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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 Adriani³ 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; Kołataj *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 Alexandria¹⁴ 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 point¹⁵).

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*

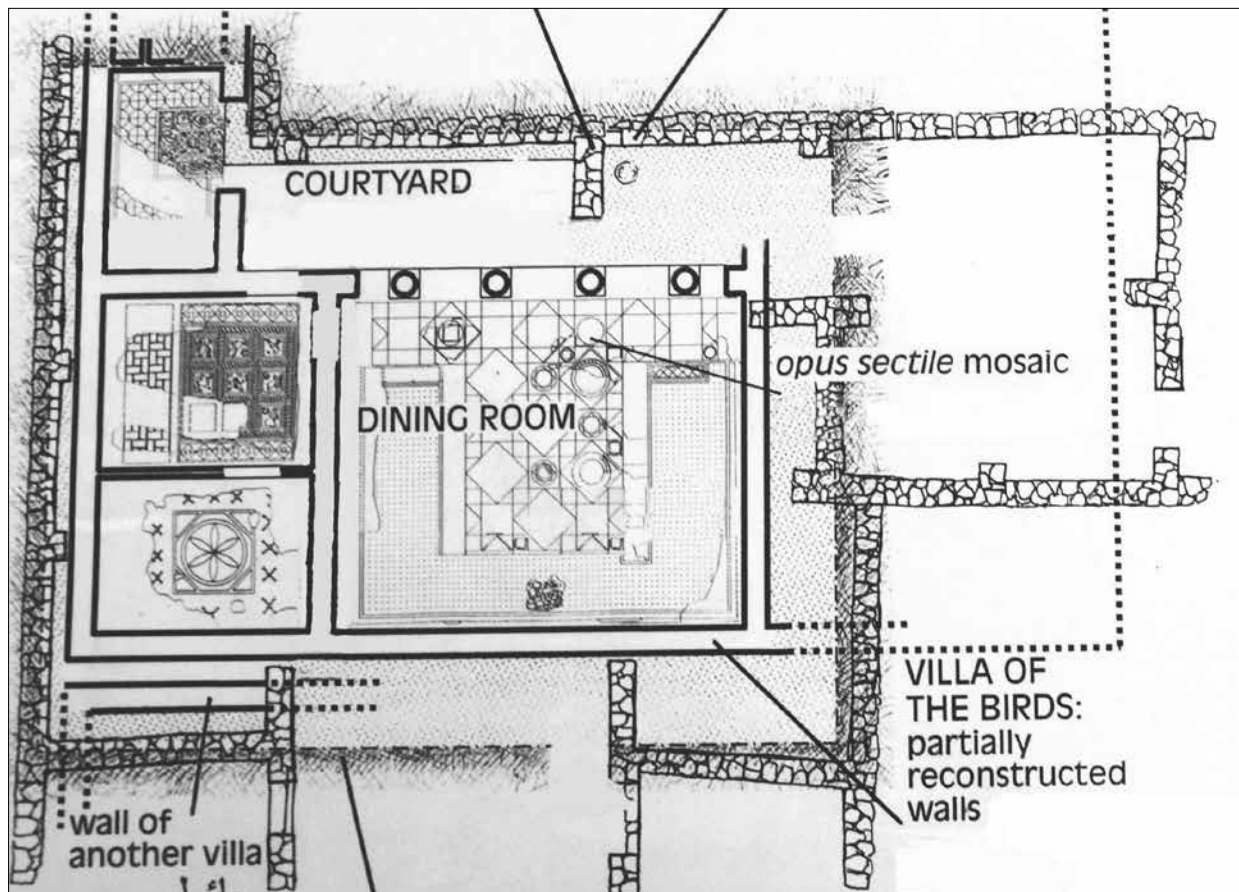


Fig. 1. Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka, House Alpha (after Kołtąj *et al.* 2007, 17, fig. 12).

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 Kołtąj *et al.* 2007, 18.



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

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



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

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 types²⁰ 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 com-

pared 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

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



Fig. 6. Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka, ancient depot of architectural 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

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).

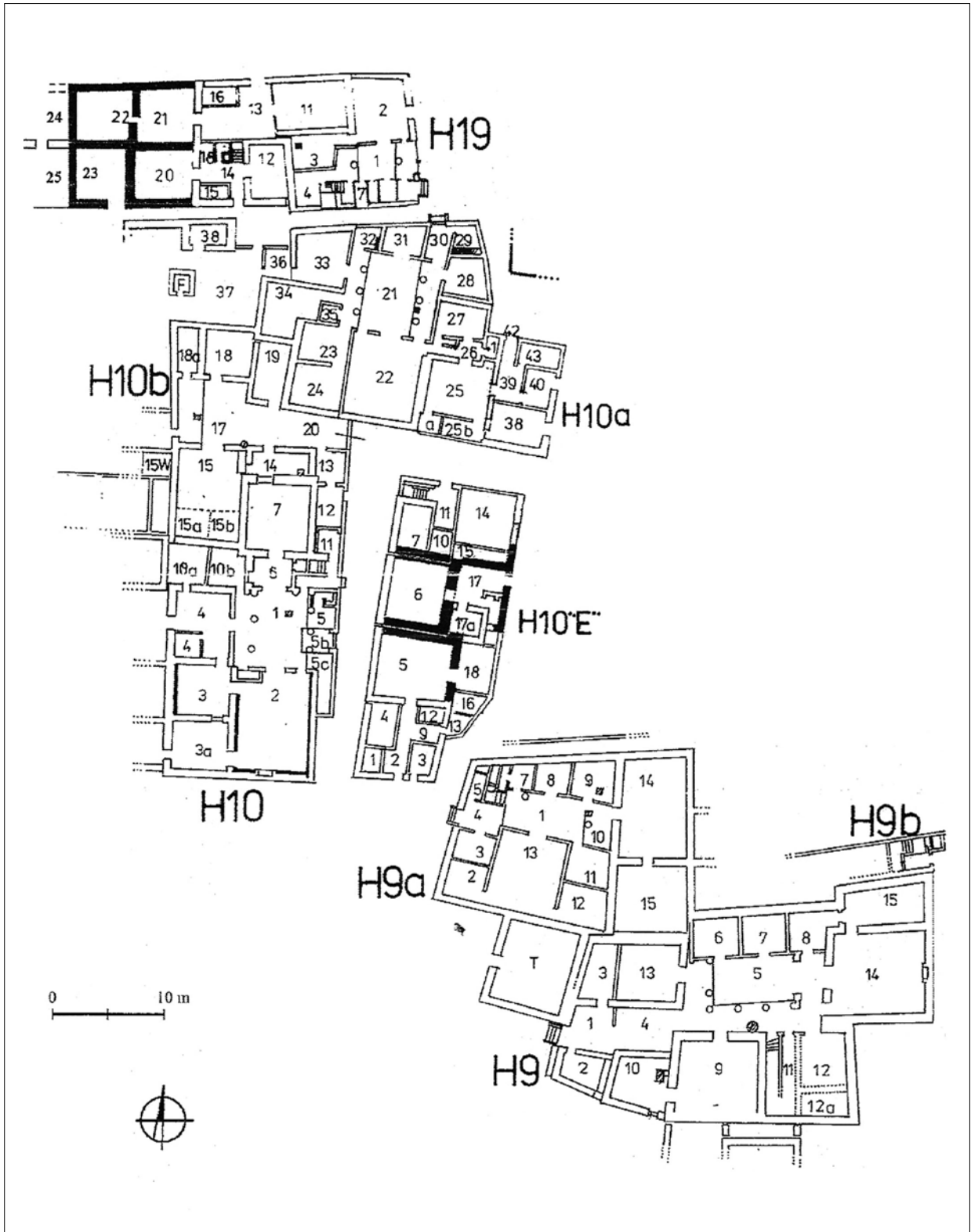


Fig. 7. Marina el-Alamein: a. Houses in the southern area of the town; b. H9, H9a (after Medeksza *et al.* 2004, 110, fig. 2).

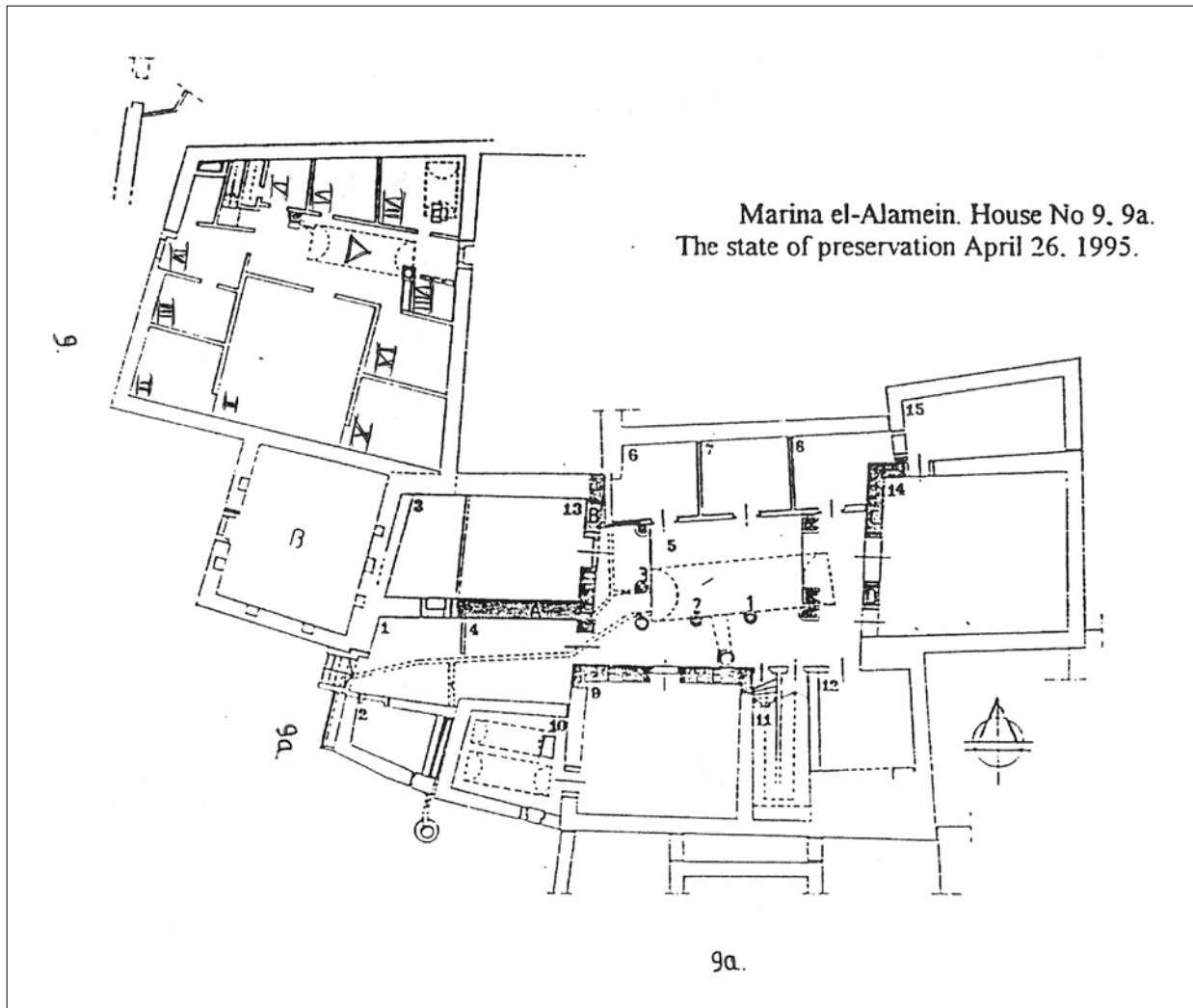


Fig. 8. Marina el-Alamein, houses in the southern area of the town (H17c) (after Medeksza *et al.* 2004, 110, fig. 3).

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 Mysliwiec, 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 Mysliwiec *et al.* 1992, 407, fig. 10d.

²⁷ Mysliwiec *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.

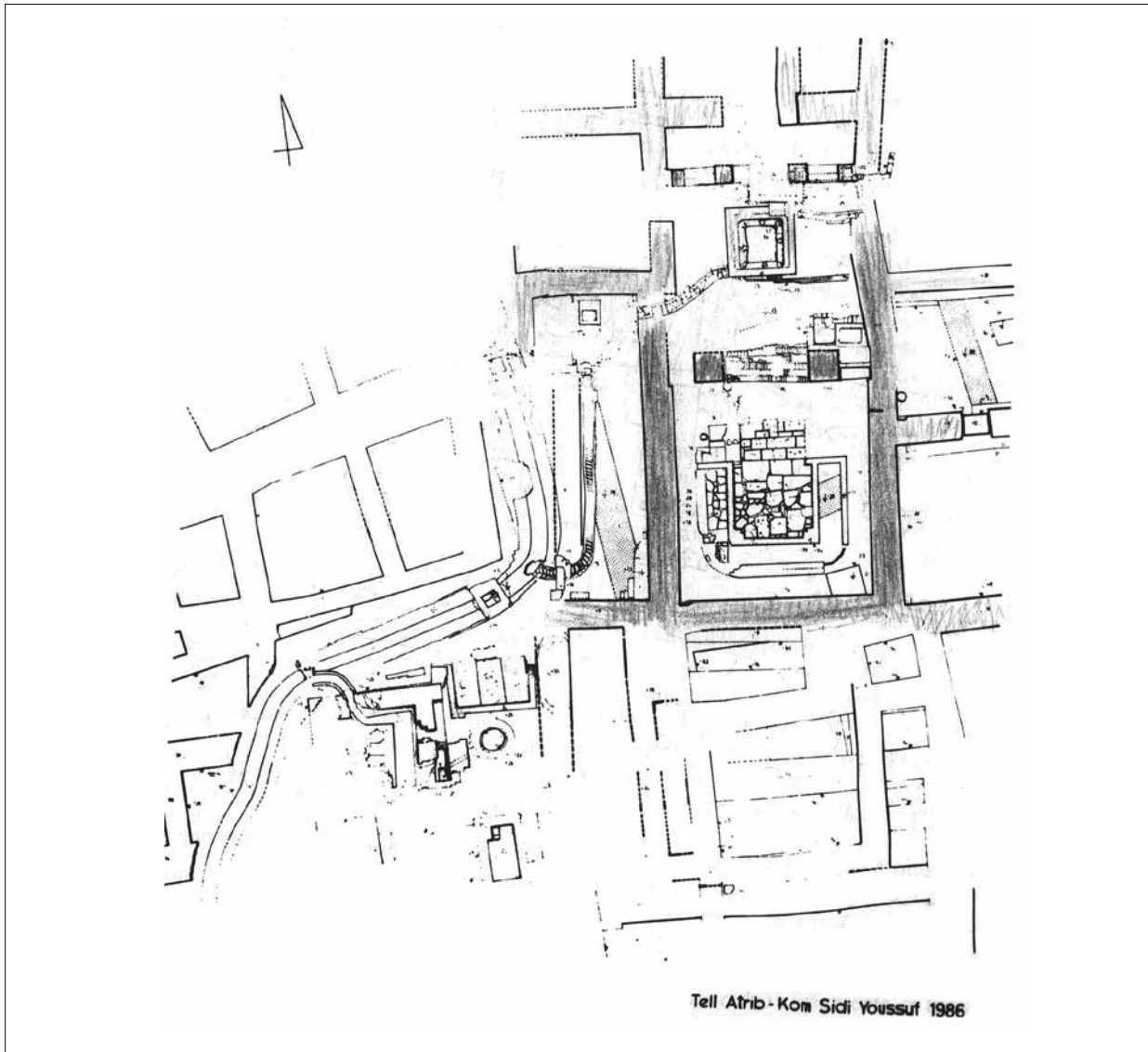


Fig. 12. Tell Atrib (*Atrhribis*), 'Ptolemaic Villa', plan (after Myśliwiec, Abdel Haq Rageb 1992, 412, fig. 12).



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).

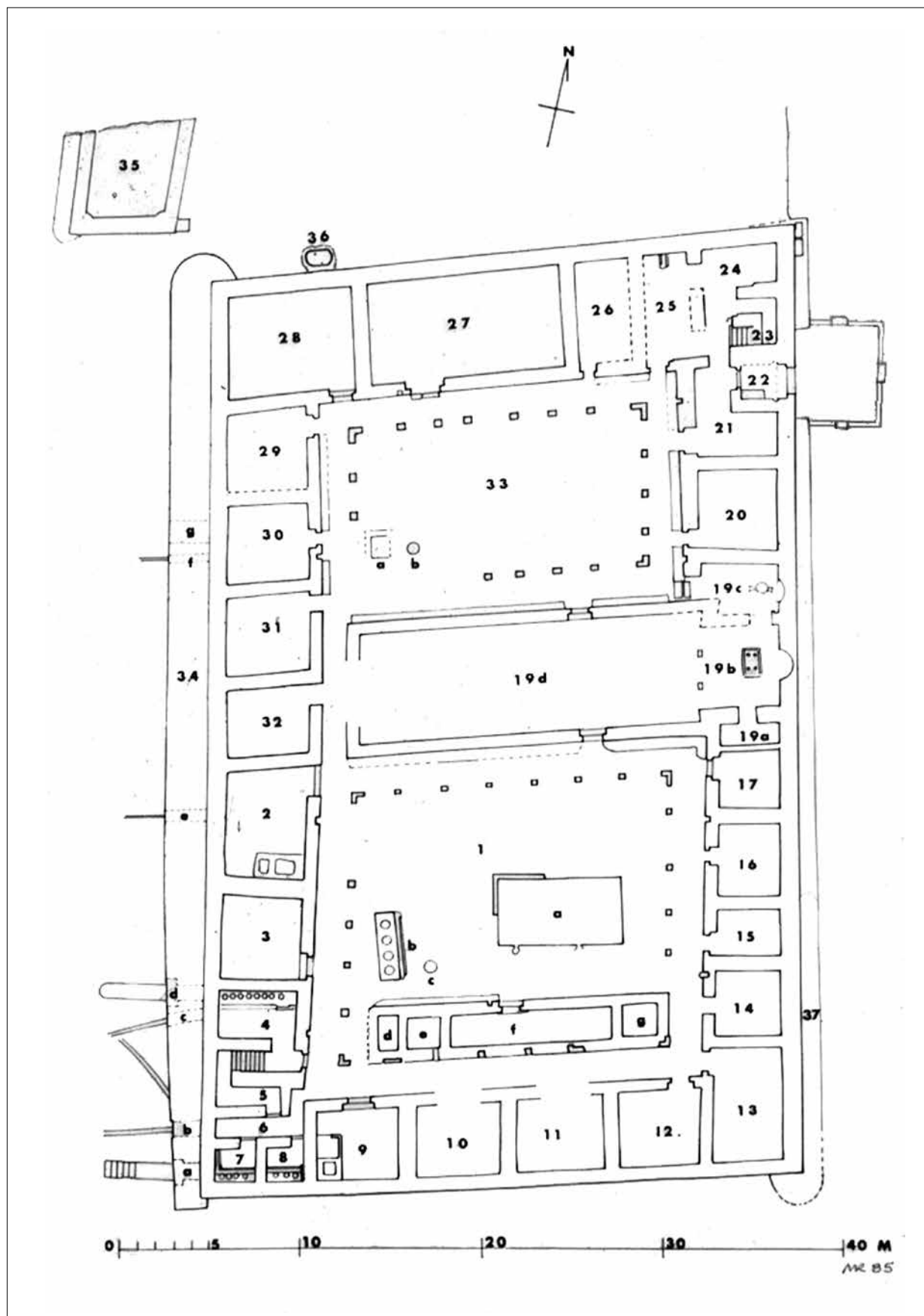


Fig. 15. Hawariyah, plan of the 'Byzantine complex' (after Rodziewicz 1988a, 274, fig. 2).



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 m² 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 col-

umnis constituitur', but concludes that 'id autem peristylum quod unam altiorem habet porticum, Rhodiicum 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 (*peristylum Rhodiicum*) with the island of Rhodes remains somehow obscure or still in need of deeper investigation.

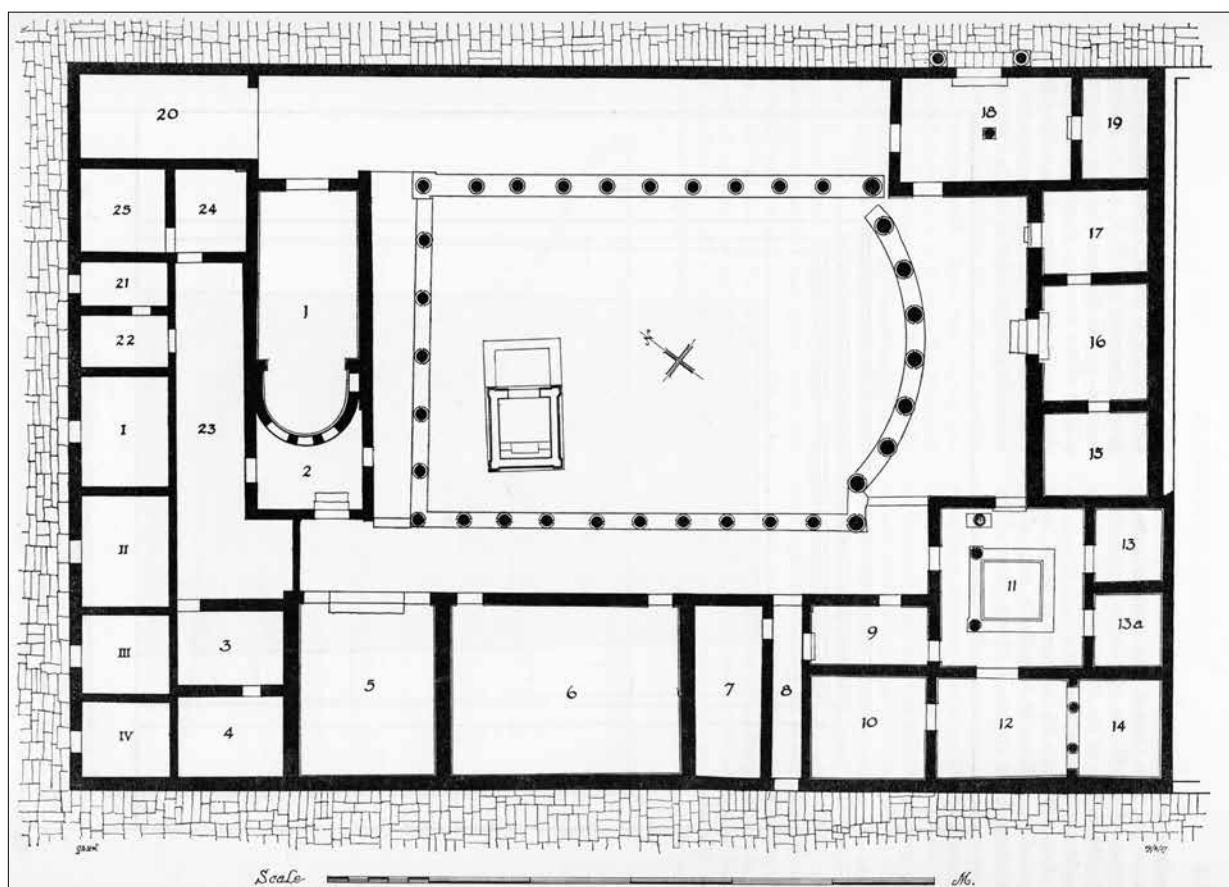


Fig. 17. *Ptolemais*, 'Roman Villa', plan (after Kraeling 1962, 121, fig. 43).

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 Paulus³⁷ (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.

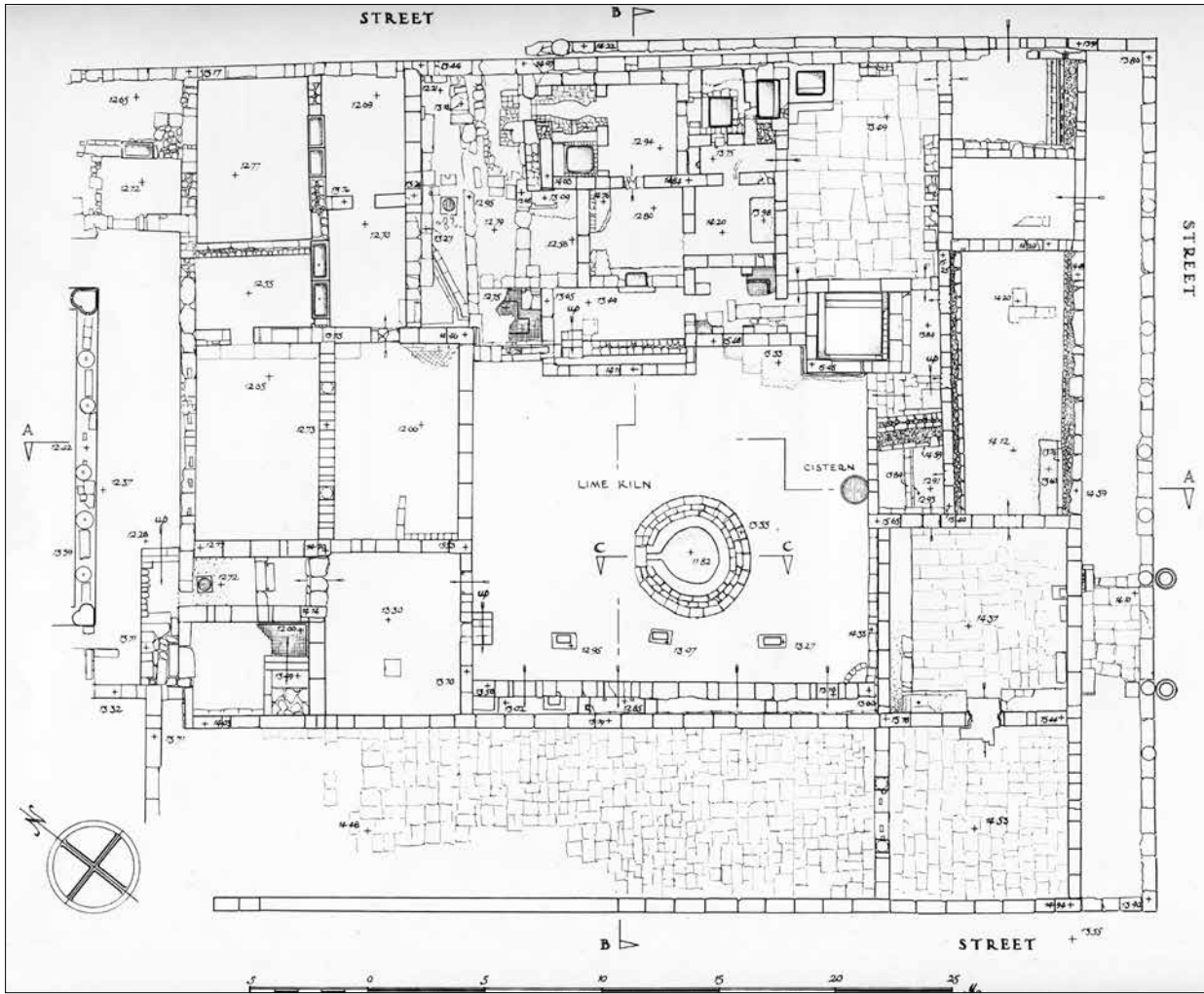


Fig. 18.a. *Ptolemais*, House of Paulus, plan (after Kraeling 1962, plan XVI).

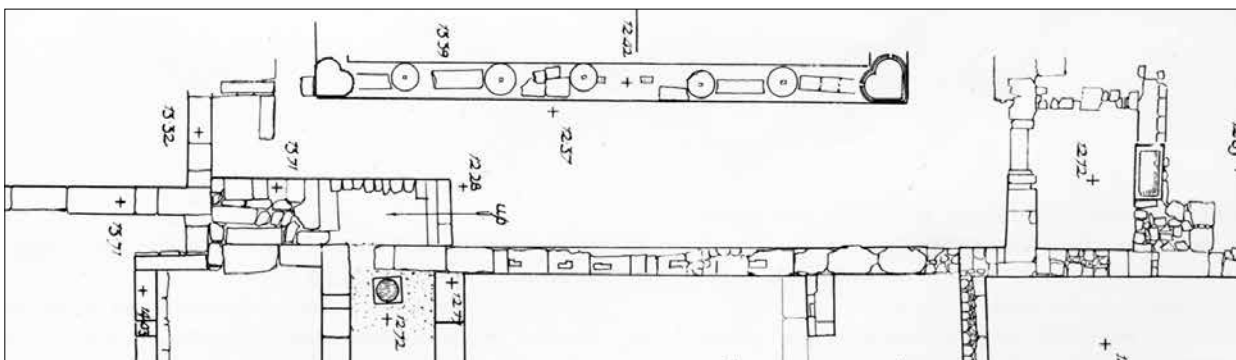


Fig. 18.b. *Ptolemais*, House of Paulus, northern side: detail of the plan (after Kraeling 1962, plan XVI).

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 capitals⁴² 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.

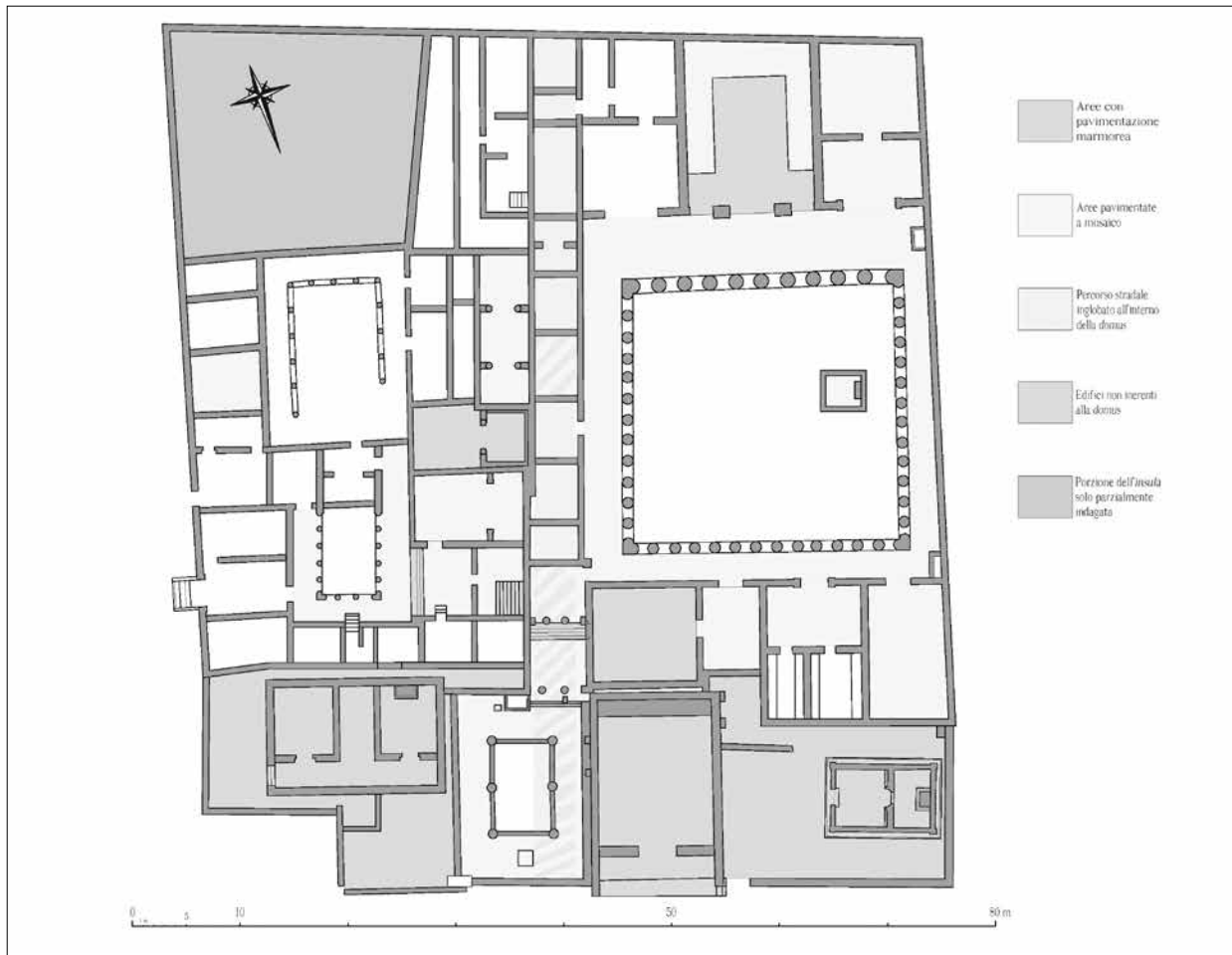


Fig. 20. *Cyrene*, House of Jason Magnus (after Pensabene, Gasparini 2014, fig. 6).



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

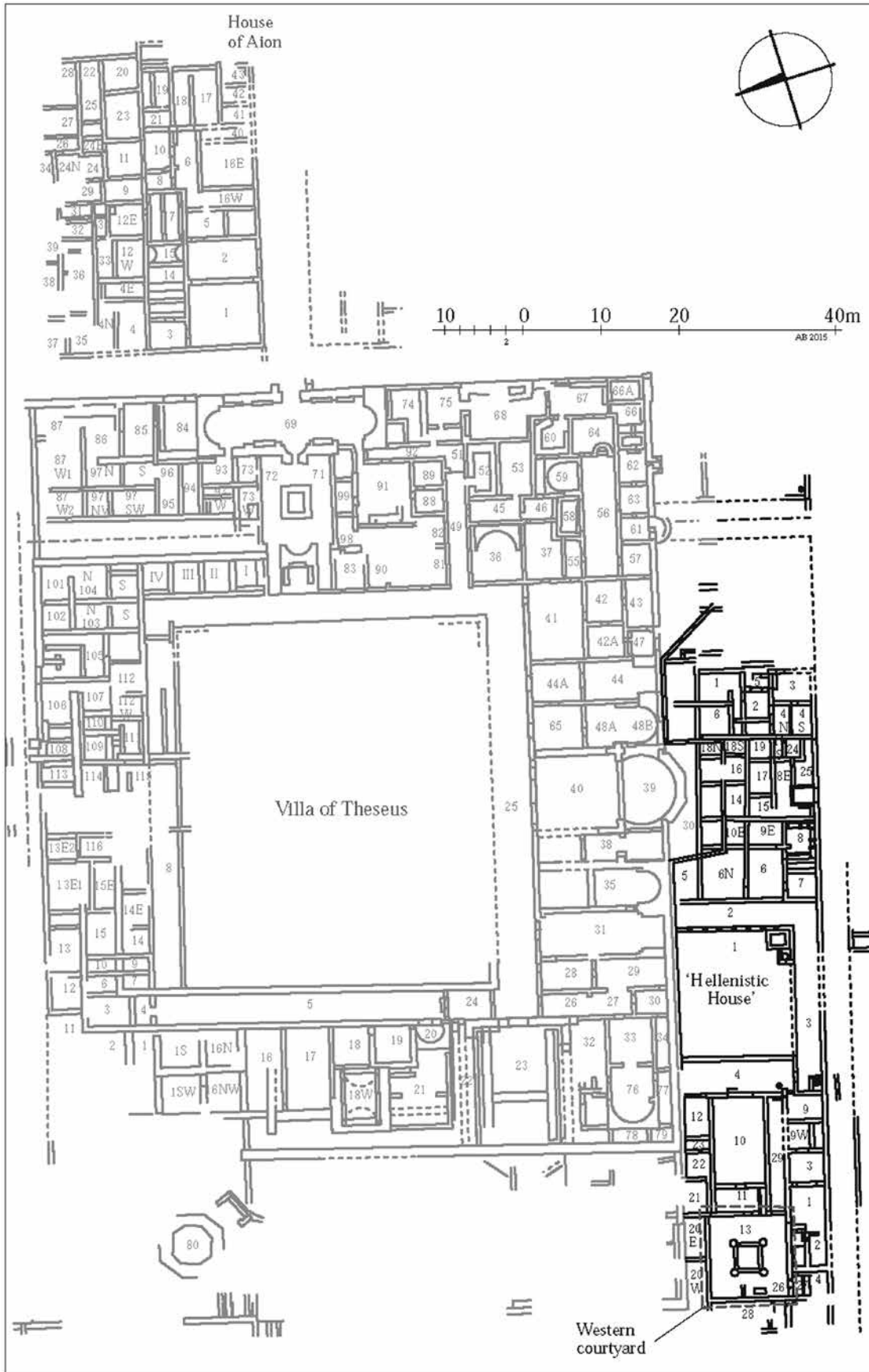


Fig. 22. *Nea Paphos*, 'Hellenistic' House (after Brzozowska 2016, fig. 2).



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 lobes, 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 architectural artefacts for public architecture. These 'new' architectural 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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