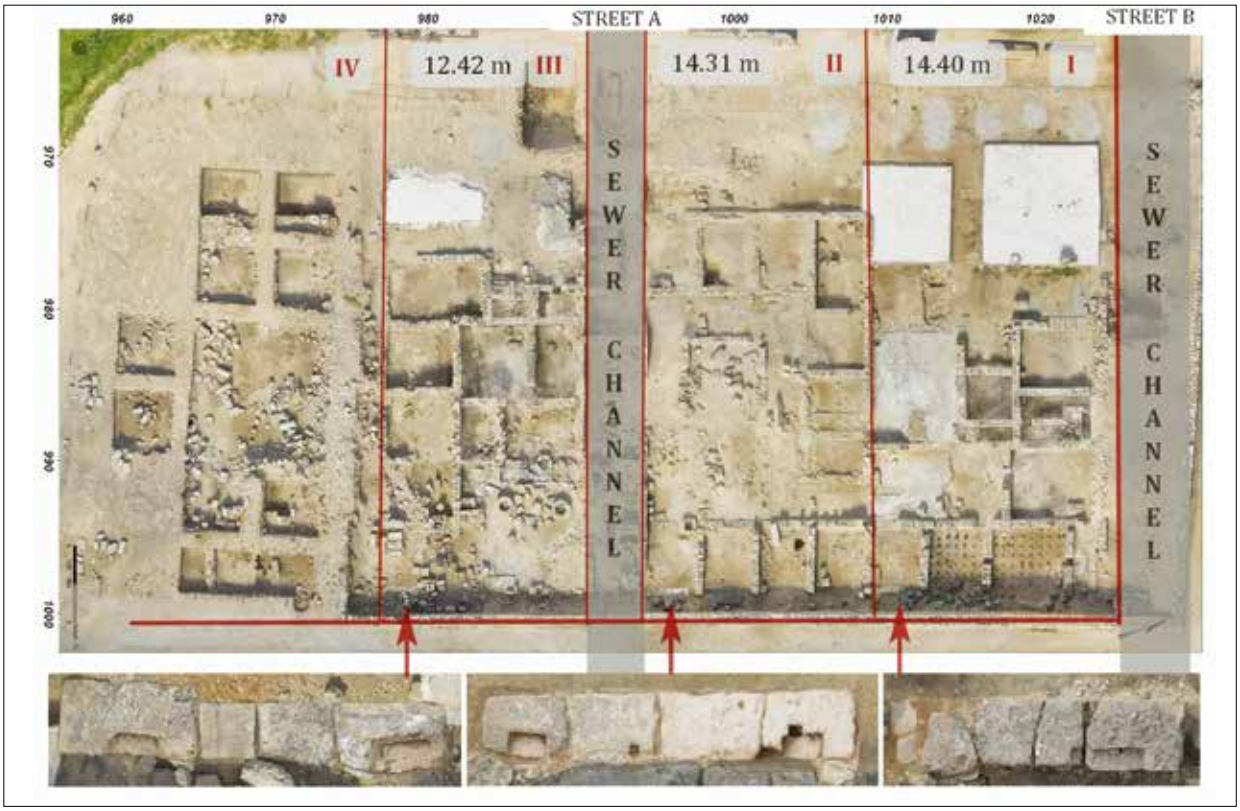


Fig. 8. First phase of the House of Orpheus – an attempt at reconstruction (compiled by M. Rekowska).

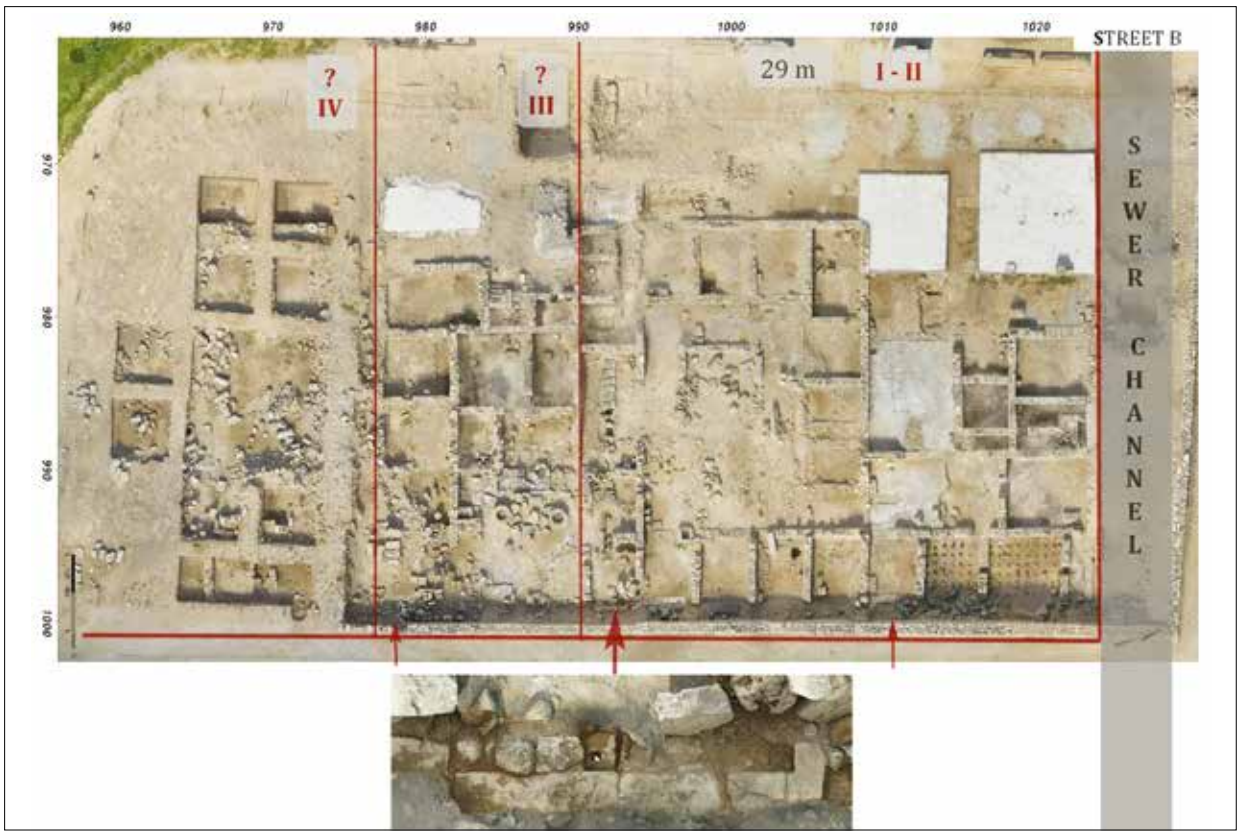


Fig. 9. Second phase of the House of Orpheus – an attempt at reconstruction (compiled by Rekowska).

Fig. 10. Colonnaded courtyard with a heart-shaped column (photo by M. Gładki, P. Prejs).

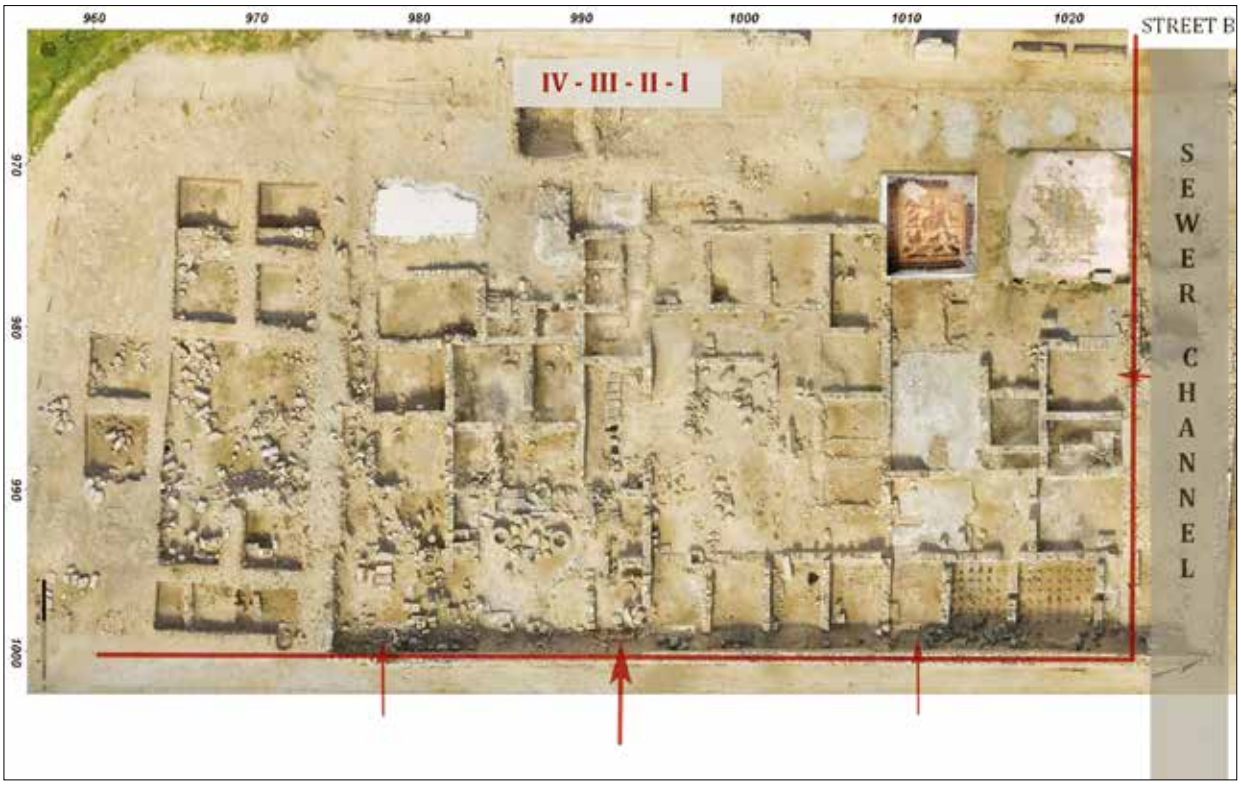


Fig. 11. Third phase of the House of Orpheus – an attempt at reconstruction (compiled by M. Rekowska).

Fig. 12. Mosaic with Orpheus (photo: The Getty Conservation Institute).

Fig. 13. Mosaic with Heracles and an Amazon (D. Michaelides archive).

enable us to propose a hypothesis concerning the other parts – namely that they remained (at least initially) three distinct units, with their separate entrances still in use.

3. During the third phase, several earlier units merged, and the residence reached its apogee, both in size and decoration (Fig. 11). The biggest change occurred in the northern wing, which became official in character. The reception area was divided into different parts. On its western side, there are the two chambers decorated with the figurative mosaics (Figs 12, 13). In its north-eastern part, a thermal bath complex was erected, with two rooms with heating installations (*hypocaustum*) (Fig. 14). The large size of the baths in relation to the size of the entire residential area, their location, and the possibility of accessing them directly from the streets may suggest that their use was not solely private (Fig. 15).

The architectural elements discovered in the southern sector of the excavated area should also be associated with this phase (Fig. 16). A section of the western ambulatory with two blocks of a stylobate *in situ*, next to which were found three screen panels (*transenna*), two almost complete and a fragmentary one further to the north (all fallen but *in situ*), suggests the presence of a large peristyle (Fig. 17). Unfortunately, as this area has not been fully explored, it is impossible to define its exact limits. A number of column drums and shafts of different diameters suggest the existence of an upper level, something confirmed by the nearby stairs.

4. The last, fourth phase of the structures in the excavated area reflects a process of gradual transformation of the domestic space. The rooms to the south of the colonnaded courtyard were converted into storage spaces as evidenced by giant *pithoi* and large quantities of amphorae found *in situ* (Fig. 18). Production installations (several water basins of different sizes) were located mainly near the eastern boundary of former residential unit III, including the area previously serving as a street (Fig. 19). These structures are accompanied by two large circular stone elements (diameter of 1.23 m, height of 0.55 cm), the interpretation of which is still problematic (Fig. 20). The picture of the transformation is completed by changes in the spatial arrangement and communication between the rooms. This was achieved thanks to newly built walls and the blocking of former entrances with re-used architectural elements (Fig. 21.a, b).

Meanwhile, it seems that the western side of this part of the building (where the geometric mosaic of exceptional quality was found[20]) retained its residential character (Fig. 22). Regrettably, the remains lie very near

[20] Michaelides 1991, 7–8.

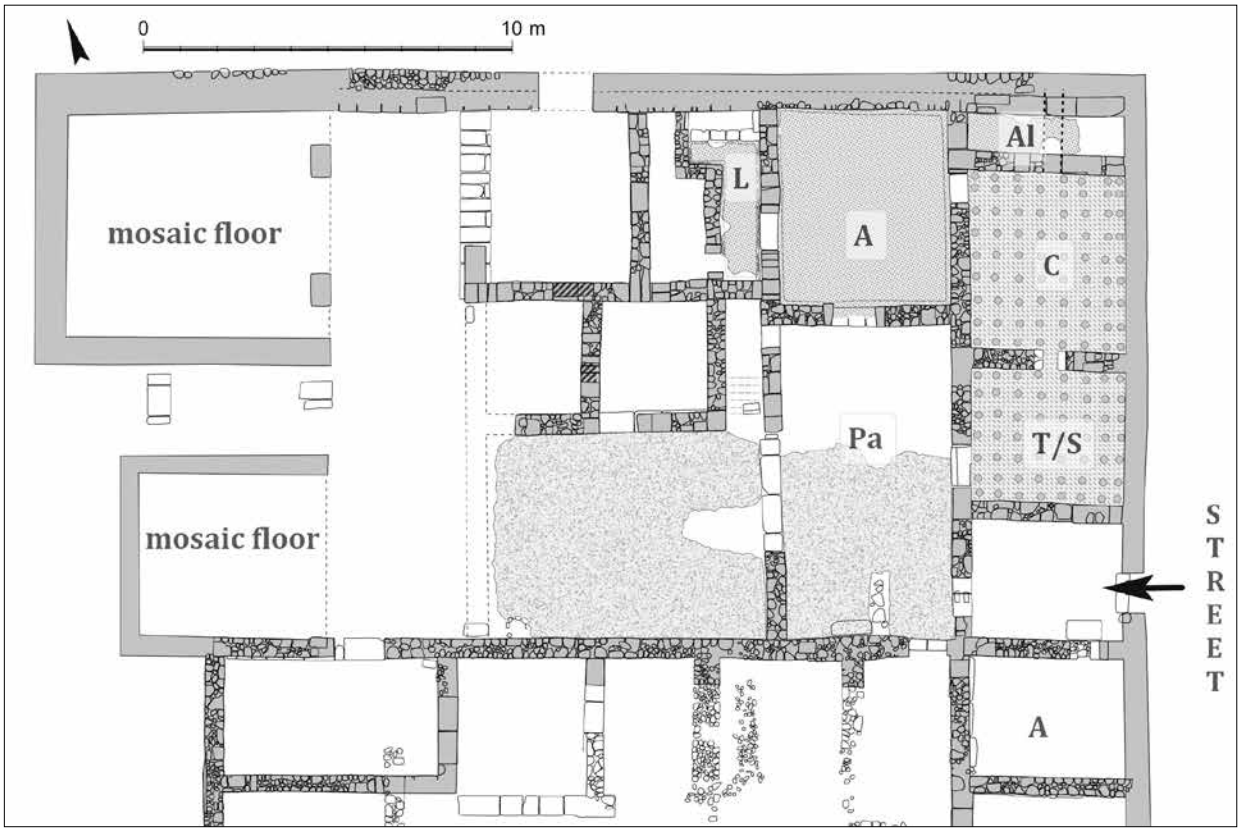


Fig. 14. Northern wing: rooms with mosaics and baths (compiled by J. Kaniszewski).

Fig. 15. Entrance to the baths, just after the 1988 investigation (photo by D. Michaelides).

Fig. 16. Architectural elements in the southern part of the excavated insula (photo by M. Gładki, P. Prejs).

Fig. 17. Remains of the stylobate (photo by M. Rekowska).

Fig. 18. Storage space S of the courtyard, just after the 1987 exploration (photo by D. Michaelides).

Fig. 19. Production installation (photo by M. Gładki, P. Prejs).

Fig. 20. Stone elements in the working area (photo by M. Rekowska, drawing by P. Filieri).



Fig. 21. Two capitals in re-use (a) and just after the exploration (b) (photos by D. Michaelides).

Fig. 22. Rooms near the western limits of the excavated area: stairs in the foreground, the room with paintings in the background (photo by M. Rekowska).

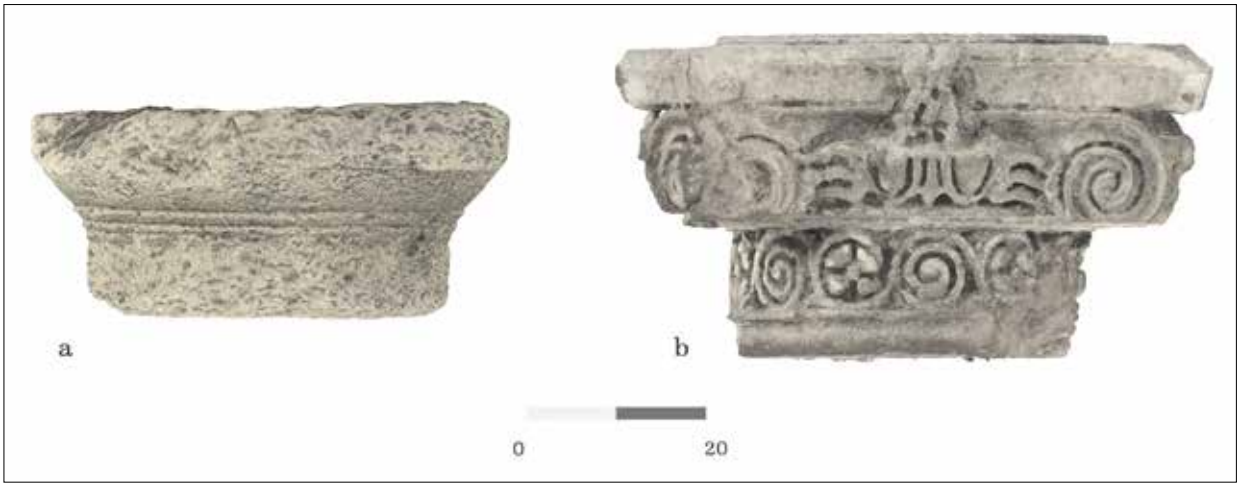


Fig. 23. a. Doric capital D 62; b. Ionic capital D 12 (compiled by M. Gładki).

the surface, and their layout – largely erased by stone robbers, building activity of the British Royal Air Force, and modern agricultural activities – is hard to interpret, and until now the relation between the western and the eastern parts remains unclear.

The proposed relative chronology must obviously be in accordance with the absolute chronology for which a reference point is provided by the dated finds, pottery, and mosaics which belong to the third phase (or the phase of the greatest development at the turn of the 2nd and 3rd centuries). To the same phase we can assign the majority of the registered architectural elements, among which the most interesting are capitals and fragments of cornices, jambs, and lintels, their decoration influenced by the

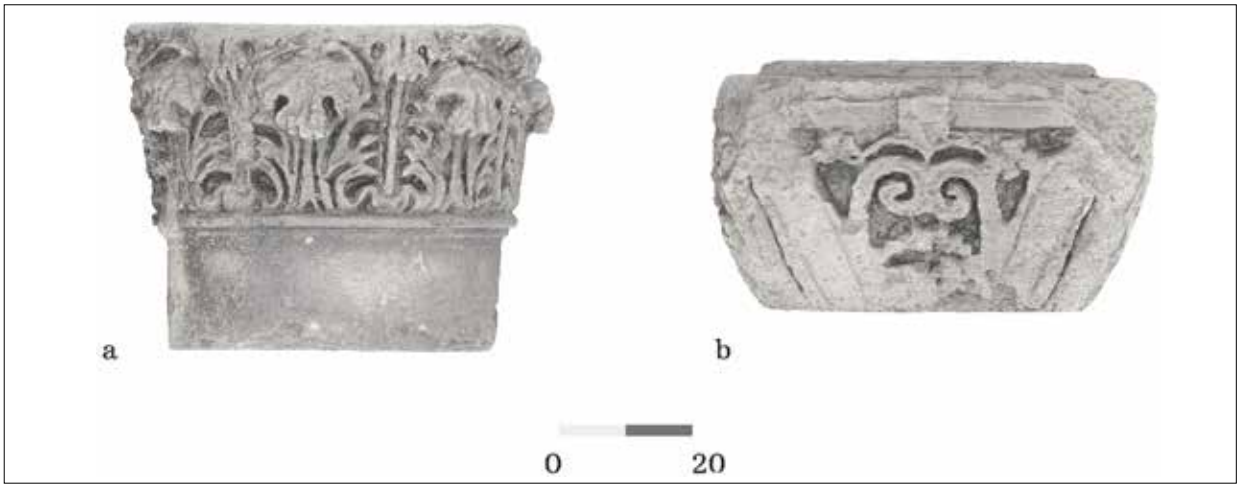


Fig. 24. Corinthian capital of a column: a. Lower part D 58; b. Upper part D 60 (compiled by M. Gładki).

Fig. 25. Fragment of an entablature with *travicello* modillions, D 42 (compiled by M. Gładki).

Alexandrian style (Figs 23–25). The details of ornamentation as well as the material used for their manufacture (local limestone and, rarely, sandstone) suggest that they are the work of local masons, who apparently continued the tradition deriving from the Ptolemaic Period.[21] In the Middle Empire it was common and practical to make use of the advanced skills of local craftsmen and artisans – as testified by the quality of the mosaics made by Cypriot craftsmen. The mosaic inscription written in Greek but mentioning the Latin *tria nomina* of '[Tit]*os*' or more likely '[Gai]*os Pinnios Restitutos*' (Fig. 26)[22] confirms this practice. It shows that the owner of the house, a Roman citizen, most likely from overseas, commissioned the decoration of his house from a local workshop. The presence

Fig. 26. Inscription on the mosaic with Orpheus (photo by M. Michaelides).

[21] Pensabene in this volume.

[22] SEG XXXVI, 1986, no. 1263bis; Michaelides 1986b, 485–486; Donderer 1989, 73; Cayla 2018, 370.

of foreigners on the premises is also confirmed by Latin graffiti on painted wall-plaster fragments found in the south-eastern corner of the excavated area.[23]

On one hand we have the Roman *tria nomina* (notwithstanding the fact that they are written in Greek) and the baths equipped with a hypocaust, a feature of Roman origin; on the other: the Alexandrian elements in the architectural decoration, as well as several Egyptianizing objects (the *polylychnon* mentioned above[24] and a terracotta of the Tyche of Alexandria[25]) combined with the mythological scenes represented on the mosaics and wall paintings. All these reflect a wealthy owner (or owners) with a cosmopolitan background, ambitious as well as sophisticated and well educated.

It is a great pity that the site has suffered so much from stone-robbing and, more recently, ploughing, as these have disturbed the ancient stratigraphy and led to the loss of the best part of its architectural features. It is hoped, however, that our work will lead to a better understanding of the history and development of the site known as the House of Orpheus.

Assuming that the house was a manifestation of its owner's wealth, high social standing, as well as his lifestyle, the study on the House of Orpheus in terms of self-presentation of the town's elite will hopefully contribute to the reconstruction of the urban and social townscape of *Nea Paphos*.

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[23] Michaelides 1993, 288; Herscher 1995, 747.

[24] Michaelides 2009.

[25] Michaelides 1992b.

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**House of Orpheus**

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