Houses of Roman and Late Antique Egypt:

Change or Continuity?

Mandana Adhami

Detail from The Nile Mosaic from Palestrina showing a Graeco-Roman temple surrounded by several tower-shaped multistorey buildings (McKenzie, *Architecture of Alexandria*, 63)

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Department of Classics and Religious Studies
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

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Abstract:

This thesis investigates the evolution of domestic architecture in the Roman and Late Antique Egypt, questioning whether the period was characterized more by change or continuity in housing practices. Drawing upon archaeological evidence, papyrological sources, and recent methodological advancements, the study traces the influences of the Roman, Greek, and indigenous Egyptian traditions on house types, spatial organization, and domestic practices from the first through seventh centuries AD. The research is organized in three chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the typologies of dwellings in the Roman world, the origins of Roman *domus*, and its Late Antique evolutions. Chapter two explore the influences of the new Roman culture as perceived in diverse house types that existed in Egypt from the first to the third centuries AD, including both elite and non-elite housing. It also explores some of the important factors that influenced the formation of these house types. Finally, the third chapter creates a diachronic picture of change and continuity in houses in Egypt over seven centuries of Roman rule. The findings demonstrate that there is continuity, with the previous period, in regional architectural styles and in the diversity of house types that existed in the province. However, noticeable changes also occurred, most of which hover around matters of privacy and architectural diversity. Most of these changes played out differently in classical houses and Egyptian houses. The findings demonstrate that formation of houses in Egypt is generally influences by a complex interplay of environmental adaptation, cultural hybridity, and economy. While native architectural traditions persisted, significant innovations emerged in response to social, economic and religious developments in the broader Mediterranean context. Ultimately, the thesis argues that Egyptian domestic architecture in this era is best understood as a dynamic synthesis of continuity and adaptation, shaped by long-standing traditions and multiple vectors of external and internal change.

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General Introduction

> The dwellings of the rich and poor are as essential as streets, public monuments, and official buildings in defining the image of a city.[1]

Since the early days of the empire, the emperor's residence on the Palatine Hill symbolized the emperor's power and the supremacy of Rome. Located near the Circus Maximus, the palace served not only as the emperor's residence but also as the venue where he oversaw spectacles, executions, and trials, closely monitoring state affairs under his watchful gaze. This was also the public arena, where he met and communicated with his subjects during his *adventus* and other ceremonies. Late Antique emperors from Diocletian onwards adopted the same symbolism of power in building their palaces not only in Rome but also throughout the provinces.[2] However, new palaces featured an intricately woven system of public and private spaces. The Palace of Diocletian in Split, constructed around the late-third century AD, where he retired, remains the best-preserved example. It resembles a military fort, with two arcaded streets intersecting at right angles, along with entrance gates and watchtowers. The emperor's quarter was richly adorned with striking architecture, featuring peristyle courts, a domed roof, a hexagonal grand dining room, various apsidal reception rooms, and baths.[3] The complex included a military camp, two temples, and the emperor's personal mausoleum. There is also evidence that emperors such as Diocletian, Maxentius, and Constantine incorporated circuses into their newly built or refurbished palaces, a practice that grew as an increasingly popular trend during Late Antiquity.[4]

Late Antique palaces excavated throughout the empire emulated similar structural features. For most of the 20th century, these were the focus of studies for archaeologists, whose main concern was to show the 'decline' of the classical city through its monumental structures during a period characterized by political and cultural change as a consequence of the vast expansion of the

[1] M. Machado, 'Aristocratic Houses and the Making of Late Antique Rome and Constantinople', in L. Grig and G. Kelly (eds), *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity* (New York, 2012) 136-61 at 136.
[2] A. Barnes, 'The Fusion of Spectacles and Domestic Space in Late-Antique Roman Architecture', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* (2011) 72-78 at 72.
[3] R. Adam, *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (Printed for the author, London: 1764) 5-17.
[4] Barnes, 'Fusion of Spectacles', 73.

empire and the distancing of the emperors from the centre, paralleled by the advent of a new religion, namely Christianity.[5] Some scholars interpreted these features through the retrospective lens of medieval Christian architecture. They emphasized that the increasing use of circular architectural elements, such as apsidal basilicas and arcaded circular colonnades, echoed the grandeur and holiness of the emperor and represented the transition from the imperial palace to the later church.[6]

Towards the end of the 20th century, other possibilities were ruled, when the identity of the Villa di Casale at Piazza Armerina in Sicily and a few other villas were questioned as palaces. It was confirmed that many of these palaces belonged to wealthy landowners in the provinces, who either temporarily or permanently lived in these villas, keeping a close eye on the management of their rural farms.[7] The fourth-century Villa di Casale is an unusually grand structure arranged along three axes. To the east, private apartments and a grand apsidal basilica are positioned. The adjacent grand corridor crossing the width of the villa opens onto a rectangular peristyle court. Both spaces lead to a dining room complex featuring apses and equipped with circular dining furniture, which opens onto an oval peristyle courtyard. Both courtyards feature gardens adorned with fountains and basins. The third wing consists of a grand entrance defined by a tripartite niched arch, accompanied by a *palaestra* (gymnasium) and a bath complex. Over 3,500 m^2 of lavish mosaics adorn various areas of this villa, reflecting the favored themes of the period. Theses proclaim the owner's lifestyle by depicting him in scenes such as the animal hunt that carpeted the entire grand corridor, or illustrations of circus games that embellished the *palaestra* of the bath.[8]

There was also a multitude of Roman *domus* (aristocratic houses) in the cities, built or renovated during the fourth century. Compared to the elite houses of the early empire, when the emperor's palace was the most prominent residence, newly built or refurbished *domus* in Rome were considerably larger. They transformed the urban landscape by encroaching on and exploiting

[5] I. Uytterhoeven, 'Housing in Late Antiquity: Thematic Perspectives', in L. Lavan, L. Özgenel, A. Sarantis (eds), *Housing in Late Antiquity; from Palaces to Shops* (Leiden, 2005) 25-66 at 33.
[6] L.D. Beylié, *L'habitation byzantine* (Grenoble, 1902) 21; I. Lavin, The House of the Lord: Aspects of the Role of Palace Triclinia in the Architecture of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages', *Art Bulletin* 44 (1962) 1-27 at 22-4; H.P. L'Orange, *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Later Roman Empire* (Princeton, 1965) 70-85, 128-31; K. Bowes, *Houses and Society in the Later Roman Empire* (London, 2010) 21-3.
[7] A. Carandini,'De villa perfecta', in A. Carandini (ed), *Settefi-nestre, una villa schiavistica nell'Etruria Romana* (Modena,1985) 107-37.
[8] Pensabene, E. Gallocchio, 'The Villa del Casale of Piazza Armerina', *Expedition Magazine* 53 (2011) 29-37.

various civic resources, from public baths and streets, to complexes of smaller houses, and *insulae* (apartments). These houses similarly included large colonnaded courtyards, apsidal basilicas, grand dining areas, private baths, and a complex access plan. Evidence suggests that significant political events took place in these houses.[9] Late 20th-century scholars recognized that the Late Antique Roman house changed significantly. Its resemblance to palatial architecture indicated a shift in the lives of the Roman aristocracy.[10]

However, from the fourth century onward, this process appeared to have reversed. Some of these houses seem to have been abandoned, converted into lower-quality housing, or repurposed for other uses. Few classical houses were built at this time, but these were larger and even more architecturally elaborate. In Rome, the Basilica of Junius Bassus, a structure identified by an inscription and once part of his house, was converted into the Church of Saint Andrea on the Esquiline in the fifth century. Poorly constructed and modest structures were found throughout the empire, primarily resulting from the subdivision of the interior space of larger houses or public buildings, a widespread phenomenon of Late Antiquity. In Ephesus, Cyrene, and Thasos, some reasonable apartment *insulae* with classical elements near the public squares were subdivided into houses of lesser quality between AD 300 and 500. In Ephesus, only one large-scale house was built in a prominent location overlooking the theatre, while scholars have been at pains to identify mid-range houses within the urban fabric of some cities. It seems that the city centre was no longer the focus of civic life.[11]

Evidence of housing during Late Antiquity was also interpreted in light of the written sources, which are exceptionally abundant in this period. After the administrative reforms implemented by the tetrarchs at the end of the third century, a new class of local officials emerged. These individuals were appointed by the imperial court to intervene and counterbalance the

[9] Machado, 'Aristocratic Houses', 136, 143-9, and 'The Aristocratic Domus of Late Antique Rome: Public and Private', in C. La Rocca et al. (eds), *Spazio Pubblico e spazio privato tra storia e archeologia* (Turnhout, 2018) 1-21 at 1-6.

[10] S. Settis, 'Per L'interpretatione di Piazza Armerina', *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome Antiquité* 87 (1975) 873-994 at 890, 892, 894, 897, 901, 903; Carandini, 'De villa perfecta', 107-37; Y. Thébert, 'Private life and Domestic Architecture in Roman Africa', in P. Veyne (ed), *A History of Private Life and Domestic Architecture: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1987) 313-410 at 325-53; S.P. Ellis, 'End of the Roman House', *American Journal of Archaeology* 94 (1988) 566-76 at 574.

[11] S.P. Ellis, 'Late Antique Houses in Asia Minor', in S. Isager, B. Poulsen (eds), *Patrons and Pavements in Late Antiquity* (Odense, 1997) 38-50 at 46-7; Machado, 'Aristocratic Domus', 8.

declining power of the civic governments. In the countryside, these were sometimes local landowners who also managed imperial land and collected taxes. Furthermore, the local population soon understood the advantages of being protected by these authority figures. Thus, new forms of patronage were moulded between the landowning aristocrats (*honorati*) and the tenant farmers (*humiliores*). The new class of *honorati*, who may have later become bishops, directed their affairs from either homes or churches, which had emerged as the new venues of power.[12] The concept of a polarized society was intensified by social history and written sources, wherein landowning patrons either protected or exploited their impoverished clients.[13]

New architectural features enabled the owners to display their authority and connection with central power through architecture and decor that alluded to the lifestyle and *paideia* (classical education) of the Roman Emperors. This shared aristocratic culture was soon disseminated throughout the Mediterranean, in both rural and urban contexts, serving as a new way to express *Romanitas* (Roman identity) and asserting the authority of the owners.[14] One scholar has attempted to mark the end of classical way of life by tracing the Roman house as its embodiment through the passage of time.[15] However, along with a shift in paradigms in Late Antique studies during the last quarter of the 20th century and into the new century, scholarly interest in Late Antique archaeology also changed its focus to seek signs of continuity with the classical past rather than significant change or transformation that heralded a transition to the medieval period.[16]

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[12] Ellis, 'End of the Roman House', 573-5; Uytterhoeven, 'Housing in Late Antiquity', 23, 32.
[13] On Late Antique patron-client relationships See: Libanius, *Orations* 47; On the same subject in Gaul see: Salvian, *On the Government of God* V.7-8, 38-9; On the dealings of *principalis* or later bishops with the central power in Constantinople on behalf of their local communities see *Letter* of Synesius of Cyrene in A. Fitzgerald, *The Letters of Synesius of Cyrene* (London, 1926); On the increasing ritualized nature of patron-client relationships reflected in Late Antique dinning see Sidonius Apollinaris, *Letters* 1.11.
[14] Barnes, 'Fusion of Spectacles, 72-3.
[15] Ellis, 'End of the Roman House', 565.
[16] L. Lavan, W. Bowden (eds), *Recent Research in Late-Antique Urbanism* (Portsmouth, 2001) is a complete volume of works that eschew the narratives of the decline of classical urban infrastructure related to 'Christianization', in favour of more neglected secular topographic issues, and thus provide a richer appreciation of the cultural transformation of this period; A. Cameron, 'The "Long" Late Antiquity: a Late Twentieth Century Model', in P. Wiseman (ed), *Classics in Progress* (Oxford, 2002) 165-91 at 166-7, 178-9; K. Bowes, *Houses and Society*; L. Lavan, M. Mulryan (eds), *The Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism'* (Leiden, 2011) is a volume of works that defy the triumphant Christian narrative through analyzing the evidence of continuation of the old Graeco-Roman religion during Late Antiquity.

A few works have sought to provide a comprehensive view of housing throughout the empire.[17] However, there is a tendency in more recent works to focus on regional idiosyncrasies. The differences between the East and West, characterized by greater continuity in the East and more change or transformation in the West, are already acknowledged. This is particularly true for the Eastern Empire and regions where classical culture had already taken root for centuries and continued to exist under the Eastern Roman Empire for an extended period. Thus, no individual settlement or local study can serve as an all-encompassing model of change or continuity suitable for the whole empire. Additionally, many provinces like Egypt and Syria had a strong native culture that influenced housing practices, complicating the precise identification of changes. Therefore, the new concern in regionalism also relates to the diverse processes of creolization and appropriation, as corroborated by the extensive range of evidence across a vast geographic span.[18]

In alignment with contemporary scholarly interests, this thesis seeks to explore, through the analysis of archaeological evidence, what changed or continued in houses and housing practices in Egypt from the early Roman period to Late Antiquity and some of the possible reasons behind these shifts. Considering Egypt's specific geographic circumstances and its millennia-old culture, we expect to find greater continuities in housing practices with pre-Roman periods and Egyptian traditions, alongside developments that relate to contemporary Mediterranean trends, such as Roman influences and the advent of Christianity. By Late Antiquity, Egypt had become a melting pot of cultures due to various periods of conquest and reconquest. Therefore, we can reasonably expect to observe further developments resulting from cultural adaptations and appropriation processes. If changes, as we predict, are confined to innovations in cultural domains instead of conflicts, economic and environmental shifts, demographic changes, and technological advancements, then a cultural evolution is more likely than a drastic transformation.

Houses are frequently described as the physical containers of households and the activities occurring within them. However, the ambiguous nature of households and their activities makes

[17] See J.P. Sodini, "Habitat de l'antiquiè tardive", *Topoi* 5 (1995) 151-218; J.P. Sodini, "Habitat de l'antiquitè tardive", *Topoi* 7 (1995) 435-77; S.P. Ellis, *Roman Housing* (London, 2000).
[18] Cameron, '"Long" Late Antiquity', 172-3, and 'Ideologies and Agendas in Late Antique Studies', in L. Lavan, W. Bowden (eds), *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology* (Leiden, 2003) 3-21 at 10-11; L. Lavan, 'Late Antique Urban Topography: from Architecture to Human Space', in Lavan and Bowden, *Theory and Practice*, 171-195, at 186-8.

defining 'house' a challenging task. New Archaeology, which has greatly influenced the archaeological studies of houses since the beginning of the 20th century, views the house as the physical container of the household as an economic unit. From this point of view, four main activities are carried out in a house: production, consumption, regeneration (the production of heirs), and finally, transmission of the property to the next generation. On the one hand, we recognize that domestic activities can be diverse, and some of these activities may also take place in other settings such as military camps, monasteries, and inns, where the relationships among people do not always conform to familial bounds. On the other hand, we also know that many people lived alone in houses, and some couples never had children. Sometimes several households lived in a house at the same time or at different times, over decades or centuries. This means that the lifetime of the house may sometimes exceed that of the household.[19] This fluidity of concepts has prompted a group of works in a recent volume to broaden the definition of house and household to suit their agenda.[20]

In Antiquity, houses served various functions, including industrial production, economic activities, schools, and offices. This is especially true in the case of Late Antique houses and has raised the question of whether houses during this period were more public than private compared to houses from earlier periods. The purpose of studying houses is to broaden our understanding of their functions and the various ways in which domestic space influences behaviour and shapes the life experiences of the inhabitants. Houses reflect the personal taste, needs and preferences of their owners and their families, translated into architecture by an architect, craftsman, or builder, whose ideas and preferences are in turn shaped by socio-cultural norms of their time. The house was the focal point and at the base of all human interaction with its broader social context, including the immediate neighborhood, district, town, region, and the larger society. The house served not

[19] C.E. Barette, 'Houses, Households and Homes; Towards an Archaeology of Dwelling', in C.E. Barette, J. Carrington (eds), *Households in Context: Dwellings in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt* (Ithaca and London, 2023) 1-46 at 2-6.
[20] See e.g. in the same volume mentioned in 19: D.J. Thompson, 'The Papyrus Trail: Houses and Households in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt', 125-44. Thompson shows through a Ptolemaic tax register that individuals might live not only in houses, but also in other spaces like shrines, gatehouses, bathhouses, or shops; R. Alston, 'Modes of Production and Reproduction in Roman-Era Egyptian Villages', 181-198. Alston shows that many domestic tasks (crafts, grocery shopping, and making offerings in temples to secure the well-being of family members) took place outside houses, often in courtyards or streets that might be shared between multiple households; D.L. Brook Hedstorm, 'Three Monks and a House: The Archaeology of Monastic Houses in Byzantine Egypt', 273-296. Hedstorm explores the concept of the "family" as something far beyond a group of people related by descent or marriage.

merely as a domestic structure but as an integral part of the broader social fabric of Late Antique settlements.[21]

Houses have been studied in a variety of ways. We have demonstrated how the early studies of Late Antique houses carried the bias of elite sources, and how the interpretation of Late Antique monumental and palatial residences relied on textual evidence. The situation was no better in the study of homes from earlier periods of classical Antiquity. Early excavators at Pompeii organized the assemblages discovered in houses according to the descriptions of domestic spaces found in the work of Vitruvius, *on Architecture*.[22] Additionally, the glossary of finds included in Robinson's excavation report of Olynthos was a transliteration of terms from texts written by Athenian male elites, who oddly lived 250 miles away.[23] Thus, works generally suffered from poor integration of methods and neglect of marginalized groups.[24] Under the influence of New Archaeology, which viewed the house as the physical container of the household, and the household as an economic institution, the focus of scholarship shifted away from an over-reliance on textual narrative, placing more emphasis on material evidence during the last decades of the 20th century. However, the purely economic view of the house encouraged by New Archaeology did not necessarily direct later studies, which approached houses in various ways and for different reasons, most frequently for their implications and uses in understanding social, cultural, economic, and religious change.[25]

Nevertheless, Late Antique archaeological schools remained highly empirical at the start of the new century. The first volume of the Late Antique Archaeology series calls for the re-integration of sources in a more scientific manner and the adoption of new methodologies and approaches to bridge the fields of archaeology and history. Although the works presented in the volume are still at the beginning of the path to adopting Archaeological Theory,[26] the last few years have witnessed the emergence of more works utilizing a diversity of sources, the

[21] S.P. Ellis, 'Late Antique Housing and the Uses of Residential Buildings: an Overview', in Lavan, Özgenel, Sarantis, *Housing in Late* Antiquity,1-24 at 1, 7-10, 20.
[22] See e.g. P.M. Allison, 'Artefact Distribution and Spatial Function in Pompeian Houses', in P. Weaver, B. Rawson (eds), *The Roman Family in Italy* (Oxford,1997) 321–54.
[23] See D.M. Robinson, *Excavations at Olynthus, Vol. 8. The Hellenic House* (Baltimore,1938).
[24] L.C. Nevett, 'Afterword 2: Contextualizing Houses, Households and Homes, in the Classical World and Beyond', in Barette and Carrington, *Households in Context*, 332-41 at 337-8.
[25] Barette, 'Houses, Households and Homes', 12-5, 24.
[26] L. Lavan, 'Late Antique Archaeology: An Introduction', in Lavan and Bowden, *Theory and Practice*, vii-xvi; see also other works in the same volume.

interpretation of which requires different methodologies.[27] A few illuminating studies offer insights into methodologies for integrating and reconciling various sources, particularly in Egypt. Here, a wealth of papyri enriches the corpus of evidence regarding houses, although the papyri and architecture may not always align. These studies suggest that sources should not necessarily comply with one another; rather, they provide answers to different questions. Similar to pieces of a puzzle, they complement each other and contribute to reconstructing the greater picture.[28]

The aristocratic house has been a cornerstone for studying the changes and continuities in the social and political life of Roman aristocrats, where social networks and personal relationships, such as patronage and friendships, have influenced politics. However, there appeared also an interest in the less monumental evidence related to other neglected voices of society, such as craftsmen, traders, and even the humble, whose lives were directly shaped and impacted by the state and its policies.[29] The first volume of Late Antique Archaeology, dedicated to the houses of this period, still focuses on monumental structures such as *praetoria* (residences of provincial governors), *episcopeia* (houses of the bishops), and Roman villas, both in rural areas and towns across different parts of the empire (except for Egypt and the Balkans).[30] Conversely, less conspicuous houses and shops are represented in another volume on the social and political life in Late Antiquity, which includes several chapters discussing the evidence of non-elite lives and the humble both in text and archaeology.[31] A pioneering work in the same volume strives to establish criteria for identifying 'middle-class' houses in major towns of Asia Minor, constructing its interpretation of homes based on archaeological evidence and then utilizing texts for further

[27] See e.g. L. Lavan, E. Swift, T. Putzeys, 'Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity: Sources, Approaches, and Field Methods', in L. Lavan, E. Swift, T. Putzeys (eds), *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2007) 1-42; see also other works in the same volume.
[28] For methodological approaches to Egyptian houses see L.C. Nevett, 'Family and Household, Ancient History and Archaeology: A Case Study from Roman Egypt', in B. Rawson (ed), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Singapore, 2011) 15-31 at 24, 29-30; A. Pudsey, 'Housing and Community: Structures in Houses and Kinship in Roman Tebtynis', in J.A. Baird, A. Pudsey (eds), *Housing in the Ptolemaic and Roman Fayum: Material and Textual Approaches* (Cambridge, 2022) 300-14 at 312-14; I. Uytterhoeven, 'Mudbrick and Papyri from the Desert Sand', in Baird and Pudsey, *Housing in the Ptolemaic and Roman* Fayum, 261-99 at 261.
[29] See A. Gutteridge, C. Machado, 'Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity: An Introduction', in W. Bowden, A. Gutteridge, C. Machado (eds), *Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2006) xv-xxx at xx-xxi.
[30] See the volume by Lavan, Özgenel and Sarantis, *Housing in Late Antiquity*.
[31] See S. Holman, 'Constructed and Consumed: Everyday Life of the Poor in 4th C. Cappadocia', in Bowden, Gutteridge and Machado, *Social and Political* Life, 441-463; E. Zanini, 'Artisans and Traders in the Early Byzantine City: Exploring the Limits of Archaeological Evidence', in Bowden, Gutteridge and Machado, *Social and Political* Life, 373-412.

support.[32] A study of social structure in Late Antiquity, based on a combination of methodologies and sources, is the subject of another work that considers a full spectrum of social strata.[33]

I have already mentioned that the house reflects the tastes and needs of its first owner or architect. However, we are uncertain whether the subsequent inhabitants continued to use the space in the same manner. This is especially true in the case of Late Antique houses, particularly in Egypt, where habitation extends over decades and sometimes centuries. The function and use of space in ancient houses were flexible and largely depended on the time of day or even the season. Most pieces of furniture were portable and could be moved around according to necessity. While architecture, decoration, and fixtures, such as the traces of dining rooms in *triclinia* mosaics, create a raw setting for human activities, they do not convey the full range of functions of a specific space, nor do they offer guidance on the continued use of that space. Rooted in anthropology and social science, the field of material spatiality aids scholars in reconstructing the use of space and activity patterns by analyzing the distribution of artefacts within a specific space. Material finds are now contextually interpreted, taking into account their special significance in their original locations instead of being studied in isolation. Material spatiality now assigns a dynamic agency to the material setting, acting as the shaper and facilitator of human behaviour and activities.[34]

However, determining the function of space solely based on distribution patterns is also ineffective, as objects were constantly moved around the houses. This approach is most fruitful when applied to sites where material finds are abundant and derive from a level of occupation that remains undisturbed. This is possible at sites where occupation has ceased due to sudden destruction, such as an earthquake (as in the case of Pella for Late Antiquity)[35] or a volcanic eruption (like Pompeii from the earlier empire).[36] However, when sites were gradually abandoned, people tended to remove their valuables and dispose of the rest of their belongings in a haphazard manner. In any case, systematic excavation and stratigraphic study of domestic sites with rich

[32] S.P. Ellis, 'Middle Class Houses in Late Antiquity', in Bowden, Gutteridge and Machado, *Social and Political Life*, 413-37; the controversial topic of 'middle-class houses' with a focus on decoration and aesthetic aspects is only most recently addressed in S. Kamani, *Neglected Architectural Decoration from Late Antique City* (Leiden, 2023) 168-205.
[33] J. Sodini, 'Archaeology and Late Antique Social Structure', in Lavan and Bowden, *Theory and* Practice, 25-56.
[34] Lavan, Swift, Putzeys, 'Material Spatiality',1-3, 23; Barette, 'Houses, Households and Homes', 12.
[35] See A. Walmsley, Households at Pella, Jordan: Domestic Destruction Deposits of The Mid 8th C', in Lavan, Swift, Putzeys, *Objects in Context*, *240*-72 at 240.
[36] See P. M. Allison, *Pompeian Households: an Analysis of the Material Culture* (Oxford, 2004).

material finds, or even domestic dumps, still provide us with ample information about the lives of the inhabitants over a specific period of time and can enhance our understanding of similar sites with meager finds. The results of these studies can still enhance our understanding of human habitation when combined with textual and pictorial evidence.[37] Two pioneering works concerning houses in Late Antiquity exemplify such circumstances.[38]

In Egypt, many settlements, such as Karanis, have produced a wealth of artefacts, all of which were removed from their find spots during excavations conducted in earlier centuries.[39] These were, at best, studied typologically and only inform us about their general meaning or application.[40] Nonetheless, even at these sites, both material culture and architecture are currently being reinterpreted in a new light and alongside other evidence.[41] Despite the costly process of stratigraphic excavation, a number of stratigraphic studies have been carried out in Egypt, including those in Alexandria,[42] and more recently, at domestic sites in the Dakhla oasis. The latter represents an exemplary micro-study with a holistic approach to analyzing individual houses in Amheida, utilizing all available evidence, such as structures, decorations, artifacts, papyri, and animal or plant remains.[43]

New approaches also consider the environment as an influential factor in house formation, which offers a number of possibilities or restrictions (for instance, construction materials like mudbrick, architectural styles, and the availability of water or wood) for housing practices. The environmental approach is a by-product of the view borrowed from New Archaeology, which assumes that nature is inherently functionalist. This means that culture adapts itself to meet environmental and social needs.[44] We will see in the second and third chapters that the architecture

[37] T. Putzeys, 'Domestic Space in Late Antiquity', in Lavan, Swift and Putzeys, *Objects in Context*, 49-62 at 49-51; Lavan, Swift, Putzeys, 'Material Spatiality', 5-7.
[38] See 35 above and also T. Putzeys et al., 'Contextual Analysis at Sagalassos', in Lavan, Swift, Putzeys, *Objects in* Context, 205-37.
[39] See E.M. Husselman, *Karanis Excavations of the University of Michigan in Egypt, 1928-1935: Topography and Architecture* (Ann Arbor, 1979).
[40] See E.K. Gazda, *Karanis an Egyptian Town in Roman Times* (Kelsey, 2004).
[41] See e.g. P. van Minnen, 'House-to-House Enquiries: an Interdisciplinary Approach to Roman Karanis', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 100 (1994) 227-51.
[42] See M. Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III: les habitations romaines tardives d'Alexandrie à la lumière des fouilles polonaises à Kom el-Dikka* (Varsovie, 1984).
[43] See A.L. Boozer, *Amheida II: A Late Romano-Egyptian House in Dakleh Oasis: Amheida House B2* (New York, 2016).
[44] Barette, 'Houses, Households and Homes', 12.

of Roman *domus* in Egypt, with its specific social implications, is not solely a product of societal norms; rather, its formation during the Roman and Late Antique periods is largely determined by climatic conditions in various Egyptian regions. The impact of the arid weather conditions in Egypt on the internal appearance of houses is highlighted in some studies of Egyptian houses.[45]

The ultimate goal of material spatiality is to reconstruct the totality of the house through a multidisciplinary approach. Over the past 15 years, architecture and urban planning have opened new possibilities by introducing computer-based quantitative analytical tools that contribute to this goal. This enables scholars to reconstruct fragmented artefacts that would have previously been disposed of or, at best, used for dating. Reconstructing the distribution patterns of the artefacts in stratigraphy within space helps scholars better understand the organization of daily life, thereby providing a visual method for analyzing and presenting find distributions. The digital creation of immersive virtual environments (3D modeling) of ancient domestic spaces enables us to study variables such as visibility, lighting, as well as patterns of movement and behaviour within these settings. Recent developments have the potential to embed sensory experiences in built spaces through the integration of 3D modeling and GIS (Geographic Information Systems).[46]

Overall, these studies can uncover activity patterns in space and enhance our understanding of the same artifacts in a different context. A proliferation of these works in a specific area can provide a bottom-up approach for tracking the transformation and change in societal norms through small shifts in the habits and practices of common people who used those assemblages or acted within those spaces.[47] Thus far, I have tried to present the primary methodologies and directions in Late Antique scholarship on housing, and some of the pioneering works and key research that have informed the writing of the current thesis. Meanwhile, I endeavored to introduce the reader to the interdisciplinary atmosphere of Late Antique archaeology of domestic space in which most regions of the empire are well represented. In the East, cities generally enjoyed

[45] See e.g. M. Nowicka, *La maison privée dans l'Égypte ptolémaïque* (Wroclaw, 1969); P. Davoli, 'Classical Influences on the Domestic Architecture of the Graeco-Roman Fayyum Sites', in A.A. Di Castro, C.A. Hope (eds), *Housing and Habitat in the Ancient Mediterranean Culture and Environmental Responses* (Leuven, 2015) 173-84.
[46] Lavan, Swift, Putzeys, 'Material Spatiality', 35-6; Barette, 'Houses, Households and Homes', 13; Also see W. Wendrich, B. Simpson, E. Elgewely, '3D Reconstruction of Furniture Fragments from the Ancient Town of Karanis', *Studies in Digital Heritage* (2017) 409-27; G. Landeschi, 'Rethinking GIS, Three-Dimensionality and Space Perception in Archaeology', *World Archaeology* 50 (2018) 1–16.
[47] Lavan, Swift, Putzeys, 'Material Spatiality', 23-5.

stability for a longer time up to the seventh century AD (in the case of Egypt and the Levant) and sometimes even beyond. The particular circumstances created due to the continuity of classical culture in Egypt make it even more difficult to closely follow changes and continuities. Late Antique Egypt primarily belongs to the ancient classical world and is therefore studied under the label of Roman archaeology alongside Ptolemaic Egypt.[48]

However, despite the numerous excavation reports generated for Egyptian settlements - primarily focusing on retrieving papyri rather than on architecture and material finds - key synthetic works for Egypt have only emerged in the last two decades.[49] Also, significant monographs on Egyptian houses examine the evidence diachronically over a broad time span from the third century BC to the seventh century AD.[50] Most works in the new century study houses on a local level but have adopted more methodological and holistic approaches, incorporating a variety of sources. One specific study examines change diachronically in the Dakhla oasis from the Roman period to Late Antiquity.[51] While there are also multidisciplinary approaches on a broader scope, including evidence of housing from the totality of Egypt.[52] Most recently, a comprehensive synthetic volume explores various topics related to houses and households from Ptolemaic to Roman Egypt.[53]

Egypt, influenced by both Greek and Roman cultures for nearly a millennium, showcases a vibrant tapestry of cultures, ethnicities, languages, and identities. It offers a unique opportunity to explore cultural interactions and the impacts of foreign rule. Meanwhile, the long-lasting effects of ancient Egyptian culture have resulted in continuities that stretch even beyond its separation from the empire following the Persian and Arab invasions in the seventh century AD, aligning well with contemporary scholarly interest in focusing more on continuities than changes. However,

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[48] Uytterhoeven, 'Housing in Late Antiquity', 89.
[49] See e.g. R. Alston, 'Houses and Households in Roman Egypt', in R. Laurence, A. Wallace-Hadrill (eds), *Domestic Space in the Roman World, Pompeii and beyond* (Portsmouth, 1997) 25–39; D. Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies on Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Housing in Egypt: Analysis of Ground Plan Typology, Locking Systems and Accessibility, and a Comparative Study of Domestic Bread Ovens* (unpublished doctoral dissertation; Leuven, 2005); Y.E.H. Abdelwahed, *Houses in Graeco-Roman Egypt, Arenas for Ritual Activity* (Oxford, 2016); Boozer, *Amheida II*.
[50] For an archaeological approach see Nowicka, *Maison privée*; and for a study of houses based on papyri see G. Husson, *Oikia: Le vocabulaire de la maison privée en Egypte d'après les papyrus grecs* (Paris, 1983).
[51] See C.A. Hope, 'The Roman-Period Houses of Kellis in Egypt's Dakhleh Oasis', in Di Castro, Hope, *Housing and Habitat*, 199-229.
[52] R. Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (London, 2002); Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*.
[53] Barette and Carrington, *Households in Context: Dwellings in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt.*

this same advantage may complicate the assessment of its relationship with developments in other provinces. Egypt is also notable for its abundance and exceptional preservation of architecture, material culture (including organic finds), and textual remains (such as papyri), which facilitate multidisciplinary studies of housing practices and domestic life. These studies can also enhance our understanding of similar contexts in other regions of the empire, where sources are scarce.[54]

It is obvious that, even if the focus of a work is on Late Antiquity, knowledge of the state of affairs in previous periods is essential for demonstrating the process of change. There is significant continuity between Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, and we will refer to them sparingly as well. Nonetheless, narrowing down the time frame focuses on the relevance of developments concerning the rest of the empire during this period. Thus, the objective of this work is to demonstrate change and continuity through a multidisciplinary and diachronic comparison of houses across Egypt, from the Roman period (first to the end of the third centuries AD) to Late Antiquity (fourth to seventh centuries AD), using evidence from architecture, decoration, furniture, and material finds, where applicable. These elements will be discussed in their contexts. This research includes evidence of all house types, including both Roman *domus* and middle-range native houses in both towns and the countryside, as well as more modest subdivision structures that emerged during Late Antiquity.

We have defined 'house' as both a social construct and the venue where the act of habitation occurs. However, the scope of this work is restricted to private houses where human beings live with their families. Our information will be drawn from secondary sources. Sites have mostly been chosen where good synthetic work has been conducted, such as Alexandria and the Dakhla oasis. Although evidence may be scarce or patchy for a certain house type at specific sites and across particular time periods, such as Late Antique Alexandria, recent meticulous excavations and holistic studies have compensated for these shortcomings. Otherwise, evidence will be drawn from excavation reports.

One cannot discuss Egyptian houses without mentioning the papyri, which have been abundantly discovered in various contexts and have served as the primary sources for studying houses in Roman and Late Antique Egypt for a considerable time. These consist of legal and tax

[54] Barette, 'Houses, Households and Homes', 12.

documents, personal letters, and receipts. Unlike textual evidence from Rome that deals with matters of spatiality, these are generally informative about some of the visible aspects of houses (number of floors, various house parts), specific house types, and rights of access some of which are now lost in the archaeological record. Occasionally, we may find information regarding specific spaces and what they may have contained, which can indirectly lead us to understand the use of space. Although this work is primarily based on archaeological finds, at the beginning of each chapter regarding Egypt, I have included a section that reflects on what papyrological studies from each period contribute to the study of houses.

Furthermore, papyri discovered in homes may sometimes unveil a family archive connected to a particular residence. These are best studied in context alongside architectural and material findings. However, in most cases, due to the difficulties associated with recovery and interpretation of the papyri, reconstruction of a family or a person's life might not be possible. It is also challenging to link papyri to a specific occupational level. Although a few studies have attempted to do so, the methodological approaches in this area are still being developed. Nonetheless, these studies open possibilities and help enrich the interpretation of houses in certain instances. We have utilized some of these studies in the present work where they are relevant to the selected sites, such as Karanis and Jeme.

Drawing upon this evidence, we will examine the changes in various aspects of Late Antique houses, including housing styles, spatial organization, architectural technology, the use and function of houses, interior spaces, and finally, the role of environment. Social bonds among the inhabitants, family and household relationships, and gender considerations are excluded from the scope of this research. We will try to explain our perspective on cultural change by illustrating how various spaces were constructed and used, how these might reflect the identity of the inhabitants (including occupation, ethnicity, and religion), how dominant cultures and ideologies (such as religion and cultural products) are mirrored in the built environment, and how they may have influenced and shaped the lives of individuals residing in different types of housing.

We will address the research goals in three chapters. In the first chapter, we will present background information on the ideal Roman house, its Greek origins, and its formation. This is essential for understanding the classical house, its elements and developments over time, which

led to the emergence of a shared Mediterranean aristocratic culture during Late Antiquity. The fundamental information provided in this chapter helps to identify Greek or Roman influences in the distinctively divergent Egyptian context, which will be explored in the following chapters. We will also introduce other types of non-elite houses and establish a criterion to define middle-range homes that exhibit aristocratic influences in the Roman world. We will then illustrate how these various dwelling practices might have evolved during Late Antiquity, both in the centre of the empire and in the provinces. The objective is to establish a benchmark for analyzing the cultural influences of houses in Roman Egypt.

In the second chapter, we will give an overview of houses in Roman Egypt, focusing on the continued influence of Greek culture and the emergence of Roman influences across all house types during the first to third centuries AD. This section is crucial for understanding the state of houses in the first three centuries and aids in grasping later developments. First, we will bring to the fore evidence of Romano-Egyptian houses by examining Roman period papyri. Next, we will present evidence from archaeology that is selected with a balanced distribution across three distinct regions in Egypt, ranging from the north (Lower Egypt or Delta region) to the south (Upper Egypt), while focusing on the regional styles of housing and foreign influences. A final section synthesizes the evidence with the aim of providing an overall analysis of the formation, origins, and functions of houses that existed in Egypt during the first three centuries of Roman rule.

The third chapter maintains a similar structure. After comparing the papyri from the new period with those from the first three centuries, we will visit previous regions to introduce evidence of housing in the Late Antique period, focusing on local continuities and changes in relation to the earlier period. Where evidence of continued habitation into the Late Antique period is scarce, we will draw examples from similar settlements in other regions to conduct a cross-regional diachronic comparison. This is the case for Roman Karanis, where the fourth-century layers are not well-preserved. In this instance, we will draw on the evidence of similar house types from the Coptic town of Jeme in Upper Egypt, where the continuity of habitation extends into the eighth century. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the changes that occurred in houses and housing traditions in Egypt over six centuries and to explore some possible reasons for these evolutions. We will finally return to the inquiry into how these changes may reflect or relate to the developments in Egypt or in the greater Mediterranean milieu.

The changes and continuities of the ancient way of life in Egypt have been the subject of various studies in the 21st century. However, the latest comprehensive work covering the entirety of Egypt was written two decades ago. Since then, the state of affairs has evolved, and new methodologies have reshaped our interpretation of the existing evidence. The current work is an up to dated report on housing in Egypt, bringing together and synthesizing a diverse body of information, evidence, and latest studies from across Egypt. It considers socio-cultural influences and environmental factors in the formation of both elite and non-elite houses in Roman Egypt. While the conclusion may not differ drastically - and this may not occur for some time – a proliferation of contextual micro-studies with multidisciplinary approaches holds great promises of a changed perspective in the future.

Chapter 1:

From Greek *Oikia* to Late Antique Roman *Domus*

One house is a town, the city hides ten thousand towns.[55]

Introduction

Public buildings exemplify social norms and conventions. Likewise, houses recount the story of the inhabitants, their tastes, habits, personal ideology, social class, ethnicity, and political and religious affiliations. A house is both a reflection of its owner's personality and its architect's taste, who were influenced by the conventions and norms of their society. This makes the house a product of both the individual and social context.[56] The homogeneity of classical Athenian houses suited the democratic city state, whereas the rigid spatial divisions of a Roman house reflect a hierarchal society. Thus, houses are interpreted as what Kim Bowes calls 'an important barometer of social change'.[57]

Late Antiquity was a period of constant social and cultural change. The Tetrarchs' reforms to alleviate the military and political crisis of the third century entailed massive recruiting of bureaucratic personnel empire-wide, who became powerful local figures.[58] Patronage became a more important element in aristocratic life and sometimes of a more oppressive nature, especially between the elites and the local peasants, who relied on their patrons to defend them from tax collectors.[59] The growth of Christianity, which, compared to the traditional religions, dealt more with the private aspects of citizens' lives, alongside the autocratic essence of the new government, changed the nature of the age-old Roman patron-client tradition. These influences were projected in the lives of Late Antique aristocracy and in their houses.[60]

Many areas of the empire witnessed a proliferation of elaborate Roman peristyle houses during the late-third and early-fourth centuries AD. These houses displayed the ever-increasing

[55] Olympiodorus, fr. 41.1. By 'house', Olympiodorus meant the fifth-century *domus* of wealthy aristocrats in Rome.
[56] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 1-9.
[57] Bowes, *Houses and* Society, 11.
[58] Bowes, *Houses and Society*, 98.
[59] Ellis, 'End of the Roman House', 573-4.
[60] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 59.

power of the Roman aristocracy during this period. A general lack of archaeological evidence for middle-range houses and subdivision of larger structures (including houses) to form multiple poorer accommodations, along with a decline in the number of large houses, signals another change towards the end of our period during the fifth and sixth centuries.[61] However, Late Antique developments were perceived differently, at various times, in different regions of the empire, and for different reasons. To understand the extent to which the above social developments are reflected in domestic space in different regions, not only local studies are needed, but also a general apprehension of the Roman house and its function is imperative. In the first section of this chapter, I will provide an overview of the ideal Roman house and its origins. The evolutions of the ideal house during Late Antiquity are discussed in the second section. Other types of dwellings are presented in the last section. The purpose of this chapter is to show that, while changes can be perceived in the domestic space under the influence of Late Antique developments, the fundamental principles of housing traditions remained consistent, as local types also coexisted alongside them in the provinces.

The Roman Domus *and Its Origins*

Studies on both Greek and Roman domestic spaces refer to the work of the second-century author, Vittuvius' *On Architecture*. Vitruvius has dedicated a complete book to the architecture of houses in his work.[62] However, his description of Roman house is mainly theoretical rather than practical, as he describes standard dimensions and orientations of the main areas or rooms (*atrium*, *tablinum*, peristyle, dining rooms, and bedrooms) of a generic Roman house rather than describing an actual house.[63] Furthermore, like most Latin authors who mention houses in their writings, his description appears to include only large Roman houses found at the heart of the empire, leaving aside humbler dwellings.[64] House was the symbol of the social status of the owner in ancient

[61] F. Guidobaldi, 'Le domus tardo antiche di Roma come "sensori" delle transformazioni culturali e sociali', in W.V. Harris (ed), *The Transformations of the URBS ROMA in Late Antiquity* (Portsmouth, 1999) 53-68 at 57-9; Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 59,191; Ellis, 'Middle Class Houses', 413-37; Machado, 'Aristocratic Houses', 145.
[62] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.
[63] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.3.1-11.
[64] For instance, Petronius, the fist-century author, describes Trimalchio's dinner party in Rome at the time of Nero in his work, *Satyricon*; Pliny the Younger, describes his villas in Tusculum and Laurentium in his letter to his friend

Rome.[65] Thus, one expects to find many varieties and sizes, rather than the ideal aristocratic house, generally depicted in the works of ancient writers. Nevertheless, Vitruvius's work helps identify the main features (rooms) of a Roman house according to the central traditions of the empire. It has also provided us with vocabulary to label the interior spaces of a house when we encounter them in archaeology.[66] The plans of the majority of the so-called '*atrium* houses' excavated in the 19th and the early 20th centuries in Pompeii and Herculaneum are in conformity with Vitruvius' description of the Roman house.[67] Roman *domus* finds its origins in the Greek peristyle house of the Hellenistic period, which is itself developed from the classical Greek courtyard house. We will show in later chapters that this terminology naturally changed over time and across the vast territories of the Roman Empire, some of which were influenced by Greek Hellenistic culture.

Figure 1 is a reconstruction (according to Becker) of Vitruvius's description of the peristyle house of a wealthy Greek household in the first century AD, where separate quarters for men and women are arranged around two courtyards.[68] Yet, it has enabled scholars to make some generalizations about the principles and components of fifth- and fourth-century BC Greek single-courtyard houses. Normally, the courtyard, αὐλή (area A and Γ), is located in the centre or the southern part of the house and may be entered through a single entrance door *θυρών* (area α). A colonnaded portico runs around one to four sides of the courtyard, depending on the house type (*pastas, prostas,* peristyle). This forms a roofed, open space suitable for work (area Π), surrounded by one or two floors of rooms of different functions. Around the porticoed court, the living quarters (bedrooms or *θάλαμος*, areas marked as θ) are laid out. Cisterns in the courtyards provide access to water for domestic use.[69] The examination of material finds in the majority of houses in Olynthos, in northern Greece, shows a high concentration of finds from various categories in the courtyards. Based on these finds, the courtyards are associated with a variety of domestic activities

Gallus (*Letters* 2.17-5.6); Other Latin writers such as Cicero, Martial, Statius, and Sidonius comment on houses in Italy in passing.

[65] Vitruvius states: 'Hence, men of everyday fortune do not need entrance courts, *tablina*, or *atrium* built in grand style, because such men are more apt to discharge their social obligations by going round to others than to have others come to them.' See *On Architecture* 6.3.5.1.

[66] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.3.1-11; Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 12-3.

[67] P.M. Allison, 'Domestic Space and Activities', in P. Foss, J. Dobbins (eds), *The Worlds of Pompeii* (New York, 2009) 269-78 at 270-1.

[68] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.7.1-7; M.H. Morgan (tr.), *The Ten Books on Architecture* (Cambridge, 1914) 186.

[69] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.7.1-7; L.C. Nevett, *House and Society in Ancient Greek World* (Cambridge, 2001) 22-5.

such as cooking, baking, weaving, and washing.[70] Evidence of industrial activity such as the production of textiles, olive oil, and grinding grains attests to the existence of business activities above the level of domestic use in twenty-five percent of the Olynthian houses.[71]

References to separate quarters for men (*andronitis*) and women (*gynaikonitis*) appear in Vitruvius and other Greek writen sources.[72] However, an examination of houses in Olynthos and other parts of the Greek world bears no proof of such clear-cut physical separation in smaller houses with one courtyard, except the *andron*, where men held their *symposia*. Women (except for *hetairai*) were not allowed to participate in these events.[73] It is only in the later, rich Hellenistic peristyle houses with two courtyards that the availability of space enabled the inhabitants to assign separate quarters for men and women, as described by Vitruvius.[74]

House Avii4 (Fig. 2) in Olynthos serves as an example of a single-courtyard house, featuring a porticoed colonnade on only one side of the court (pastas) and in front of the main domestic unit. This unit is called an *oikos*.[75] Here, the living quarters (areas nos. a to g) are located to the north. A shop h and the *andron* k flank the courtyard to the south. The distribution of finds (shown on the layout) reveals that, except for the *andron*, all other spaces in this house were shared by all family members. Here, the *andron* k gives direct access to the courtyard, which is the hub of activities.[76] *Andrones* are identifiably the largest rooms in the household, which had raised borders on the sides to accommodate the *klinai* (dining couches). *Andrones* also have better decorations, such as coloured plastered walls, mosaic floors, and drainage in some cases. The access from the courtyard is provided through an anteroom (j) or an off-centre door. This allowed

[70] Nevett, *House and Society*, 65-9.
[71] N. Cahill, 'Household Industry in Greece and Anatolia', in A. Bradley, L.C. Nevett (eds), *Ancient Greek Houses: Chronological, Regional and Social Diversity* (Philadelphia, 2005) 54-66 at 55.
[72] See e.g. Lysias, *Speeches* 1.9-10 in which Euphiletos explains that his modest two-storey house has both an *andronitis* and a *gynikonitis*; Xenophon, *The Economist* 9.5; Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.7.2, 6.7.4.
[73] C. M. Antonaccio, 'Architecture and Behavior: Building Gender into Greek Houses', *The Classical World* 93 (2000) 517-33 at 533.
[74] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.7; Antonaccio, 'Architecture and Behavior', 527.
[75] The *oikos* unit was the main domestic component of the house, used by all the household members. This unit consisted of a large room, sometimes containing a hearth, and two other smaller areas, normally a bath and a storage. These two spaces were separated from the main room by a rubble partition.
[76] Nevett, *House and Society*, 66.

more couches to be placed inside and offered increased privacy by impeding the view to the court area.[77]

These influences shaped the 'ideal' Roman *atrium* house by the third century BC. To provide a general view of the ideal Roman *domus*, the plan of the 'House of the Vetii' in Pompeii is used here (Fig. 3). Vitruvius uses the word *atrium* to refer to the inner courtyard of a house.[78] This is an area immediately behind the narrow entrance or *fauces* (area no. b), and a constant component of the *atrium* house (area no. c). The most notable feature of this space is an opening in the roof (*compluvium*) that possibly reached the height of a second floor, which no longer exists. A small *impluvium*, located in the centre of the *atrium* directly beneath the opening, collected rainwater in a cistern situated below the pool. An *atrium* functioned as a lightwell and supplied the household with water for cleaning and industrial use. Pompeian houses had a piping system which supplied water for drinking and for fountains that adorned the peristyle gardens.[79] A variety of both decorative objects, such as statues, marble tables, and basins, as well as utilitarian objects like cupboards, utensils, chests, and storage vessels, were found in the *atria* of Pompeian houses and the rooms around them. This suggests that the *atrium* was the hub of domestic activities such as cooking, weaving, and spinning. This was also where the master of the house received and impressed his guests and clients.[80]

On the opposite side of the *atrium*, another relatively large room (*tablinum*), axially aligned with the entrance, gives open access to the large colonnaded peristyle garden. A rare number of objects found in the *tablinum* of Pompeian houses suggests that they had no specific function, at least during the summer when Vesuvius erupted.[81] The 'House of the Vetii' does not have a *tablinum*. A wide opening in the rear wall of the *atrium*, defined by two flanking piers, provides access to the garden.[82] Fountains, pools, and sometimes masonry garden furniture exist in many Pompeian gardens. This suggests that the area was meant to be entered and seen by visitors. Other material finds in the courtyards of poorer houses, such as braziers, wellhead covers (*puteals*), and

[77] M. Trumper, 'Space and Social Relationship in Greek *Oikos* of the Classical and Hellenistic Period', in R. Beryl (ed), *A Companion to Families in Greek and Roman World* (Oxford, 2011) 32-52 at 36.
[78] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.3.
[79] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 1-2.
[80] Allison, 'Domestic Space', 271.
[81] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.3.5-6; Allison, 'Domestic Space', 273-5.
[82] J.R., Clark, *The Houses of Roman Italy 100 BC- AD 250* (Berkeley, 1991) 208.

amphorae, serve as evidence of cooking, bulk storage, as well as industrial and agricultural activities.[83]

The peristyle is surrounded by rooms of different types and sizes. Larger open rooms are labelled *triclinia* (dining rooms).[84] As a guest walks into the peristyle of the 'House of the Vetii', he can see one such highly decorated room (room q) on his right side. This is a dining room with couches arranged in a U-shaped format at the back of the room, enabling the guests to enjoy an unimpeded view of the garden as they dine.[85] The combination of a *triclinium* and its adjoining smaller rooms forms a dining suite, labelled as *oecus* or *exedra* in later houses. There are three *triclinia* in the 'House of the Vetii' (rooms p, q, n), and room q forms an *oecus* with its adjacent room r.[86] Vitruvius generally names the larger and more open rooms around the peristyle *triclinia*, and the smaller and closer ones, *cubicula*.[87] *Cubiculae* around the peristyles in Pompeian houses are either empty or contain chests with domestic utensils related to food preparation and serving. Bedrooms are associated with finds such as evidence of bedding, small quantities of personal items related to toilet and dress, and more common objects such as lamps. However, the use of the rooms might have changed according to the seasons.[88]

Almost all types of residences, from the rich houses to the poorest one-room shops, had a secondary function in addition to their domestic use. Roman aristocrats received their clients during early morning hours (*salutatio*) at their houses. Shopkeepers both lived and worked in their one-or-two-room spaces.[89] In the 'House of the Vetii', a single large room on the left side of the *atrium*, accessible from the street, might have been a shop. Vitruvius explains the necessity of designing a stall or a shop for the house owners who are in the business of selling agricultural products.[90] Thus, houses of the rich functioned as both domestic and business venues. However, there was a firm distinction between the private and public areas of the houses, which displays a hierarchy of space, replicating Roman social structure.[91] Vitruvius informs us that there were two

[83] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 3-4.
[84] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.3.7-8.
[85] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 3.
[86] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.3.8; Clark, *Houses of Roman Italy*, *208.*
[87] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.4.1-2.
[88] Allison, 'Domestic Space', 272-4.
[89] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 5.
[90] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.5.2.
[91] Clark, *Houses of Roman Italy*, 12.

kinds of rooms in a Roman house: public and private. The vestibule, *atrium*, and *tablinum* were accessible to everyone, while bedrooms, baths, and dining rooms were only accessible upon invitation.[92]

The addition of the Greek peristyle to the atrium house also solved the problem of accommodating the enslaved, whose quarters had to be concealed. The enslaved were bound to a hierarchy depending on their intimacy with the family members and their tasks (cooks, *cubicularii*, clerks, secretaries, and so on). A second courtyard, upper storeys either in the peristyle or in the *atrium*, and sometimes a lower level, could solve the problem. In the 'House of the Vetii', two rooms, t and u, accessible from the peristyle, may have been women's quarters. The combination of rooms around the second *atrium* v may have been a quarter for the enslaved, where also a room with a hearth (probably a kitchen) was found.[93]

Houses were frequently built on a platform of cement and beaten earth. Walls were made of stone or cement and were stuccoed on the surface. Windows to the exterior were rare and located at a great height. Wall paintings were the most important type of decoration in a house due to their high visibility.[94] The delicacies of the Pompeian painting styles are out of the scope of this paper. In brief, a common characteristic of these styles was the sectional treatment of space. The walls were divided into horizontal friezes and vertical panels, which served as frames for artistic depictions. These panels would then embrace a variety of themes, including architectural elements and vistas, sometimes accompanied by still life, or figurative scenes. Both mythology and everyday life were sources of inspiration for Pompeian wall painters. Everyday life scenes such as hunting, fishing, and games represented the identity of the owner. The interpretation of mythological scenes was precarious and would have to be read jointly with other decorative elements. Most common, however, was the use of geometric motifs alone, or surrounding the busts of the seasons, or a simple wall sectioning, which counterfeited ashlar masonry, a technique called *opus isodorum*.[95]

[92] Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.5.1.
[93] Clark, *Houses of Roman Italy*, 14.
[94] Clark, *Houses of Roman Italy*, 31-2.
[95] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 115.

The combination of architectural elements and decorations in a house was meant to create a specific meaning for both the patron and the client. The prominent theme of the entrance - *atrium* - peristyle axis in the 'House of the Vetii' is set by a wall painting depicting Priapus, weighing his manhood against a bag of money. A mid-life-sized statue of the same figure was also found in the garden. Likewise, the two *acrae* (chests specifically used to keep money and valuables) would not escape notice in the *atrium*. The prominence of themes related to eroticism and wealth has been interpreted in light of the owners' social status. The Vetii brothers were freedmen who had climbed the social ladder and were obsessed with showing off their new money. Other statues of Dionysus, satyrs, and the cupids in the peristyle further relate to this theme.[96]

The great *oecus* q includes a continuous frieze, running around the room. Here, the upper and lower friezes are painted in red, and the main frieze is painted in black. Miniature cupids and *psychai* at work demonstrate the occupations customary at Pompeii, such as baking, gold working, perfume making, as well as woollen cloth and wine production processes. These mythological depictions of everyday life activities seemed reasonable and appealing to the guests. However, Dionysus, drinking and revelling with maenads and satyrs in the upper frieze, stood in contrast with the main theme. The two other smaller dining suites, p and n, located on the two sides of the entrance to the peristyle, include larger mythological scenes. A famous depiction of the infant Hercules, confronting a serpent to the amazement and fright of his parents, is believed to be a reproduction of the work by the fifth-century BC painter Zeuxis. This was an appealing choice for any aristocrat of high culture.[97]

By the first century AD, the importance of *atria* was secondary to the peristyle in Roman houses. Still, their prominence and role as a guest reception area remained the same until this time. Many new peristyle houses were made by adjoining a plot of land to the *atrium* houses, while the area of the *atrium* was kept. After the first century AD, the importance of the *atrium* as a reception area decreased. Reception and dining took place in the reception suites (*oeci*), located on the far side of the peristyle with a view to the peristyle garden. The idea of a reception room (*tablinum*) in Roman houses is very close to the Greek *andron*, from which the word *triclinium* (Roman dining

[96] Clark, *Houses of Roman Italy*, 210-3.
[97] Clark, *Houses of the Roman Italy*, 215-8, 224-7.

room) has probably derived.[98] In Late Antiquity *atrium* became a general term to refer to reception areas in houses.[99]

Peristyle houses were the ideal dwellings for the Roman elites, as the house indicated the association of the owner with a particular social class. However, the majority of the urban population could not afford to live in them. In cities, many had to live in smaller apartments in building blocks. The so-called *medianum* apartments in Ostia consisted of a few rooms built around one central larger room called *medianum*. This was a long corridor that allowed light and air through its exterior windows, which opened to either a shared courtyard or street. Ostia offers forty to fifty examples of these apartments. These were accessed from a shared staircase at one end of the corridor. There was typically one more decorated large room at the opposite end of the *medianum*, which has been labelled as *exedra* (living room). Other small rooms were called *cubicula* (bedrooms). Although it is not possible to firmly attribute a certain function to spaces, Ellis compares the *exedrae* with *triclina*, since it is located at the far end of the residence and sometimes includes rich decoration.[100]

A good example of this type of residence is the House of the Graffiti (Fig. 4) in the Garden Court complex in Ostia (AD 123-128), which includes thirteen apartments. The apartment covers 180 m^2 of living space on the ground floor. After passing through the door to the complex from the south, one enters a vestibule paved with black and white mosaic. To the right, one can enter the apartment into a luminous *medianum* with three large east-facing windows. The *exedrae* is located to the north with windows facing the street. Remnants of the interior walls show that these were stuccoed and painted with yellow and red. The other western rooms (5 and 6) depend on the *medianum* for light and air. Both of these rooms show traces of stucco and yellow paint, which are partially preserved. This is an example of a spacious and well-lit apartment, with richly decorated reception rooms. Residents of some means, who obviously aspired to the lifestyle of the upper classes, may have lived here.[101]

[98] A. Boethius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture* (Norwich, 1994) 75-6, 184-6.
[99] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 36, 41.
[100] G. Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman City life* (Edmonton, 1982) 35; Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 75.
[101] Hermansen, *Ostia*, 35-7.

The Late Antique Evolution of the 'Houses of Pretention'

By the fourth century, the peristyle house became the ideal aristocratic residence, found in many different varieties in most provinces throughout the Empire. Nonetheless, the principles of its layout remained the same. Houses consisted of a central peristyle with the entrance and the *triclinium* facing each other on opposite sides. All the other rooms and apartments were arranged around this core according to personal taste or local architectural traditions. Sometimes, a second courtyard was added either at the front or the rear of the house, forming women's or servants' quarters, or a more public reception area. *Atria* completely fell out of fashion and became just a label generally attributed to the reception areas such as vestibules.[102] With the emergence of the local grandees in the provinces, more elaborate houses and sumptuous villas were either built or adapted from earlier houses during the fourth and fifth centuries AD, in both the East and West. Most elaborate peristyle houses, sometimes interpreted as *episcopeia* and *praetoria* (residences of bishops and governors), with larger and multiple specialized reception rooms and more private facilities may in fact belong to local *clarissimi*, unless otherwise attested by an inscription or other evidence. These grand structures either in rural or urban contexts constitute the basis of all studies of domestic space in every corner of the Empire. Asia Minor is the best region to study the developments because of its relative political and economic stability up to the seventh century.[103]

The increasing need of local magnates to receive clients of various social strata in their houses and to maintain the privacy of the household at the same time led to the introduction of various types of reception rooms to the Late Antique *domus*. These are identifiable in archaeological records by their location, size, form, and more elaborate decoration.[104] To show these new developments, three particular houses are selected here: the fifth-century 'Villa above the Theatre' at Ephesus (Fig. 5), which was developed on a smaller Hellenistic house, the so-called 'Bishop's House' at Aphrodisias (Fig. 6), also dated to the fifth century, and the partially excavated

[102] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 40-9.
[103] Ellis, 'Late Antique Houses', 47.
[104] L. Özgenel, 'Public Use and Privacy in Late Antique Houses in Asia Minor: The Architecture of Spatial Control', in Lavan, Özgenel, and Sarantis, *Housing in Late Antiquity*, 239-82 at 239.

'Late Roman Villa' at Halicarnassus (Fig. 7), dated to middle of the fifth century. The latter was abandoned around the time of the Persian or Arab invasions in the seventh century.[105]

The new houses mostly have large colonnaded stone-flagged courtyards, often decorated with eloquent water installations, such as water tanks, pools, basins, and fountains, sometimes adorned with mosaics. Unlike the earlier houses, these normally have more than one entrance. The 'Villa above the Theatre' has two courtyards, with one entrance near the apsidal room and probably another on the east side. The 'Bishop's House' has three distinct entrances. The 'Late Roman Villa' at Halicarnassus must have had one more entrance, considering the size and the partial preservation of one side of the house. Here, the abnormality behind the wall of the apsidal hall indicates that there was once a fountain, which faced a possible main dining room on the opposite side of the court.[106]

One common feature recognizable in all three houses is the presence of a considerably large elongated room with a single apse at the end. This was an audience hall, where the patron would receive his clients on a daily basis in a formal and ritualized manner.[107] In all three houses, the hall is located in a lateral position with the courtyard, close to an entrance door preceded by a vestibule. All have no view to the peristyle and limited access to the interior spaces of the house. In the 'Bishops's House', a second entrance from the courtyard close to the apse enabled the patron to enter the hall before his clients and take his seat in the area immediately in front of the apse. This area was divided from the rest of the hall by a vertical screen embedded in the marble floor.[108] The audience hall of the 'Villa above the Theatre' covered an area of 181 m^2. This could be accessed through a seven-meter-wide passage into the vestibule preceding the hall at the southwest entrance. A recess in the wall foundation along the interior of the apse might have been a seat. A door on the west side of the chamber led to the courtyard via a short corridor.[109] At Halicarnassus, the audience hall covered an area of 122 m^2. Here, the sequence of decorated rooms leading from

[105] Özgenel, 'Public Use', 242-4.
[106] Özgenel, 'Public Use', 248-51.
[107] S.P. Ellis, 'Early Byzantine Housing', in K. Dark (ed), *Secular Buildings and the Archaeology of Everyday Life in Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 2004) 37-52 at 39.
[108] Özgenel, 'Public Use', 254.
[109] Ellis, 'Late Antique Houses', 43-4.

the vestibule to the apsidal hall would make the visit more ritualized. A low marble screen probably existed across the chord of the apse.[110]

Triclinia still occupied a prominent location in the peristyles, except that they became more elaborate, sometimes with one or more apses. Nevertheless, their view to the peristyle was deliberately more restricted. Where more than two of these rooms are present, it is possible that the smaller one was used for dining with friends and family, and the larger one, with three or more apses, would be reserved for formal and ceremonial dining.[111] The grand dining room with three apses to the east of the peristyle in the 'Bishop's House' is a triconch. The off-centre door in the middle apse gives way to the staircase leading to the upper floor. A second door in the adjacent apse leads to a series of small rooms that may have served as a service area. The triconch here would be accessed through a narrow door.[112] The *triclinium* in the 'Villa above the Theatre' is not apsidal, but it occupies a large area to the east of the courtyard, and it is accessed through three doors. Some form of masonry block found to the north of the room may have been a tribunal for addressing a large number of diners here. The prominent place of the dining rooms on the main peristyle shows that these were used to receive and entertain a closer circle of friends and peers, family, and associates who were allowed to enter the interior areas of the house.[113]

The absence of an open view to the peristyle in these Late Antique houses may suggest that most of the attention was supposed to be directed towards the interior events, the splendor of the host, and the extravagance of the meal. Further evidence supporting this assumption is provided by the introduction of a new semicircular dining couch or *stibadium* (Fig. 8), along with a semicircular table called *sigma*, replacing the previous recliners. In his study of artificial lighting in domestic space, Ellis shows how this new arrangement in dining rooms, together with lighting fixtures like the *polycandelon* (bronze chandelier hanging inside the apse), created a theatrical effect. The guests would be packed at the end of the room in the apse with a dim light focusing on their table. They would eat, while watching the entertainment which took place in the remaining rectangular space of the room. He concludes that the arrangement is meant to accentuate the increased importance of the host by placing him and the food in the spotlight. According to the

[110] Ellis, 'Late Antique Houses', 44; Özgenel, 'Public Use', 256.
[111] Ellis, 'Early Byzantine Housing', 39.
[112] Özgenel, 'Public Use', 254.
[113] Ellis, 'Late Antique Houses', 44.

textual evidence, the host or the most important guest sat at the right end of the couch. Thus, he interprets the space as dramatized and the activity as greatly ritualized. This might have been different in a triconch, which could accommodate three couches. Here, the attention was directed to the interior rather than the exterior as in previous *triclinia*.[114]

Bathing is indisputably a Roman leisure and social activity. Romans met their patrons and clients to discuss business. They ate, drank, and socialized in public baths. Some Roman aristocrats preferred to use more sophisticated rather than public facilities. The first private baths in Roman houses date to the end of the republican and beginning of the imperial period in Pompeii, where at least 30 private baths have been uncovered from both middle- and upper-class houses. Roman baths, both public and private, consisted of a changing room (*apodyterium*), a warm room (*tepidarium*), and a hot room (*caldarium*), which contained hot and cold plunge baths. Hot air produced by fire was led through the pile of tiles beneath the floor, flowed through the terracotta tubes inserted in the walls, and warmed the area.[115]

Baths are recognizable in the archaeological records by semicircular niches, their small size (for fuel economy considerations), and their location. In Late Antique villas, baths were usually located at the entrance, close to the reception rooms, and far from the interior of the house due to their public character and safety reasons.[116] In the 'Villa above the Theatre' at Ephesus, a bath was added during its later construction phases near the audience hall and was accessible from outside. Many North African baths were accessible both from the interior of the house and the street front. A study of houses in North Africa and Tunisia reveals a high number of baths built during the later reconstruction phases. This enables us to consider the addition of baths as an important characteristic of Late Antique houses in this particular region.[117] However, this might

[114] For an account of a dinner with emperor Majorian see Sidonius Apollinaris, *Letters* 1.11; S.P. Ellis, 'Shedding Light on Roman Housing', in Lavan, Özgenel, Sarantis, *Housing in Late Antiquity*, 283-302 at 294-5.
[115] The 'Villa of Menander' in Pompeii is an example. See Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 41; N. De Haan, 'Si aquae copia patiatur: Pompeian Private Baths and the Use of Water', in A. O. Koloski-Ostrow (ed), *Water Use and Hydraulics in the Roman City* (Iowa, 2001) 41-9 at 41-2.
[116] Nowicka, *Maison privée*, 141-2.
[117] F. Chedini, S. Bullo, 'Late Antique Domus of Africa Proconsularis', in Lavan, Özgenel, Sarantis, *Housing in Late Antiquity*, 337-66 at 340.

not be the case in all parts of the Empire, since the construction of a bath is subject to the availability of water.[118]

Domestic shrines are attested mostly in the written sources but not many of them are attested in the archaeological record.[119] It is possible that the 'Villa above the Theatre', included a small shrine in one of the more private apartments to the north. This appears to have had a full bema for the clergy with a marble step across the middle of the room.[120] A British Roman villa at Lullingstone (AD 100 to 400) also included a shrine, built around AD 350, in the second phase of its occupation from AD 290 until it was destroyed by fire in AD 400. Although evidence of traditional religion and worship from the fourth century exists at the villa, the shrine suggests that at least the owners had converted to Christianity. A wall painting from this space (Fig. 9) depicts five Christian worshipers of different ages and genders in five separate panels, praying in congregation in the orans position, a typically Christian gesture. The seated person in the sixth panel seems to be the *dominus* of the house. Painted columns in red and blue separate the panels, and the lower frieze is filled with floral motifs in the same colours. The fresco is believed to be a depiction of the owner and his family at prayer. Noteworthy is a bath built into the house during its first construction phase in AD 180, refurbished at the time of reoccupation after AD 290, and went out of use in AD 380.[121]

Late Antique houses, like their predecessors, constitute an ensemble with their decorations and should be interpreted jointly. Although few wall paintings have survived from the fourth century onwards, the popular themes and styles of Late Antique artistic representations can be deduced from mosaics. One common theme, which emerged in North Africa and spread to the rest of the Empire, is the representation of life in the countryside and scenes of animal hunts for the amphitheatre in Rome. Some depictions include the owner of the estate himself and his villa in the background. Other common themes are busts of the seasons and anachronistic representations of minor mythological heroes, such as Bellerophon, Meleager, Ganymede, and Orpheus, often

[118] De Haan, 'Si aquae copia patiatur', 42.
[119] A late-sixth-century text mentions the suburban villa of Anastasius at Amoriom with a chapel dedicated to the Virgin. see *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, 107; two laws, *Cod. Theod.* XVI.2.33 of AD 383 and *Cod. Theod.* XVI.5.11 of AD 398, suggest that the state was mindful of private cults and heresies and attempted to regulate private chapels.
[120] Ellis, 'Late Antique Houses', 43-4.
[121] G.W. Meates, 'The Lullingston Roman Villa' in R.L.S. Bruce-Milford (ed.), *Recent Archaeological Excavations* (London, 1956) 87-109 at 101-3, 109; Ellis, 'Shedding Light', 292.

associated with the villa owners. It seems that the local officials followed the path of the increasingly ritualized courts of the emperors in adopting the iconography of a local hero.[122]

A mosaic in the apsidal room of the 'Late Roman Villa' at Halicarnassus depicts Meleager and Atalante in contemporary local costume, associating them with the owners of the house. Elsewhere in the same room, a similar type of representation of Aeneas and Dido is found. These heroes would not have been identifiable without name labels. An inscription in the threshold of the door names a certain Charidemos as the owner of the house. In Room E, busts of the three cities of Beirut, Alexandria, and Halicarnassus are displayed in a mosaic, indicating the owner's association with these cities, either as the venue of his education (Alexandria and Beirut being related to education and law schools) or the city of his residence. Here, the visitors to this house would be introduced to a heroic representation of their patron and his achievements before visiting him in reality. This shows how representations of art served to articulate the power, high culture, and liberality of the owners.[123]

Housing Options for Ordinary People in Late Antiquity

Such luxuries were not available to the majority of the population in Late Antiquity. Evidence of middle-range housing is insufficient in many of the cities of the Empire, and subdivision of larger structures, including houses, an empire-wide development, reinforces this suggestion. This development is interpreted as the degradation of major public structures or larger houses into clusters of poorer and lower-quality dwellings by adding walls. Subdivision is regarded as an architectural style in that it follows certain rules. In Asia Minor, in particular, the new walls did not disturb the existing base, but rather rested on top of the original floor mosaics. These were built with reused architectural material and rubble and were normally left unplastered. The architecture of subdivision is also determined by the size of the space to be divided. This means that the new walls always follow the existing plan. For instance, in peristyle houses, porticos were always divided with intercolumniation walls.[124] But, where the court was large enough,

[122] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 132-4.
[123] Ellis, 'Late Antique Houses', 45.
[124] Ellis, 'Early Byzantine Housing', 47-8.

independent small houses would be built in the area. The *palaistra* of the baths at Anemur in Isauria (Asia Minor) is a good example where two houses, each with three to four rooms and a small corridor, were erected in the court. A fifth-century subdivision created smaller houses in the amphitheatre of Tebessa in modern Tunisia.[125]

The plan of the House of the Frescoes (Fig. 10) in Tipasa, modern Algeria, shows how subdivision has turned the previously richer house into four lower-quality residential units that accommodated a less wealthy community of people. Here, the dividing walls are all built from rough stone masonry. The entrance is divided along its length to direct the traffic to different apartments. The extension of the south-eastern apartment into the portico, along with finds of coins and buried storage jars in Room 16, suggests commercial activity in this unit. Room 1 in apartment C, or the former *triclinium* of the house, and Room 3 are divided by a wall to restrict the line of sight from the street through the entrance of Room 20. Both apartments A and B have restricted access to their entrances by building walls and doors on the portico around the peristyle. These apartments are obviously poorer but it is not clear to what extent, for Apartment A still covers a substantial area with eight rooms.[126]

Literary evidence regarding subdivision suggests a social and economic base for this phenomenon. With many public buildings going out of fashion, subdivision enabled authorities to maintain the greatness of the ancient cities by accommodating the poor in the shells of the grand monuments. Public buildings or lands of no use to municipalities could be sold or leased through a petition to individuals, who would consequently remodel and rent them to people of less means.[127] The latter would gain housing in the heart of the city, and the former would enjoy their support in the elections. Otherwise, encroachment on public land was subject to heavy fines, which were beyond the means of the poor.[128] This kind of privatization also provided the municipalities with an income to maintain other decaying public buildings such as public baths.[129] Only few

[125] Ellis, 'End of the Roman House', 568-9.
[126] Ellis, 'End of the Roman House', 568-9.
[127] A law of Julian orders that rent be paid for houses built on public land: *CJ* XI.70.1; *CTh* X.3.5 is a law of AD 400 which states that the leases were for unlimited time, and the city councils would remain in possession of such land.
[128] *CTh XV.1.52* is a decree of the year AD 439, which shows that building shops inside the porticoes and streets of Constantinople was subject to a fine of fifty pounds of gold. This suggests that owners here were wealthy individuals.
[129] *CJ* VIII.11.19 (of AD 424) stipulates that the rents of houses and their workshops erected in the porticoes of baths in Constantinople be spent for the construction and maintenance of the public baths.

examples of subdivision have been studied. The reason is the unappealing look of the architecture of rough masonry to archaeologists. Subdivision architecture is also difficult to date, for it does not leave occupational deposits. Therefore, it is possible that the trend had already begun in the fourth century and was only accelerated in the later centuries.[130]

Shops were considered to be the poorest and the smallest kind of housing recognizable in the archaeological finds of the whole of Antiquity, but in comparison to the round wooden huts and shacks of the poor, which are hard to find and classify, these are quite formidable residences with stone bases. Built on the two sides of the porticoed streets in the urban centres, shops enjoyed a prominent location in the commercial centre of cities. These were normally two-roomed structures, with a shop in front for commercial or artisanal activities and a living area either behind or on top. Shopkeepers and artisans worked in one room and lived in the other. Sometimes they could even bed down behind the counters. Pompeian shops had niches for this purpose. A line of 32 shops at Sardis, burnt in the seventh century AD at the time of Persian invasion, has left enough artefacts and evidence for archaeologists to draw interpretations from. A few of these shops have no sign of trade or artisanal activities. The interpretation could be that these were either offices of scribes or residences of those who worked in other shops.[131] Libanius informs us that shopkeepers of Antioch were required to provide oil for lighting the porticoed street during the night, which suggests that shopkeepers here might have been financially faring better than their counterparts in other cities.[132]

In between the grand peristyle houses and shops, there are other types of middle-range dwellings, which demonstrate the tendency of the owners to aspire to the aristocratic way of life. The evidence for these infill houses (like the Ostian apartments of the earlier periods) is sparse in the major towns of the Empire. 'Middle class' is a modern term, adapted by archaeologists to define such housing. In this sense, it might include a wide array of domestic architectural forms. They do not adhere to a specific typology, and establishing a criterion to identify them as middle-

[130] H. Saradi, 'Privatization and Subdivision of Urban Properties in the Early Byzantine Centuries: Social and Cultural Implications', *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 35 (1998) 17-43 at 17-20; Ellis, 'Early Byzantine Housing', 48.
[131] Ellis, 'Middle Class Houses', 422-3.
[132] Libanius, *Orations* 33.6; Ellis, 'Shedding Light', 296-7.

range is only possible on a case-by-case basis.[133] One of these rare examples is found in a fourth-century city block at Utica, Tunisia. Here, two apartments are organized in Lot 11 (Fig. 11) in an *insula* around a long corridor which leads to a small stone-flagged courtyard with a wellhead. This court might have functioned as a lightwell similar to the *atrium*. Three shops flank the corridor on the street front, of which one has access to the interior of the lot and into the corridor. A three-room apartment is located at the rear of the lot. A vestibule gives way into a central space flanked by two other rooms. The larger room could be a reception room, and the other, a *cubiculum*, on account of its smaller size and limited visibility. This suite recalls the *medianum* apartments in Ostia. Here, there is no peristyle courtyard or mosaic floors, but we have a substantial apartment with some classical elements. Still, it is impossible to associate the apartment with a specific 'middle class' or occupation.[134]

Local housing traditions also exist in some provinces. The long wooden house, attested in the Northern and Western provinces and some villages in Anatolia, is considered an architectural development based on its geographical distribution and its occurrence in both urban and rural contexts. At Ferrara, wooden houses were built alongside other house types both in the urban environments and at the rural sites.[135] Two of these houses were excavated in 1981 by Ellis and Bryan Ward-Perkins at Luni in Italy. These have walls of perishable material and floors of hard, yellow clay covered by pebble stones. The houses are dated to the sixth century based on the evidence of coins and pottery.[136] Contrary to subdivision architecture, which follows the layout of the previous houses, the wooden house shows a tendency for complete change. Their emergence suggests a departure in taste from Roman-ness during the fifth and sixth centuries AD.[137]

In Syrian villages, a specific form of architecture developed. Houses here consist of a row of 5-by-5 rooms with a portico in front. Each room is covered by a single arch, and the size of the rooms depends on the length of the wooden beams supporting the ceiling. Walls are made of dressed stone blocks. The village of Darkita contains two peristyle houses and twelve local-style houses, dating to the fifth and sixth centuries, based on inscriptions. Contrary to the Ostian

[133] Ellis, 'Middle Class Houses', 413-6.
[134] Ellis, 'Middle Class Houses', 419-20.
[135] Ellis, 'Early Byzantine Housing', 45-6.
[136] B. Ward-Perkins, 'Two Byzantine Houses at Luni', *Papers of British School at Rome* 49 (1981) 91-8 at 96.
[137] Ellis, 'Early Byzantine Housing', 46.

apartments, south Syrian apartments have a vertical emphasis, with reception rooms on the upper floor, and the ground floor reserved for more mundane activities like stabling animals. An inscription of AD 431 in Greek from a house in el-Medjdel identifies a reception room on the upper floor as '*triklinos'*, which means that the local architects used Greek classical terminology to refer to different parts of a structure. A reciprocal influence between the local and classical traditions can be detected not only in the rural areas but also in cities like Bosra. Here, the so-called 'Palace' adapts the typical Syrian large square rooms with central arches into a peristyle house with a triconch *triclinia* in the upper storey.[138]

Inscriptions on well-built and constantly refurbished houses and apartments in the southern villages of the Syrian limestone massif have preserved names of the master masons and architects, who took pride in building their own houses and leaving their distinct mark of status as the possessors of a specific knowledge.[139] At the village of Dehes, changes in construction techniques at the end of the fifth and early-sixth centuries AD are marked by the use of cranes, professional stone workers, and sculpturers. Here, people paid skilled workers to build their houses in a variety of sizes. These examples show both an improvement in the level of technical know-how and an increase in prosperity.[140]

Finally, in Egypt, a strong local architectural tradition can be detected in addition to classical styles. Karanis, a village in the Faiyum, provides a wealth of evidence for the first-to-fifth-century houses. Similar to Syria, these are blocks of two-or-more-storey houses made of mudbrick and wooden beams for doors and window frames. The nearly same-sized rooms of the Syrian tradition were arranged in a vertical plane, with a cellar at the bottom and rooms and dining rooms above. Niches are abundantly used for different purposes, such as household shrines, decoration, and storage for vessels in the living areas. Use of the classical architectural terms like *symposion*, *aule*, or *aithrion* is noteworthy in Egyptian papyri dealing with houses, although their application may not be the same. [141]

[138] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 89-93.
[139] Zanini, 'Artisans and Traders', 378.
[140] Sodini, 'Archaeology and Late Antique Social Structure', 46-7.
[141] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 95-6.

Conclusion

Roman *domus* of the third and second centuries BC were an adaptation of the Hellenistic Greek peristyle into the Roman *atrium* houses. The Roman peristyle house became the standard Roman *domus*, and its principles were adapted by aristocrats in most provinces by the first century AD. Business was an inseparable part of any house. Roman aristocrats received clients in their reception rooms every day, and impressed their guests and peers in their dining rooms. Most large houses had a shop on one side of the entrance with separate doors onto the street. Shopkeepers both lived and worked in their shops, and many households used their gardens for farming. However, there was a clear demarcation between the public areas (vestibule*, atrium, tablinum,* and *triclinium*) and more private rooms (bedrooms, restrooms, and women's quarters) of a house. Roman society was also extremely stratified, and the combination of architectural elements and decorations in a house had to suit the social status of the owner.

During Late Antiquity, the basics of a Roman *domus* and its general plan remained the same. New arrangements were made to meet the increasing needs of its owners to adopt more public functions in the house while maintaining their need for privacy. The addition of audience halls near the entrance doors from the street facilitated the patron's need to receive a variety of clients without disturbing the privacy of the house. *Triclinia* now occupied a more prominent location on the peristyle with a limited view of the outside world, suggesting that dining was now a more ritualized activity involving a closer group of friends, who were allowed to enter the interior of the house. Some elements of public architecture, like the use of apses, semi-circular dining couches, and *sigma* tables, found their way into Late Antique houses, adding to the grandeur and formality of dining. Private baths are not generally considered a novelty in Late Antiquity but became more common in some areas of the Empire, as revealed by many houses in North Africa. Private chapels are attested, although their identification remains difficult. The anachronistic representations of certain local mythological heroes associated with the homeowners, along with busts of the seasons and depictions of the countryside, are common in mosaics and emphasize the increasing power of the individuals.

Middle-range houses similar to Ostian apartments, which show how people with limited access to resources still aspired to the aristocratic way of life, are generally rare in the urban fabric of Late Antique cities. However, local architectural traditions are well attested in the provinces and mostly in rural contexts. In the Northern and Western regions of the Empire, these are represented by the long wooden houses made of perishable material and tend to appear in the urban fabric towards the end of our period. By contrast, in South Syrian villages and Egypt, local construction traditions demonstrate more substantial apartment houses, built primarily in mudbrick and timber and organized on a vertical plane. These local forms usually stem from rural context and sometimes belong to long-lasting traditions, although their occurrence in urban sites is also expected. As we will explain in the next chapter, this does not indicate ruralisation. Shops are the smallest known houses in the extant archaeological records, but it is hard to classify them as poor housing with certainty. The abandonment and subdivision of larger structures (including large peristyle houses) into smaller and lower-quality dwellings is another Late Antique empire-wide phenomenon and may have a social and economic basis. However, peristyle houses continued to exist in the eastern areas of the empire to the end of the period. The increasing adoption of public facilities into these complexes brings to mind Olympiodorus' portrayal of Roman *domus* as miniature cities.[142]

[142] Olympiodorus, fr. 41.1.

Chapter 2:
Houses and Society in Roman Egypt

I added Egypt to the Empire of Roman people.[143]

Introduction

Upon the arrival of the Romans, the population of Egypt already encompassed an amalgamation of ethnicities due to a long history of conquest and reconquest. Egypt, itself possessing a strong native culture, had lived for almost three centuries under Greek rule, and the population was already introduced to the Hellenic culture that held common roots with the Romans. The Ptolemies had encouraged Greek immigration from the Eastern Mediterranean basin into the hinterland by expanding irrigation and allotting land to veterans who served the crown in the army when necessary. However, higher-status Greeks also resided in larger Greek cities. The superiority of Greeks over Egyptians was a matter of language and culture, in addition to ethnicity. Many Egyptians thus sought to learn Greek and picked Greek names to facilitate their movement up the social ladder. Egyptians who participated in the battle of Raphia in 217 BC were granted lands, to be personally owned, and duly inherited. By the Roman period, except for the Jews, people stopped identifying themselves with ethnic designations. The population was either Roman or Graeco-Egyptian for the Roman administration.[144]

To the early emperors, Egypt was the breadbasket of the Empire and determined the fate of the emperors. In contrast to the other Roman provinces, Egypt was to be governed by a prefect, chosen from the equestrian ranks, by the emperor and responsible only to him. Senators and high-ranking equestrians were forbidden to enter Egypt without the emperor's expressed permission. Egypt was depoliticized, and economic activity was increased based on agriculture.[145] One might wonder how the new rule would have been perceived by the inhabitants of the Nile valley and smaller villages. Social change may be traced in houses where individuals first learned about their social norms and responded to them by shaping their personal space, which reciprocally defined

[143] Augustus, *Deeds of the Divine Augustus* 27.
[144] R.S. Bagnall, D.W. Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Copts* (Cairo, 2004) 21-5.
[145] A.K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs* (Berkeley, 1986) 37-40.

their standing in the ancient community.[146] Most Egyptian settlements had a long history of occupation from time immemorial. Houses were constantly rebuilt, creating multiple layers of habitation at a single site.[147] While this may be an indication of continuity, we can also expect the social change to be reflected in the development of the house, even if it can only be detected over an extended time span.

For a better comprehension of the Late Antique developments, inclusion of evidence from the Roman period is inevitable. In this chapter, we will trace the influence of Roman rule as reflected in the houses of Roman Egypt. The goal is to determine, firstly, if the ideal Roman *domus*, which is thought to emerge in Roman provinces during the first two centuries, also existed in Egypt. Secondly, we will explore the influences of the new rule as perceived in other house types. Accordingly, the first section of this chapter considers the physical aspects of houses as described in the papyri. The evidence of archaeology from three different regions of Egypt is presented in the next three sections. The last section analyzes patterns in the evidence. I will argue that a distinct elite Roman culture of housing existed both in rural and urban contexts, which was demonstrably in dialogue with its Mediterranean counterparts. However, the Roman villa, as we call it, was by no means the only housing option available for even the wealthy Roman aristocrats in Egypt. Housing in Egypt was diverse and influenced by a myriad of factors, including societal norms, function, lifestyle, local taste, and climate.

Houses and the Papyri

Much of our knowledge about the physical appearance of houses during the Roman period relies on the Greek papyri. These include documents regarding property transfer, wills and legal disputes over property divisions, tax rolls, lists of censuses, as well as contracts and receipts of construction processes.[148] Egyptian houses were made of sun-baked mudbricks, the most available resource

[146] Alston, *City*, 51-2.
[147] For instance, the ancient city of Medinet Habu with an occupational history from 1069 BC to the ninth century AD, on which see U. Hölscher, *The Excavation of Medinet Habu - Volume V: Post-Ramesside Remains* (Chicago, 1954); the city of Karanis in the Faiyum records 600 year of occupation, on which see Husselman, *Karanis Excavations*, 7-8.
[148] Husson, *Oikia*, 12.

provided naturally by the river Nile. Use of stone was rare and limited to the foundations or room corners. Wood was hard to acquire in many areas in Egypt and was thus reserved for doors, window frames, and consolidation of the walls and ceilings. Houses were of one or more floors in Egypt, and stairs led to a flat roof, where people slept during the summer nights to enjoy the cool breeze. Shades were put up here, where cooking and domestic activities were also caried out. Windows, if present, were small, placed at a considerable height, and were covered with shutters, mats, or barred plates to keep out the sand and heat from the desert. Below, the interior walls were decorated with small niches, which served as cupboards, while more elaborately ornate niches were used for domestic shrines (*aediculae*).[149]

One type of house, mostly attested in urban contexts, consisted of one or two floors of rooms arranged around a central open court or corridor, with a staircase on one side. This court was called an *aithrion*. The main function of an *aithrion* was to provide light and air for the adjacent rooms through the windows and doors.[150] There were no windows on the exterior walls. In fact, the house was shut to the outside world, with the only access provided through the entrance door. *Aithria* were integral to the house, and could not be sold or leased separately.[151] The presence of outbuildings and fixed equipment such as ovens or mortars in *aithria* is rarely mentioned in the papyri, except for one instance.[152] This means that it was not a work yard. Nevertheless, these are attested in archaeology. House B2 at Amheida in the Dakhla oasis, to be discussed below, contains a storage bin and a bread oven in its *aithrion*. This suggests that houses with *aithria* also existed in other contexts and were a hub of domestic activity in the absence of a side courtyard. Whether the *aithrion* is an old Egyptian element or a classical influence remains uncertain. Almost all houses of the New Kingdom period excavated in Amarna had a central space surrounded by rooms. However, the evidence suggests that these were at least partially closed - if not completely - or had

[149] Nowicka, *Maison privée*, 53,108-9, 114.
[150] Not to be confused with the Roman *atrium*. According to Husson, *aihtrion*, meaning clear and light, is attested in the papyri mostly from the first century AD to the Late Antique period, except one mention in the Ptolemaic period This appearance is too early to suggest that the word was loaned from Latin *atrium*: *P.Cairo Zen*. IV 59764.39-40 mentions 'the *aithrion* of the bedroom'; *P.Oxy*. II 247.23-5 of AD 90 refers to the central position of the *aithrion* in relation to a house with two towers, where an *aithrion* is located in the middle. Alston, 'Houses and Households', 29.
[151] Husson, *Oikia*, 29-32. No sale or rent contracts regarding *aithria* have been found.
[152] Husson, *Oikia*, 32 refers to a private letter *P.Oxy*. XII 1488 of the second century AD, which asks if a mortar in the *aitrion* is in good condition.

raised ceilings with clerestory windows that provided light and air from the terrace above (Fig. 12).[153]

Unlike the *aithrion*, the courtyard or *aule* was a larger open space, could be surrounded by walls, and was usually located at the side of the house. A house with several side courts is mentioned in one papyrus of AD 81-6, and another papyrus of AD 109 describes the position of the yard in relation to the house as 'the adjoining court to the south'.[154] Some houses had more than one courtyard or both an *aithrion* and an *aule*.[155] The *aule* was an independent entity, could be accessed from the exterior, shared among the houses in one *insula*, rented, or even sold separately.[156] The presence of outbuildings such as dovecotes, granaries, storages, and fixed installations such as animal pens, cupboards, bread ovens, cisterns, and even farming equipment suggests that this was a work yard. A side courtyard is irrefutably an Ancient Egyptian element.[157]

Another house type in Egypt is represented by the tall and narrow structures depicted in Nilotic mosaics (such as the Palestrina mosaic on the cover page) and by limestone house models. These show two-or-more-storey structures, with small windows placed high up on the walls. The only access was through a single door placed at a few steps above the street level or on a second floor (Fig. 13). Nowicka explains the occurrence of the term *pyrgos* or tower in the papyri in conjunction with these depictions, which have also found a counterpart in the archaeological records from the ancient village of Karanis in the Faiyum (see below). These uninviting rampart-shaped houses are conventionally called tower-houses by scholars. However, the term *pyrgos* in the papyri does not refer to a house type, but rather to a structure contained in the house and may have served different purposes, such as a dwelling, storage, or workshop.[158] Both the evidence of

[153] K. Spence, 'The Three-Dimensional Form of the Amarna House', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 90 (2004) 123-52 at 130, 134.
[154] *P.Oxy*. VIII 1105; *P.Oxy*. III 482.11-3; *P.Mich.* IX 542.20-1 of AD 212 refers to a 'new single-storey house' with a 'walled court'.
[155] *P.Oxy*. II 248. 18-9 of AD 80; *P.Petaus* X 16 of AD 184.
[156] *P. Oxy*. VIII 1105 of AD 81-6 mentions a courtyard with direct access to the street; *P.Oxy*. XIV 1697 of AD 242 is the deed of sale of a courtyard; Abdelwahed, *Houses in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, 2-3.
[157] *P.Oxy*. II 243.18 of AD 79 mentions a stone wellhead in the court; *BGU* I 275 of AD 215 mentions an irrigation machine in the court; Husson, *Oikia,* 45-54.
[158] *BGU* VI 1273.12-13 of 221 BC states that in return for the interest of an amount owed, the creditor gets to live in a *pyrgos* in the property of the debtor for a year; in *P. Ryl*. II 138.20-24 of AD 34, a *pyrgos* located in an *epoikion* (rural estate) is used as a storage for agricultural goods and money; in *P.Lond*. II 371 of the first century AD, a *pyrgos* contains a dying workshop; Nowicka, *Maison privée*, 108-10; Husson, *Oikia,* 248-51; Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 176; A.A. Di Castro, 'Investigating Housing and Habitat in the Mediterranean World: An Introduction', in

archaeology from Amarna and the representations of houses in Thebes show that the two-to-three-storey houses with small windows were common since even earlier periods in Egypt.[159]

Contrary to the *pyrgos*, the term *oikia dipurgia*, attested in fifteen papyri of the Roman period but not in archaeology, refers to a specifically elite urban house with two towers of residential purpose. Alston suggests that the towers of an *oikia dipurgia* flanked the entrance (*pylon*) of the house, forming a grandiose façade or gate, similar to the Egyptian temples. The *pylon* of *dipourgia* both demarcated the boundary between the private and public spaces and emphasised the social status of the owner (Fig. 14).[160] A papyrus of AD 261 is the transfer of a two-towered house in Oxyrhynchus, belonging to a magistrate. Another papyrus of AD 252 mentions that a three-towered house (*tripurgia*) was sold by a gymnasiarch to the wife of a former magistrate in Oxyrhynchus. The house contained both an *aule* and an *aithrion* and was probably of a considerable size.[161] *Aule* and *aithrion* were distinctive components of these houses. However, the towers of a *dipurgia* should not be confused with the domestic *pylon*. The *pylon* of a *dipourgia* was a huge tower-shaped entrance with an in-depth recessed space and an entrance door. Domestic *pylon* could be a free-standing structure, distinct from the house proper and close to the entrance. It might have included several rooms, and could be rented and sold separately, either in part or as a whole. *Pylon* is not attested in archaeology. In the papyri, it is mostly associated with large houses and *aithrion* houses in an urban context.[162]

The *androne*s are attested in the papyri from the third century BC to the third century AD. In Graeco-Roman Egypt, *androne* traditionally referred to a reception room, most probably on the first storey of a house. Sometimes more than one *androne* existed in a house.[163] By the Late Antique period a *symposion* was located on the upper storey of a *pylon*.[164] The association of the *androne*s with the residential towers at the gate suggests that these were separated enough from the house

Di Castro, Hope, *Housing and Habitat*, 3-12 at 9; Davoli, 'Classical Influences', 175-8; Hope, 'The Roman-Period Houses', 226; Barette, 'Houses, Households and Homes', 16-17.
[159] Spence, 'Three-Dimensional Form', 144-7.
[160] Husson, *Oikia,* 251-2; Alston, 'Houses and Households', 25–39.
[161] *P.Oxy*. XIV 1703; *P.Oxy. P.Oxy*. LXIV 4438.
[162] *P.Mich.* V 295.4. of the first century AD is the deed of sale of a dining room with three couches located in a *pylon*; *P.Oxy*. I 104.25-26 of AD 96 mentions a domestic *pylon* consisted of at least two stories with different rooms, including residential suites; Husson, *Oikia,* 252; Abdelwahed, *Houses in Graeco-Roman Egypt,* 14, 16, 45.
[163] *P.Lond.* III 978 of AD 331 mentions a two-storey house with at least three *androne*s divided among four heirs.
[164] *SB* VI 8988.57-8 of AD 647 mentions a *symposion* on the upper storey of a domestic *pylon* of a house in Oxyrhynchus.

that may be accessed or rented without disturbing the household.[165] Temples may have rented dining rooms equipped with dining facilities, as meeting rooms for associations or simply for family banquets. Papyri regarding invitation letters to banquets - some issued by women - show that *androne*s were not exclusively used by men in Egypt.[166] Contrary to the Roman *triclinium* which was located at the heart of a *domus*, reception rooms in Egyptian traditions, similar to Olynthus, were likely to be found in the frontal zone of houses.[167]

A few papyri provide glimpses of the expenses and material used in the construction of houses. Three papyri refer to houses made of stone. A stone house in Oxyrhynchus including an open court belonging to Isidora Apia, daughter of a Roman magistrate from Alexandria, was sold for the considerable amount of 21600 drachmas.[168] This and other contracts mentioning wages of stonemasons and the price of stone suggests that these were quite expensive houses.[169] Baths and latrines are rarely mentioned in the papyri, and it is generally hard to distinguish private from public baths. Baths were expensive both to build and to maintain. A receipt of AD 186 is the calculation of the construction cost regarding a large bath with five rotundas in a private house. A payment order of AD 159 mentions the wage of an employee who is probably in charge of heating such a bath at the private residence of the rich Alexandrian family of Theones in Oxyrhynchus.[170] Ironically, Roman period baths attested in archaeology are associated with more modest houses.[171]

Having discussed the evidence of papyri which only cover some physical aspects of urban houses - now mostly lost to us due to the constant habitation in those centres - we will now turn to the extant architectural evidence recovered from several regions. The Delta region and specifically

[165] *P.Mich.* V 295.4 of the first century AD is sale of a *triclinium* within a *pylon*.
[166] *P.Oxy*. XII 1579 of the third century is an invitation made by a woman named Thermothis to dine at her daughter's wedding ceremony held in her house.
[167] Husson, *Oikia,* 267, 271; Bagnall, Rathbone, *Egypt*, 137, 143; Abdelwahed, *Houses in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, 39-40.
[168] *SB* I 5117 of AD 55 is bequeathal of a stone-house in Soknopaiou Nesos; *P.Oxy*. III 489 0f AD117 is a bequeathal of an apartment in a stone-house in Oxyrhynchus; *P.Oxy.* XIV 1634 of AD 222 refers to the house of Isidora Apia which also contained a court and an underground cellar. This is the most expensive house attested in the papyri of Roman Egypt; I.A.A. Gendy, *Economic Aspects of Houses and Housing in Roman Egypt* (London 1990) 23, 132-5.
[169] *SB* XIV 11958 of AD 117 records that the sum of 223 Drachmas was paid to a stonemason for cutting 100 blocks of stones for the houses of a Roman woman; Gendy, *Economic Aspects of Houses*, 24-6.
[170] *P.Theon*. 15 stipulates that 4 Drachmas be paid for 4 days of work in the bath, but the type of work is uncertain; *P.Oxy.* XVII 2145; Husson, *Oikia*, 59.
[171] Hölscher, *The Excavation of Medinet* Habu, 37-9.

Alexandria provides us with the only examples of residential structures in an urban context. We will then examine other evidence from rural contexts in the Egyptian hinterland.

Alexandria and the Delta Region

Alexandria was the seat of power for the Ptolemaic rulers. Not much has survived from the classical city except a few monuments and the remains of the vibrant city centre in the Kom el-Dikka quarter. Here, on the west side of the street R4, under the fourth-to-sixth-century public structures and houses, lie early Roman houses that once covered this purely residential quarter (Fig. 15).[172] Recent excavations have revealed enough of at least ten of these earlier stone houses, allowing us to define some of the major architectural aspects in Alexandrian houses, including the layout and internal decoration.[173] Here, I have chosen two houses that best represent these main features.

On the east of the Street R4, remains of highly ornate floor mosaics belonging to three houses of the first to second centuries AD were previously discovered (Fig. 16). Recent excavations in 2019, revealed more of the floor plan of the 'House alfa' or the 'Villa of the Birds', (Fig. 17) called after a mosaic of nine panels depicting exotic birds (Fig. 18). One could enter a central courtyard (room 4) to the south, covered with limestone slabs, which then gave way to other rooms, including a Roman-style *triclinium* (room 3). Here, the three-sided border around the floor mosaic, featuring geometric designs of overlapping circles, indicates that the placement of dining couches was U-shaped. The adjacent room 2 was connected to this *triclinium* through a door, and the fine floor mosaics suggest that it functioned as a rest area for guests. The reconstructed placement of two columns to the south of the room shows that the room had a tripartite entrance, a characteristic feature of Hellenistic period houses. These entrances are typical of the houses of the Roman colony of merchants on the Greek island of Delos, where the main *oikos* functioned both as a reception room and a family room. This was a more exposed

[172] J.S. McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt c.300 BC to AD 700* (New Haven, 2007) 8, 16, 23.
[173] G. Majcherek, 'Streets and Houses of Roman Alexandria Revisited', *Antiquity* 95 (2021) 1-8 at 1.

arrangement than the Olynthian *andron* but not as open as the Roman *triclinium*, where access to the retreat room was also provided through the courtyard.[174]

The partially surviving northern interior wall was executed in imitation of *opus isodorum*, seen in the first Pompeian painting style.[175] A bath, decorated with fine floor mosaics, was found among the smaller rooms (*cubicula*) on the east wing. Fragments of a limestone entablature (Fig. 19) and capitals found in the courtyard belong to the Doric columns and the friezes that decorated the entrance of the *triclinium.* It is, however, unclear whether the columns in the court were engaged or freestanding.[176] Fortunately, enough evidence from other contemporary houses can be used to draw an analogy.

On the west side of R4, remnants of another similar Roman-period house were found in a trench between the cistern to the south and the imperial baths to the north. One could enter 'House FA' (Fig. 20) by a stepped entrance from the street R4. The entrance then gave way to the court through a vestibule, while a latrine, a staircase, and two shops also covered the western wing of the house on the street side. The evidence confirms the existence of a pseudo-peristyle court with pairs of engaged plastered columns of Doric order, placed at regular intervals along the walls. The courtyard was carefully carpeted with stone-slabs of various colours, embedded in red mortar, a Roman waterproofing technique. A simple geometric motif formed by diamond-shaped basalt tiles decorated the centre. The largest room to the south was a Roman-style *triclinium*, judging by the exquisite floor mosaics and its adjoining repose room. The *triclinium* could be accessed through a tripartite entrance porch formed by two pilasters (Fig. 21).[177]

In general, houses in this well-situated quarter are all stone-built, large structures laid out on square plans of roughly 400 m^2 with central courtyards, pseudo-peristyle architectural elements of Doric order, and opulent decorative features. Wall decorations in imitation of *opus isodorum* are a continuation of Hellenistic tradition (Fig. 22), while the decorative motifs of the floor

[174] Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies,* 123-4.
[175] G. Majcherek, 'Notes on Alexandrian Habitat; Roman and Byzantine Houses from Kom el-Dikka', *Topoi* 5 (1995) 133-50, at 137; *Opus isodorum* is both a Hellenistic and a Roman feature also seen in the tombs of the period in Egypt.
[176] W. Kolataj, G. Majcherek, E. Parandowska, *Villa of the Birds: The Excavation and Preservation of the Kom el-Dikka Mosaics* (Cairo, 2007) 16-20.
[177] G. Majcherek, 'Houses of Alexandria: Some Aspects of Architectural Development in the Roman Period', in K. Galor, T. Waliszewski (eds), *From Antioch to Alexandria* (Warsaw, 2007) 201-12 at 203-5, 207.

mosaics, with overlapping circles, and geometric designs are derived from a common iconographical tradition in the Mediterranean world. The large *triclinia*, with tripartite porched entrances that communicated directly with their repose rooms, present a blend of the Delian reception rooms and the Olynthian *oikoi*.[178] Here, stepped entrances (Fig. 23), a native feature also seen in Amarna houses, are common.[179] The combination of domestic and commercial functions is a characteristic of most urban houses across the Mediterranean basin. The presence of latrines and bathing installations on the court, along with the open U-shaped arrangement of the *triclinia*, is indisputably in line with Roman banqueting traditions. Thus, we can perceive both the Greek Hellenistic and Roman influences, along with an adaptation of local elements in the Roman-period houses in this city block that represented a specific elite class of citizens.[180]

It is tempting to interpret the absence of a true peristyle in Alexandrian houses either as a departure from Hellenistic traditions or as an adaptation to the smaller urban plots. However, courtyard houses of the first to the third centuries discovered in Marina el-Alamein (Fig. 24) or Antiphrae, 96 km to the west of Alexandria, may suggest that these choices are rather related to the presence of local architectural styles that bring together certain elements.[181] 'House H9' best represents the main architectural traits of this style in this ancient town near the capital.

'House H9' (Fig. 25) is built on a large lot (40 by 24 m), but its irregular plot is due to a gradual expansion and reconstruction in the second century AD. In this *oikos*-type house, a stepped entrance at the south-west gave access into a vestibule (room 1). Then, A corridor (room 4) directed the traffic into a paved courtyard (room 5), enclosed by a colonnaded portico to its south and west. Room 14 was the main *oikos*, identified by its large size and prominent position on the court. This could be approached via a tripartite entrance porch, formed by a pair of square columns and a pediment of pseudo-Corinthian order (Fig. 26). The adjacent room 15 communicated with the *oikos* both directly and through the court. Room 9 to the south of the court may have been an *andron*, but was turned into a Roman *triclinium* after the reconstruction phase. A staircase next to the *andron* gave access to possible upper rooms. Ample storage spaces, wall niches, and storage amphorae were found in rooms 3, 12, and 10. The latter also contained two underground cellars.

[178] Majcherek, 'Streets and Houses', 3-5.
[179] Spence, 'Three-Dimensional Form', 126. Note the porched entrance accessed by stairs in Fig.1.
[180] Majcherek, 'Houses of Alexandria, 203-4.
[181] Majcherek, 'Notes on Alexandrian Habitat' 140; Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 129.

These and the fact that room 12a communicated directly with the street to the south, suggest the owner's involvement in the wine business. The house was equipped with a latrine (room 2) of several seats, located close to the entrance, which was flushed by a canal from the cistern below the court.[182]

No evidence of mosaics was found in the houses in Marina. Yet, the peristyle courts and the main *oikoi* were carpeted with white limestone and lavishly decorated with polychrome paint. A recent reconstruction shows that in the 'House H9' columns of white and grey rose from black plinths in the courtyard, while the pseudo-Ionic capitals might have been painted in Pompeian red and green. This colour combination was also imitated on the walls of the reception room, where a black plinth covered the room all around. Above this plinth, the walls were adorned with two rows of panels separated by reddish pilasters. Lower panels were each filled with a yellow circle, alternately painted with geometric polychrome star motifs. The large *aedicula* in the reception room was framed with pilasters of pseudo-Corinthian capitals, probably painted in a vibrant red colour (Fig. 27). In some houses, these were accompanied with figural paintings of the Graeco-Egyptian gods, a testimony of the faith and mixed identity of the inhabitants (Fig. 28). A depiction of the god Dionysus on plaster found in the 'House H9' resonates well with the evidence of the wine business.[183]

Houses in Marina gather certain elements that denote the presence of a particular local style of architecture. Colonnaded courts with porticoes, often on one to two sides, were found even in smaller plots, such as 'House H19' (Fig. 25). This small house contained two parallel porticoes of only one column each, similar to Greek *pastas* and *prostas* houses. In Marina, reception rooms with tripartite entrances dominated the courts but held no trace of dining couches. Thus, these are similar to Greek *oikoi*. Even in the smallest houses, latrines were typically found close to the entrance rather than on the court. Architectural elements were executed in a combination of stylized pseudo-Corinthian and pseudo-Ionian order known as Marina style. The ostentatious figural and geometric paintings found in houses in Marina show a strong Roman affinity, while features such as stepped entrances and underground cellars were the influences of the Egyptian

[182] G. Bakowska-Czerner, R. Czerner, 'House H9 from Marina el-Alamein - a Research Summary', *Światowit* 58 (2019) 73–86 at 75-8.
[183] G. Bąkowska-Czerner, R. Czerner, 'Marina el-Alamein as an Example of Painting Decoration of Main Spaces of Hellenistic Roman Houses in Egypt', *Arts* (2022) 1-21 at 6-19.

chora. Thus, the aristocrats of this provincial town did not only look up to their counterparts in the capital city of Alexandria but also to those across the Mediterranean.[184] Despite the abiding assumption that classical architecture in Egypt was restricted to Alexandria and its vicinity, new evidence of housing from Antiphrae and more substantial finds from the Dakhla oasis proves that McKenzie was correct to suggest otherwise in 2007.[185]

Dakhla Oasis

At the heart of the Dakhla oasis, 800 km southwest of Cairo, in ancient Kellis (Fig. 29), are found the largest mudbrick residential structures of the first three centuries AD ever in Egypt. Here, area B is covered with well-preserved houses of extraordinary dimensions.[186] Complex B1 (Fig. 30) with an area close to 6000 m^2 consists of a few units (B1/1, B1/2, and B1/4) with over 200 rooms and corridors. Presence of several staircases attest to a possible second floor. A central court surrounded by suites of rooms on three to four sides created a clustered access plan. This is the main feature of all these residential units here, which probably accommodated an extended family.[187] However, the most important classical feature in B/1/2 is a large painted full peristyle court surrounded by many rooms on its two sides. Columns preserved in the south of the court allow for the reconstruction of a peristyle of 9 by 2 m with double columns at each corner (Fig. 31). Here, plastered mudbrick columns had red and grey Corinthian capitals, and their lower shafts and pedestals were painted in pale blue and pink. The main zones of the west and south walls are decorated with panels separated by Corinthian pilasters, painted in imitation of mottled black and green stones to counterfeit the actual colonnade. The dado was sectioned with oblique lines and

[184] S. Medeksza, R. Czerner, 'Forms and Decoration of Graeco-Roman Houses from Marina El-Alamein', in P. Kousoulis, N. Lazaridis (eds), *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists, University of the Aegean, Rhodes, 22-29 May 2008* (Leuven, 2015) 1739-58 at 1745, 1747, 1758; Bakowska-Czerner, Czerner, 'House H9',75-8.
[185] McKenzie, *Architecture of Alexandria*.
[186] C.A. Hope, H. Whitehouse, 'A Painted Residence at Ismant el-Kharab (Kellis) in the Dakhleh Oasis', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* (2006) 312-28 at 317. According to Hope and Bagnall, the presence of such elaborate bureaucratic centres in a small village like Kellis is far-fetched, and no other public buildings except the temple and the baths are mentioned in the papyri associated with the site.
[187] C.A. Hope, G.E. Bowen, 'Houses, Households, Household Activities', in C.A. Hope, G.E. Bowen (eds), *Kellis, a Roman-Period Village in Egypt's Dakhleh Oasis* (Cambridge, 2022) 15-56 at 17-20.

decorated with floral motifs. Plastered fragments fallen from the ceiling contained decorations of various geometric patterns like tumbling blocks, filled with floral motifs (Fig. 32).[188]

House B/3/1, covering an area of 760 m^2 is part of another great mudbrick structure to the north of the site. This structure represents a blend of Graeco-Roman and local architectural traditions (Fig. 33). Here, two central interrelated areas (1a and b) constituted the core of the house and created a symmetry in the layout. Several units of rooms were arranged around this centre. These were mostly decorated and had a formal or religious function. Room 1b was likely the reception area of the house, separated from room 1a by a triple door. Remains of four substantial columns in the middle of room 1b probably supported a flat roof and formed a tetrastyle *atrium*. Here, the *impluvium* was omitted in adaptation to dry weather conditions. Structural elements similar to these were found in other units in the B3 complex and attest to the presence of purely Roman elements in the residential architecture in Egypt. Access to rooms 1a and 1b was provided through long entrance corridors (11 and 12) similar to the Amarna house. These corridors were decorated with semicircular niches (Fig. 34) on the northeast and the southwest of the building, painted in black, and probably accentuated with large statues of gods, of which only fragments have survived.[189]

The central areas and many rooms adjacent to them were highly decorated. Fragments of plaster acanthus and volutes likely belonged to the Corinthian column capitals here. The north wall of room 1b was decorated with panels of figural paintings (Fig. 35), such as white birds on a bouquet of lilies, or on a chalice, and a female figure. These panels were framed with yellow and red bands and separated by pillars of vine-bearing grapes on a light green background. Next to the *atrium*, Room 1a was decorated with the same green colour. Here, a repeated wallpaper with intersecting circles and framed with vine branches ornated the walls (Fig. 36). *Opus isodorum* was imitated in paint on the north wall of room 6 with yellow and red framings on a green background (Fig. 37). Comparable to Marina, a dual depiction of Graeco-Egyptian gods, Isis accompanied by

[188] H. Whitehouse, 'Paintings from Domestic Context', in Hope, Bowen, *Kellis*, 57-78 at 58-60.
[189] Hope, Whitehouse, 'Painted Residence at Ismant', 312-18, 328; Staggered entrances, use of long corridors, and windbreaks are traditionally Egyptian methods to protect the house from the elements, on which see A.L. Boozer, 'Inside and Out: Romano-Egyptian Houses from the Fayyum and Dakhleh Oasis', in Di Castro and Hope, *Housing and Habitat,* 185-98 at 188-9.

Serapis, was found in the fill. This probably belonged to the flat ceiling in the Room 1a (Fig. 38).[190] The formality in the approach to the main reception areas and the extravagant decorations in houses of area B suggest that these were designed to impress visitors. We can assume that the prestigious buildings here were occupied by the community's elite and their extended families.[191]

A little further to the east of the site, area C represents a dual residential and industrial zone dated to the second and third centuries AD. Houses here are not completely excavated, but they show a degree of homogeneity in dimensions (101-170 m^2). These houses have similar square layouts with rooms arranged around three sides of a central space. It is possible that, similar to Egyptian traditions, these spaces were covered. Thus, their interpretation as *aithria* is tentative. Staircases provided access to the roofs, which were mostly flat during this period. 'House C2/4' was a pottery workshop, suggested by the remains of two pottery kilns and a potter's wheel, while evidence of iron slags from the 'House C2/5' indicates the presence of a blacksmith workshop. Activity zones are normally undesirable areas due to the fumes and noises associated with manufacturing, and signify the lower-middle-class district to which these houses belonged. Yet, decorations of polychrome wall paintings of vine with grape clusters, found in 'House C2/2', show that even modest structures kept up with local decorative trends known from wealthier houses in the area.[192]

Better evidence of similar structures comes from 'House B2' in the north-east sector of Amheida, dated to the third and the early-fourth centuries AD, which belongs to a transition from the Roman to Late Antique period. Excavated and studied in a holistic manner (Fig. 39), it reconstructs the life of a household with modest means - but not humble- in a district similar to C2 area in Kellis, right across from a pottery workshop on the street S1. 'House B2' has the same dimensions as houses in the Kellis C2 area (121 m2), with a similar clustered layout designed around an *aithrion* (room 7). An L-shaped entrance (room 9) impeded the view to the interior of the house, while the windbreaks on the two sides of the door protected the house from the noise, debris, and the sand-laden north wind. The court was equipped with a bread oven and a built-in storage pit to the north, although evidence of cooking was also found in room 6 to the south. The

[190] Whitehouse, 'Paintings', 60-4.
[191] Hope, Whitehouse, 'A Painted Residence at Ismant', 317-19.
[192] C.A. Hope, 'Kellis in Context', in Hope and Bowen, *Kellis*, 1-15 at 28-30.

staircase (room 8) gave access to the roof, while spaces under the stairs (10 and 4) were used for storage as customary in Egypt. Except room 5, most rooms had barrel vaulted ceilings, a characteristic that became more common in the later fourth century in the region. Other fourth-century developments include the addition of interior kitchens and external yards, such as courtyard C, on the south side of House B2. At this time, the court was probably associated with other neighboring houses that are not yet excavated.[193]

Material culture and decoration in this house indicate a mix of Romano-Egyptian traditions. Egyptian style loom weights, textile fragments, along with decorations of yellow ochre, black, and red plaster, from rooms 1 and 6, show a propensity for Egyptian local traditions. Objects like undecorated glass bottles of moderately valuable body-care products are associated with the Roman habit of communal bathing. Baskets and evidence of ostraca suggests the involvement of the inhabitants with the transportation business. Transportation facilitated the export of industrial and agricultural products, which had increased during the prosperous Roman period in the Dakhla oasis.[194] The numerous Roman-period hamlets and farming structures, characterized by the presence of columbaria among the dispersed structures of ambiguous character, were found on the outskirts of large settlements such as Kellis. These hamlets reflect the economic expansion of the region during this period and were most probably encouraged by private investment in water management.[195]

Houses in the Dakhla oasis all fulfilled a secondary purpose, ranging from a formal/religious role in area B, to industrial use of houses in area C, and a possible rural function in the yet-unknown hamlets. This variety determines the diverse social zoning that signifies a stratified social texture. Nonetheless, evidence from the two settlements demonstrates a consistency in housing style in the oasis, characterized by a tendency for central spaces, clustered access plans, and a preference for horizontal rather than vertical development, even in middle-range houses. The classical architecture of wealthy houses in Kellis features full peristyles and tetrastyle *atria* executed in the Corinthian order of the second and third centuries AD in Alexandria. Decorations in these houses show commonalities with the Eastern Mediterranean

[193] Boozer, *Amheida II*, 157-79.
[194] Boozer, *Amheida II*, 186, 188-191.
[195] R.S. Bagnall, 'Society and Social Structure', in Hope and Bowen, *Kellis*,129-34 at 130-1; B. Bassett, 'The Roman Period in the Dakhleh Oasis', *Mediterranean Archaeology* 36 (2023) 39-60 at 53.

repertoire, some continuation of Hellenistic forms, and a blend with local preferences. Both the architecture and material culture in the oasis indicate a self-conscious inclination towards Roman traditions. Certain elements such as elongated or staggered entrances, windbreaks, and mudbrick construction show influences from more central parts of Egypt, such as the Faiyum area, to which we will now turn.[196]

The Faiyum

The village of Karanis situated to the north-east of the Faiyum, 80 km to the south of Cairo, was an important agricultural centre of its *nome* in ancient days. Today, it offers at least six centuries of continuous habitation dominated by tower-houses.[197] Tower-house is well attested from the Hellenistic to Late Antique periods all over the Eastern Mediterranean.[198] This vertical development in the Faiyum was partly encouraged by a tendency to save the land for cultivation and partly by the gradual accumulation of earlier refuse, covered by wind-blown desert sand. The debris gradually filled the basements and raised the street levels. Thus, upper storeys or new houses were continually built on top of the old structures forming solid bases for the later houses. This led to the formation of various chronological layers in Karanis from the latest A level (3rd -5th c. AD) to the earliest E level (2nd - 1st c. BC).[199]

The best-preserved examples of tower-houses come from the C level (first to the third centuries AD). Here, houses were arranged in dense *insulae* (Fig. 40) and normally had a ground floor, a second floor, and sometimes a subterranean level (Fig. 41). A staircase connected the rooms across the floors creating a combination of linear and clustered patterns of access.[200] Basements were sometimes accessed by stairs or through a trap door. These were often used for storage. Houses had flat roofs made by rafters on the upper floors, whereas basements had vaulted ceilings. Windows were high up on the walls and were covered with either barred wooden frames or screens that sloped towards the interior (Fig. 42). The importance of security is evident in the

[196] Boozer, 'Inside and Out', 190-1.
[197] Boozer, 'Inside and Out', 187.
[198] Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 169-76.
[199] Husselman, *Karanis*, 8-12.
[200] Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 375; Alston, *The City*, 52-3.

well-built entrance doors and the variety of bolts, used even in the most modest houses (Fig. 43). Windbreaks functioned in the same way as *pylones*, protecting the house both from the desert sand and the passersby's gaze on the street. These also defined the liminal space between the private and public (Fig. 44). Contrary to classical traditions, most houses had external courtyards located on one side, which were sometimes shared among neighbors in one *insula*. This compact and impenetrable design suited the desert climate, keeping the house cool in the summer and warm in winter.[201]

Tower-houses in Karanis have a variety of types depending on the shape of the floor plan (rectangular, square, or irregular), number of rooms, and the location of the staircase (lateral or central). Most houses in Karanis belong to the first two categories with rectangular or square floor plans. 'House C45' (Fig. 45) is an example of this type with two rooms (J and K) flanking a central staircase. The access to the house is through a stepped entrance to the north of the room J. Once in the house, one needs to use the staircase to access other rooms across the floors, including a basement that extends beneath the courtyard B to the south (room Q). Ground floor rooms and the staircase communicate with the three courtyards (A, B, and C) to the south. 'House C/51' (Fig. 46) has a square plan, with three differently-sized rooms, and a staircase on one side which provided direct access to all the rooms on three floors. Anyhow, the access pattern within each floor is linear due to the interrelatedness of the rooms. Rooms C51A and B communicate with each other, the staircase, and the court C50 to the north through doors and windows. A door also connected the room B to room C-D.[202]

Contrary to Dakhla or Alexandria, distinct urban zonings do not exist in Karanis. This obscures our perception of the economic status of these houses, and means that variously-sized houses are equally dispersed over the *insulae*. However, Depraetere has found a relationship between the size of the structures and their location at the site. According to him, the majority of the dwellings were small to medium (30-50 m^2). Medium houses occurred more frequently and concentrated towards the centre, while large houses (60 m^2 and above) were dispersed over all quarters with a concentration in *insula* I. Nonetheless, there is evidence that some of these large structures initially identified as houses in Karanis were either communal or state granaries or were

[201] Gazda, *Karanis an Egyptian Town*, 19, 23; Abdelwahed, *Houses in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, 5, 16.
[202] Husselman, *Karanis*, 69-71; Davoli, 'Classical Influences', 175.

associated with such a structure. Moreover, we are not sure of the relationship between the smaller houses and these granaries either.[203]

Houses of the C level in Karanis were of good quality from the architectural point of view and were sufficiently equipped for agricultural activities. Courtyards contained outbuildings such as granaries, dovecotes, mortars, grain bins, oil presses, and ovens. Ample storage facilities and underground cellars were available in most houses, and the material culture discovered in them included an abundance of agricultural tools such as plows, sickles, pitchforks, and winnowing shovels. The pottery found in Karanis is mostly of utilitarian types, but some imported red-slip tableware are also unearthed. A reconstruction of wooden furniture from the fragments retrieved from the dumps shows a variety ranging from personal chests, stools, tables, reading desks, beds, and lamp stands. These were mostly made of local woods and were a combination of classical and Egyptian furniture in style, but they had no inlaid metal or shell embellishment like those found in Pompeii.[204]

Most of these houses are modest in decoration. Still, some of the best examples of decorated religious niches were discovered in Karanis. These were found in the reception rooms of the ground floors, exactly where we mostly expect them to be in an Egyptian house according to the papyri of the Roman period. However, this is uncertain due to the scarcity of our evidence form upper floors. A semicircular niche of 1.5 by 2.15 m (Fig. 47) is found in 'House C119', framed with pilasters and pediments similar to the classical Alexandrian architecture of the time. The fluting on columns is also a rare Roman element. Comparable to niches in Marina el-Alamein, this niche is fashioned like a shell at the top, and a white wash covers the whole structure. Another similar *aedicula* is located at the centre of the western wall of the room C51A. A niche painting from the 'House B50' (Fig. 48) depicts Isis suckling Harpokrates, accompanied by the Thracian god on a horse, a recurring theme also seen in house B3/1 in Kellis and Antiphrae.[205]

Large houses with classical elements existed in other parts of Faiyum. Two mudbrick houses dated from the first to the fourth centuries AD were found in Theadelphia (Fig. 49). Both

[203] Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 93-4.
[204] Wendrich, Simpson, Elgewely, '3D Reconstruction of Furniture', 410-11.
[205] Abdelwahed, *Houses in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, 46-7.

houses were characterized by the presence of a central open space (an *aithrion*), surrounded by a staircase on one side, and two main rooms. These were separated by two limestone columns of Corinthian order forming a tripartite entrance, reminiscent of other classical houses of the Roman period found elsewhere in Egypt. Wall niches with stone and stuccoed architectonic elements and paintings mostly of the gods of the Greek pantheon decorated both rooms. These houses were not efficiently documented and were gradually destroyed over the years, being exposed to the elements. Several other structures with similar layouts have been excavated in other areas in the Faiyum, where evidence of occupation sometimes extends into the sixth century AD. The identification of these structures as residentials is still tentative.[206]

Patterns in the Evidence

Evidence of wealthy houses from Alexandria, Antiphrae, and Kellis show that the provincial Roman *domus* emerged in Egypt at almost the same time as in other Roman provinces, from the early first to the second centuries AD. The general paucity of papyrological evidence from the Delta region due to high humidity, as well as the lack of references to peristyle houses in the papyri from other cities in Egypt has led to the abiding assumption that classical house in Egypt was limited to major centres close to the seat of power.[207] The possibility that the allusions to few houses with Greek elements and two courtyards in the papyri of the Ptolemaic periods (discussed above in the section regarding papyri), might refer to what Vitruvius had described as Hellenistic peristyle house, has been the subject of discussion. In light of the new evidence of peristyle houses in Dakhla, it is now obvious that Depraetere correctly argued that the Greek villa, and thus even the Roman villa existed in the Egyptian chora. However, mention of two courts in the Roman-period papyri most probably indicates a separation between domestic and residential activities rather than independent quarters for men and women.[208]

[206] Davoli, 'Classical Influences', 179-81.
[207] See e.g. Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 103-4.
[208] *P.Oxy.* II 248 of 80 BC; *P. Petaus*. 10 of 184 BC; Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.7.1-7; Nowicka, *Maison privée*, 139-143; Husson, *Oikia*, 51-3; Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 130-3.

We already showed how the architecture of Roman houses in Egypt may have followed regional styles. However, all these houses share enough classical elements for us to suggest that they represented a common Mediterranean elite culture. The presence of a central colonnaded court which created a clustered pattern of access throughout the house is the ubiquitous element of Graeco-Roman houses in Egypt. In addition, the prominent location of reception rooms on the court, along with their highly decorative features boasting the status of the owner, call to mind the Pompeian houses and are distinctively Roman. In Alexandria, the U-shaped placement of dining couches in the reception rooms, which are almost open on one side to provide a view to the court, are in accord with this tradition.[209] In Antiphrae, the house follows a Greek *oikos-prostas* model, although the main reception room and the *oikos* are aligned along the same axis according to the Roman traditions.[210] In Kellis area C, the peristyle courtyard and a few tetrastyle *atria* surrounded by many decorated rooms are distinctly Roman architectural features. These structures, along with the material culture, are evidence of the robust Roman culture and the constant communication of residents of this town with other large centres of the Nile valley. These examples are in stark contrast with Greek culture, where the *andron* is intentionally concealed behind an ante-room that obstructs the view of visitors to the interior of the house, allowing for an uninterrupted arrangement of couches on four sides of the room.[211]

Another common aspect among all these houses is the ostentatious adornment of more public spaces (courts and reception rooms), which were meant to be viewed by the visitors. In Alexandria, decorations include a myriad of colourful floor mosaics. Elsewhere, the absence of mosaics is noteworthy, although the polychrome wall paintings on stucco closely resemble Alexandrian mosaics. These designs are all derived from a repertoire common in the Mediterranean basin with Greek influences. The recurrence of geometric designs, such as intersecting circles that occasionally form star motifs at the centre, is notable in the mosaics of Houses alfa and gamma (Fig. 16), the *triclinium* of House FA in Alexandria (Fig. 21), in the wall paintings of the main room of H9 (Fig. 27) in Marina el-Alamein, and on the wallpaper of room 1a in Kellis House B3/1 (Fig. 36). The *opus sectile* masonry technique found in the north wall of the *triclinium* in House Alfa in Alexandria is reproduced in paint in other houses (Fig. 37), recalling

[209] Majcherek, 'Streets and Houses', 7.
[210] Bakowska-Czerner, Czerner, 'House H9', 74.
[211] Hope, Bowen, 'Houses', 53-4; Hope, 'Roman-Period Houses of Kellis', 224-5.

the First Pompeian Painting Style. Except in Alexandria, where walls rarely preserved, wall panels with painted figurative scenes (birds, depictions of gods) and wallpaper with geometric designs are common (Kellis House B/1/2, Marina House H9).[212] *Aediculae*, similar to Roman *lararia*, are constant components of the reception rooms throughout the empire including Egypt. These are originally Roman in style, framed with classical architectonic elements such as pilasters, and adorned with dual or triple representations of Graeco-Egyptian gods. Decorated niches are found even in the so-called modest houses in Karanis (Figures 28, 38, and 48).[213]

We already showed that other expensive house types, such as the stone house of Isidora Apia and the two-or-three-towered houses, are also mentioned in the papyri. However, these are vaguely described and not represented in archaeology (see above). While *aithria* and *aula* were decisive components of these houses, these may have been equipped with expensive elements such as baths. It is not clear what kind of house was associated with the bath with five rotundas, described in the papyri of AD 189, but it is unlikely that the owner did not entertain his guests in the Roman way. The *pylones* of *Oikiadipurgia* contained several different types of rooms including *androne*s. This indicates that the reception rooms in these houses were located near the entrance according to Egyptian traditions, although there is rarely any information about their adornments. These were exclusively Egyptian style houses, and the organization of space in them was different from a classical house.[214] However, if we accept that the evidence of archaeology and papyri are complementary and should be treated in parallel,[215] we can conclude that a variety of house types was available for wealthier people regardless of their ethnic background. The high price of houses during the second and the third centuries reported by Alston is expressive of the abundance and diversity of expensive houses, which is also reflected in archaeology.[216]

Aithrion houses are attested in the archaeology of the Dakhla oasis, in the Faiyum, and in the papyri, starting from the first century AD. The origin of the *aithrion* house is still ambiguous. Central open rooms and clustered patterns of access are typical of Graeco-Roman architecture and unsuited to the harsh climate in the western desert. Yet, the evidence for central courts is scanty in

[212] Whitehouse, 'Paintings', 73.
[213] Boozer, *Amheida II*, 174.
[214] Abdelwahed, *Houses in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, 14-6.
[215] Nevett, 'Family and Household', 16.
[216] Alston, *City*, 67.

Karanis and surprisingly abundant in the Dakhla oasis. Both Boozer and Hope identify the *aithrion* houses with classical traditions, taken shape as a result of the prevalent Roman culture in the region. However, what distinguishes the classical house from the Egyptian house is its inviting nature, signified by its open-style and adorned reception. *Aithrion* houses, such as the Amheida House B2, in which there are no open reception rooms, are far more conservative than a classical house but not as concealed as the tower-houses in Karanis. For instance, the central staircase in House C45 in Karanis provides access to all the rooms across the floors, but the house would be completely concealed from the person standing in this central corridor. Central spaces existed in old Egyptian houses in Amarna as well, where they were covered at the top. Thus, the *aithrion* was possibly an adaptation of classical elements into local architecture.[217]

Tower-houses in Karanis are typically known as the Egyptian-style houses in both urban and rural contexts and the opposite of rich houses.[218] However, both houses and the material culture in Karanis are far from humble. Houses here reflect a self-sufficient farming community, where the organization of space was suited to the agricultural nature of the settlement. Vertical development of houses would save more land for cultivation, while a variety of external courts could accommodate farming equipment and helped people share the labour. These features supported a more co-opted public space and were also better suited to the desert conditions. People in Karanis produced their own utilitarian pottery and textile. They also used local wood in the construction of their houses and for carving their own furniture. This single functionality has partly accounted for the relative uniformity of the structures and the city planning, which, contrary to the oasis, were devoid of distinctive social zones.[219]

Nonetheless, some people of higher status also lived in Karanis. Papyri found in the house B17 refer to a certain Socrates, an official in charge of collecting tax money, whose annual earnings may have exceeded 10,000 drachmas.[220] Little is known about house B17, except that it covered an area of 120 m^2 on *insula* G. Material finds, such as ink wells and white papyri, suggest the possibility that he lived and worked in this house. Other officials may have also lived in these

[217] Hope, 'Roman-Period Houses', 224-5; Hope, Bowen,'Houses, Households, Household Activities', 53-4.
[218] Alston, 'Houses and Households', 31.
[219] Davoli, 'Classical Influences', 182.
[220] The amount is based on a tax roll of AD 172-3 from Karanis. See *P.Mich*. 224.

houses. Several reading tables and pieces of Greek literature, found in at least 39 houses in Karanis, attest to a level of literacy above the norm for an agrarian community.[221] In the previous section of this chapter, we showed that classical houses with elements similar to other Roman houses of the period existed elsewhere in the Faiyum. However, the evidence for these houses is still inadequate. In sum, the tower-house is the most common type of residence in Roman-period Faiyum, shaped by the necessities of a farming community and the desert climate. Yet, classical influences are also perceived in a variety of adorned *aediculae* found in the reception rooms in these houses, which attest to the mixed identity of the inhabitants.[222]

Houses in Egypt were products of a myriad of factors. We showed that the Graeco-Roman houses also demonstrate elements from the local culture. In Alexandria and Marina, stepped entrances were common. In Marina, underground cellars, staggered entrances, and domestic niches (both storage and religious) were discovered. In Kellis, long access corridors and mudbrick construction were in vogue. Here, the use of mudbrick in the construction of large houses cannot be associated with a lack of resources, as signs of wealth such as sizable statues of gods were also found from these houses. References to stone houses and stone construction in the papyri from the cities of the Nile valley suggest that stone was available in the Egyptian chora.[223] However, the scarcity of these houses (only 3 in the papyri and none in archaeology) speaks to the undesirability of stone compared to mudbrick for the construction of houses in the interior regions of Egypt.[224] Moreover, the choice of material might have followed local bylaws. For instance, the use of wood was prohibited in Alexandria to minimize the risk of fire, at the time of Julius Caesar's campaign to Alexandria.[225] Mosaics are found in other structures such as baths outside Alexandria, but it seems that these were not desirable in houses.[226] Weather conditions are similar in both Kellis and Karanis, but there is a difference in housing styles between the two regions. It seems that sociocultural norms played a more important role in the formation of *aithrion* houses in the Dakhla

[221] Van Minnen, 'House-to-House Enquiries', 237-40, 246.
[222] Davoli, 'Classical Influences', 182.
[223] *P.Hib*. II 217 of AD 176-8 is the offer of stonemasons for the sale of 9 readily-carved columns together with their capitals and bases in Hermopolise. The price of each set including transportation and installation is recorded as 264 Drachmas; See 168 and 169 above.
[224] Hope, Bowen, 'Houses, Households, Household Activities', 55.
[225] *On the Alexandrian War* I.3; Nowicka, *Maison privée*, 66, 151.
[226] Whitehouse, 'Paintings', 76.

oasis, whereas, in Karanis, the harsh desert condition and the rural lifestyle of the settlement were key factors in the formation of tower-houses.[227]

Concluding Remarks

The reciprocity of archaeological and papyrological evidence from Egypt shows a diversity in housing traditions across the regions, shaped by the confluence of divergent factors including climatic conditions, the lifestyle of the community, the function of the house (other than residential), and the sociocultural norms in varying degrees. Our knowledge of the built environment in Egypt is far from complete due to the paucity of evidence. Be that as it may, known residential forms in Roman Egypt fall into four categories according to the current state of data. Firstly, the elite Roman house emerged in due course by the first to second centuries AD in Egypt, almost at the same time as other provincial villas, both in rural and urban contexts. Secondly, the *aithrion* house, an amalgamation of local and classical traditions, is confirmed both in archaeology and the papyri. Thirdly, the tower-house is attested throughout the East Mediterranean regions in all contexts. Finally, the *oikia dipurgia*, is a large Egyptian-style urban house mentioned only in a dozen of papyri, which according to the descriptions may have been rich in architecture and decoration. No evidence of this house is found in archaeology, since the current major cities are built over the ancient urban settlements.

Houses in Alexandria, Marina el-Alamein, and Kellis share similarities in their use of classical architectural features. These include centrally located open courts dominated by reception rooms and elaborate decorations, suggesting the existence of a shared Roman aristocratic culture even in areas far from the capital city of Alexandria. Specific circumstances at each centre have resulted in the development of local styles, each with a set of distinct characteristics. These rich houses may not represent the residential architecture of a whole town or city but may provide a complete model to analyze smaller houses in each region. This may not apply to Alexandria, where our evidence is restricted to wealthy dwellings. Still, where a range of houses is present, the influence of these inclusive regional styles is obvious. In Marina el-Alamein, freestanding columns

[227] Boozer, 'Inside and Out', 195.

and a combination of *prostas/oikos* can be found even in the smallest houses, and in Kellis central open courts (*aithria*) are common even in middle-range houses in the industrial district.

Given the length of the Greek dominion followed by six centuries of Roman rule, it is not unexpected that the papyri regarding houses in Egypt generally use Greek terminology to define various parts of houses, and that the earlier structures show a greater Greek rather than Roman influence. Houses in Alexandria and Antiphrae, which were built quite early in the period and in some cases developed out of existing structures, mostly draw on Greek and Hellenistic traditions of *prostas-oikos*, while also developing Roman elements such as baths and open-style reception rooms. In Kellis, outstanding mudbrick structures built during the second to third centuries AD demonstrate an adaptation of noticeably Roman elements, such as a full peristyle and tetrastyle *atria*. This temporal discrepancy in the culmination of Roman architectural forms across different regions also displays the gradual process of the dissemination of Roman culture deeper into the provinces.

In sum, one should not expect to find purely classical or local architecture in Egypt. In fact, a variety of houses existed in this southeastern Roman province, all of which demonstrate both Graeco-Roman and Egyptian influences. Graeco-Roman houses included at least one local Egyptian element such as porched entrances, long access corridors, vaulted basements, and use of local construction material and techniques such as mudbrick. Classical influences are seen not only in the modest houses in Karanis but also in the creation of new architectural forms such as the *aithrion* house found in Kellis. In addition, high status Roman families also lived in distinctively Egyptian style houses like *dipurgia*. This is an attestation of the creolization of cultures that characterized the social texture of Egypt during the Roman period, rather than the dominance of one ruling culture, and a clear demonstration of the impact of social change in private houses. We should not be surprised to find Roman houses in Egypt alongside local structures, as Roman people were neither shocked by the sight of an obelisk erected in the Roman forum nor by a variety of temples dedicated to Isis. The change had already been heralded by Augustus when he announced that he had added Egypt to the Empire of the Roman people.

Chapter 3:

Late Antique Housing in Egypt: Change or Continuity

By the sixth and seventh centuries even leading theologians and politicians may have been living in houses that earlier ages would have regarded as no more than huts.[228]

Introduction

It was previously discussed that Roman architectural influences were perceived in Egyptian houses early in the first century. However, it is only in the second and third centuries that a surge in the number and quality of wealthy houses in different parts of Egypt is attested. Incongruously, this period of relative political stability and economic growth, brought about by Roman rule in Egypt, coincides with the political and economic crisis in other regions of the Empire. The restoration of stability by the Tetrarch emperors in the third century led to the rise of powerful local magnates. These were representatives of the imperial house, in charge of collecting the land tax, who also owned substantial amounts of agricultural estates. Late Antique Roman *domus* adopted more public features to accommodate the needs of these new elites.[229] Evidence of these houses is scarce towards the end of the period, in some areas of the empire. It is possible that many of them were abandoned or occupied by squatters. Evidence of middle-range houses are generally under-represented, and humble dwellings dominate the urban texture.[230] However, developments vary from one area to another.

During Late Antiquity, Egypt turned into a propitious milieu for monastic life. Christianity was quickly propagated and institutionalized relatively earlier than the rest of the Empire. Growing in parallel to the hierarchical structure of the imperial administration, Christianity culminated in the renewal of the political life from which Egypt has once been deprived by the early emperors. Agricultural production supported the Empire's economy and continued to be expanded and managed by the local landowning aristocracy, who, along with bishops, were also in charge of tax

[228] Ellis, 'Late Antique Houses', 47.
[229] Ellis, *Roman Housing*, 59-62.
[230] Ellis, 'End of the Roman House', 565; Ellis, 'Middle Class Houses', 413.

collection. This system of administration also involved and benefited the local population, some of whom were minor landowners or managers at various levels. Agricultural wealth and prosperity continued in Egypt until the end of Late Antiquity, and even beyond in some areas.[231]

The goal of this chapter is to show the patterns of change and continuity in the architecture of Late Antique Romano-Egyptian houses and to determine the extent to which the new dwellings reflect wider Mediterranean social developments during this period. I will argue that the formation of Late Antique houses in Egypt, similar to the previous period, was influenced by a multiplicity of factors. While some of these transformations occurred as a result of local conditions, others had their origins in the Late Antique social changes. To achieve this, the initial section discusses evidence from Late Antique papyri, followed by presentations of Late Antique houses from three distinct regions in the subsequent segments. Depending on the availability of evidence, I will endeavour to provide a diachronic picture of change in each region. Otherwise, a diachronic comparison between similar settlements across regions will be conducted. In the last section of this paper, I will attempt to outline the main lines of change in Egyptian houses and explore the conformity of developments in this province with general changes in the Mediterranean milieu.

Housing in the Late Antique Papyri

Late Antique papyri are of the same legal nature as those from the earlier period, but these are fewer in quantity. In addition to the main physical components of a house, these papyri, mainly from the Patermouthis archives, contain more descriptive details about the interior arrangements of Egyptian townhouses in the fifth and sixth centuries in Syene.[232] Patermouthis, like many other inhabitants of Upper Egyptian towns in the Nile Valley, was a military officer and probably a part-time boatman, transporting people among the cities and the islands in the area. The house of the Patermouthis family in Syene, like many others, contained both a *pylon* and an *aithrion*. It also contained a variety of specialized rooms arranged in four storeys, including a *kellion* (room) on the first floor, two *symposia* on the second floor, and another *symposion*, and an *akkoubiton*

[231] R.S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993) 149, 310-25.
[232] G. Husson, 'Houses in Syene in the Patermouthis Archive', *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 27 (1990) 123-37 at 127.

(bedroom) on its third floor. Rooms on the third floor were in turn topped by two verandas. Stairs, vestibule, gatehouse, and oven constituted common facilities.[233] Imagine vibrant Egyptian towns filled with multistorey houses featuring terraces at various heights, where women enjoyed views and likely engaged in their domestic chores.

The spaces mentioned in the papyri are not newly introduced concepts. *Kellia* also existed in the Roman period papyri but were addressed with a different term before the fourth century. *Kellia* refer to same-sized rooms that mostly occurred on the ground floor, near the entrance and on the courts.[234] These rooms served different purposes depending on the context, e.g. storage, workshop, shop, or dwellings for the farmers in an *epoikion* (rural estate).[235] In Syene, being a community of soldiers, monks, and boatmen, with no evidence of agriculture or trade (save leatherworking), houses were essentially residential. Here, a *kellion* was perhaps more public and utilitarian in nature, as is evident by its location.[236] Bedrooms (*koitones*) are mostly attested in the papyri regarding opulent houses or townhouses, rather than rural areas. Bedrooms were often located on the upper floors.[237] In the countryside, there was no need for a dedicated room for repos. People worked on farms, and when the night fell, they slept where they happened to be.[238] During Late Antiquity, a variety of terms came to be used for bedrooms in different regions.[239] It is tempting to interpret the association of the bedrooms with the names of individuals in the Syene papyri as a sign of increased privacy.[240] However, this was an indication of ownership, and their positioning on the upper floors suggests that these were the most comfortable and agreeable rooms.[241]

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[233] *P.Lond*. V 1724 of AD 578-82; *P.Lond.* V 1734 of AD 585; *P. Münch.* 11 of AD 586; *P. Münch.* 12 of AD 598; Translations of Syene papyri used in this work are from B. Porten, *The Elephantine Papyri in English, Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change* (Leiden, 1996).
[234] In *P. Amh.* II 152 of AD 400-525 six *kellia* are located in the court; *P.Lond.* V 1722 of AD 530 is the sale of an entire house with two *kellia* on the ground floor; In *BGU* I 305 of AD 556 a *kellion* is located by the *aithrion*; Husson, *Oikia*, 142-4.
[235] *Stud.Pal*. XX 157.2-3 of AD 500-599 is the payment of a rent for a *kellion* in the interior of a rural estate; *P.Oxy*. XVI 2044 of AD 564 mentions a *kellion* used as wine cellar; *P.Ross.Georg*. III.38 of AD 569 is the rental agreement of a *kellion* as a workshop located under a residence; also see, Husson, *Oikia*, 143-6.
[236] See 233 above: Husson, 'Houses in Syene', 130 (no. 40), 135-6.
[237] Two papyri *SB* VI 9153.20 of AD 596 and *P.Ross.Georg*. III 56.7-8 of AD 707 mention a *koiton* on the second. floor; Husson, *Oikia*, 152-4.
[238] Husson, *Oikia*, 152.
[239] Husson, 'Houses in Syene', 125-6.
[240] See *P.Lond*. V 1857.11-3 of AD 540; *P.Lond.* V 1724.30-1 of AD 578-82; *P.Lond.* V 1734.33-4 of AD 585.
[241] Husson, 'Houses in Syene', 154.

Sometimes, a few sets of rooms, including a *symposion* with its roofed terrace, a *kellion*, or a *koiton*, are found to have formed a living unit in houses in Syene.[242] Alston relates the multiplicity of these units to a shift in the meaning of *symposion* to a simple reception room. This development facilitated multifamily occupation of the house with a greater degree of privacy. He wonders if there was a room for entertainment within these houses at all.[243] Multiple *androne*s or a combination of *triclinia* with an adjacent room also existed in the Roman period. *Triclinia* could still be found during Late Antiquity, both on the courts and on the upper floors. These were sometimes furnished with exquisite embroidery and decorative objects.[244] However, Husson also confirms that the *symposion*, in the sense of an apartment suite, is mostly attested in the Late Antique papyri.[245] Shared use or ownership of houses was common in Egypt. However, there is now a greater tendency to specify house shares more accurately in terms of space rather than simply mentioning a fraction of the house, as seen in most papyri from earlier periods.[246]

Apart from *aithrion* and *aule*, a new term, *aithra*, also appears in six Late Antique papyri from different cities, the meaning of which is still unclear. Reference to 'a little terrace above the *aithrion* facing towards the small *aithra*', in a deed of sale of AD 578-82, suggests that the *aithrion* evolved at this time. Either it was no longer an open space, or it was partially covered by a protruding veranda.[247] Contrary to the earlier period, an *aithrion* was even leased in one instance, in AD 430.[248] It is possible that houses were enlarged by building over the roofs, which could be topped further by terraces. This may have complicated matters of shared ownership. A new expression 'from the ground to the roof/ ceiling (*ἀήρ*)' appearing in twenty-five Late Antique contracts, also attested in the papyri in other languages, refers to the right of the owner or lessee to the rental or purchased property. The sale of a courtyard in AD 493 clearly defines the purpose

[242] *P. Lond*. 1724 of AD 578-82 is the sale of one-third of a house including a *kellion* on the first floor, a *symposion* on the second, and a veranda on the third, along with a share of the common areas; Husson, *Oikia*, 269-70.
[243] Alston, *City*, 111-2.
[244] *P.Oxy.* VIII 1128 of AD 173 is the rent of such a *symposion*-apartment during the Roman period; *P.Ryl*. IV 647 of AD 300-325 lists among other items cushions or mattress in a dining room with three dining couches; In *P.Lond*. III 871 of AD 603 a dining room is still located in the court.
[245] *P.Yale.* I 71.9-11 of AD 456 is the rental agreement of a *symposion* with its bedroom and its appurtenance; References to four *symposia* in *P. Lond*. 1724 of AD 578-82 may indicate four apartments rather than dining rooms; Husson, *Oikia*, 43, 28.
[246] Only a limited number of Roman period-papyri from Tebtynis define house shares in this way, on which see Nevett, 'Family and Household', 27, 31.
[247] *P.Lond*. V 1724.27-8; Husson, *Oikia*, 34-5; Husson, 'Houses in Syene', 125.
[248] *P.Oxy*. XVI 1957; Husson, *Oikia*, 35-6.

regarding the owner's right to 'administer and build upon and sell and give it and employ what pertains to it in any way you choose'.[249] It was also possible to sell, or rent the ceiling space (*ἀήρ*) of a specific room, or a portion of it.[250]

The Late Antique palatial residences of local landowning magnates also feature in the papyri. The 'great house' of the Apion family in Oxyrhynchus is a case in point. The Apions were close and faithful members of the imperial court. They were in charge of the state tax collection and managed the state's large-scale landholdings.[251] The palace, partially known from the Apion archives, sat just outside the city walls, surrounded by the associated agricultural lands.[252] A wooden staircase connected the house to the nearby hippodrome, where the family watched races in their own private box, in the manner of emperors in Constantinople. The *triclinium* was decorated at least with two paintings of Saint Kolluthos and Virgin Marry. Balustrades, metal and wooden decorative elements, tables, 19 marble capitals and a large dining couch were reported among the objects here.[253] Structural elements, including capitals and marble columns, fountains, luxury spouts in the shape of lion's heads, tabs, pipes, bronze basins, and small statuettes adorned the external bath of this palace, which was connected to the latrines.[254] An order for 60 pieces of glass for the windows of the bath attests to huge dimensions of both the palace and its thermal facilities.[255] These features sustained the public function of the building and the privacy of its inhabitants concomitantly. The term *loutron*, rather than *balaneion*, is used to describe this bath in the papyri. *Balaneion* no longer occurs in the papyri of this period.[256]

[249] *P. Münch*. 16.28-31; Husson, *Oikia*, 64, 28-9; Husson, 'Houses in Syene', 126-7.
[250] In *P.Lond*. V 1733.49-55 of AD 594 half of a *symposion* and a share of its terrace above is sold with its *ἀήρ*.
[251] For public patronage, function and administration of the house of the Apions see R. Mazza, 'Households as Communities? Oikoi and Poleis in Late Antique and Byzantine Egypt', in O.M. van Nijf, R. Alston (eds), *Political Culture in the Greek City after the Classical Age* (Leuven, 2011) 263-86 at 280-2.
[252] *P.Oxy*. XXXVI 2779.22 of AD 530, mentions that the 'great landed *oikos*' is in the suburbs outside the city gates; *P.Oxy*. XVI 1925.44 of AD 578 mentions 'the *proastion* outside the gates'.
[253] *P.Oxy*. XVI 1925 is a list of stolen items, found and returned to the palace to Onnophrios, the assistant. Arranged in two columns, the list provides us with a glimpse of how the palace looked like.
[254] The second column of the same papyrus in 253 above; also see *PSI* VIII 955 of AD 500-599 regarding wine served for stone-cutters who carried out work in the bath (*loutron*) of the estate.
[255] In *P.Wis*. II 66 of AD 584, the amount of 1350 myriads of silver is paid by Apollos, the rent collector to purchase 60 windowpanes for the bath (*loutron*) of 'the *proastion* outside the gate'.
[256] Husson, *Oikia*, 59; R. Mazza, *L'archivio degli Apioni, terra, lavoro e proprietà senatoria nell 'Egitto tardoantico* (Bari, 2001) 84-7.

The evidence of papyri from Late Antiquity suggests that the customary arrangement of more public spaces on the ground floor and the private ones on the upper floors existed in houses. The tradition of the communal use of the house also continued. Instead of merely defining house shares as fractions of the whole, the papyri now articulate these in architectural terms, detailing the rights of occupants regarding shared and private spaces, with enhanced precision. This shift indicates a heightened concern for privacy. The variety of vocabulary used to refer to the internal spaces during this period is a matter of local linguistic differences, while a shift in the meaning of *aithrion* and the emergence of *aithra* may point to increased architectural diversity.[257] However, when words fall short of illumination, we may seek one among ancient ruins. In the subsequent sections, we will demonstrate the extent to which the evidence of papyri complements archaeological discoveries throughout Egypt.

Alexandria and Its Surroundings

Most Roman-period large houses with mosaics in the Kom el-Dikka district were burned down following a series of violent events, sometime around the late-third century AD. These were then replaced by new public buildings such as a theatre, conference halls, baths, and cisterns, which covered the west side of the Street R4. To the east of the street, previous houses were reconstructed to shape a new industrial/residential quarter, using the *spolia* from the earlier structures such as column capitals and limestone blocks. The walls and foundations followed the direction of the old ones but were built anew with the *opus africanum* technique (Fig. 50), typical of Late Antique Mediterranean architecture. The new plans were mostly courtyard houses with more than one storey, in which two distinct domestic and industrial/commercial units can be detected. The existence of one or two *tabernae* at the frontage of a house was a common characteristic of even the largest Mediterranean urban dwellings, such as house FA (Fig. 20) from the earlier period. However, commerce and industrial production came to dominate most of the living space in these

[257] Husson, 'Houses in Syene', 126-7; Alston, *City*, 112.

houses over time. This culminated in a new architectural style by the sixth century AD, which remained in use until the Arab period.[258]

'House D' (Fig. 51 and 52) is the most completely excavated and is representative of houses in the district. This was a two-storey building with a long narrow open courtyard (D8) measuring 15.5 by 2.8 m. The entrance (D16) was flanked by two shops (D15 and D1) and a veranda above. Behind the entrance, two identical rows of rooms lay to the north and south of the *aithrion*. At this time, a latrine (D9) was added at the eastern end of the court, along with a staircase (D5) leading to the residential rooms on the first floor. Here, a balcony with high-quality balustrades ran along the interior. On the ground floor, in addition to the two shops that lined the street side, most rooms surrounding the *aithrion* were of equal dimensions, similar to *kellia*. These rooms were associated with the glass production process based on the finds of a kiln, the remains of glass beads, and rods. Evidence of domestic activity was mostly found in the rooms at the end of the court (D6, D9, and 10). In the court, the walls were plastered and covered with Coptic-style incised decorations.[259]

Inside the court, on the wall between rooms D4 and D7, a religious fresco (Fig. 53) dating to the mid-sixth century based on style, was discovered. The painting, measuring 1.5 m in width, depicted Madonna and child surrounded by two figures. These were probably depictions of archangels, saints, local priests, or even the owner himself as was customary in Late Antique domestic paintings. Lamps hung by chains from the two iron dowels right under the fresco would illuminate the communions that took place in this private oratory as the focus of communal life in this multifamily house. An inscription in limestone at the entrance that reads 'the pious ones' reflects the shared belief of the residents.[260] The house might not have belonged to a family of great wealth. Yet, the commissioning of a fresco of such quality, as well as extensive renovations in the sixth century, speak to their somewhat adequate financial means.[261] Other houses in this quarter also show clear signs of a gradual expansion of the industrial and commercial units at the

[258] Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III*, 60-2; Majcherek, 'Notes on Alexandrian Habitat', 141-3.
[259] Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III*, *65, 67, 69, 97-8, 92.*
[260] C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, 1997) 201-4. Both Rodziewicz and Haas identify this as a domestic oratory. Based on written sources, practice of private devotion and ascetic life was common and encouraged in Alexandrian households. Moreover, Late Antique monastic oratories consisted of tripartite niches, always placed on an eastern wall.
[261] M. Rodziewicz, 'Archaeological Evidence on Byzantine Architecture in Alexandria', *Graeco-Arabica* IV (1991) 287-97 at 290; Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 198. I do not agree with Alston who compares this house with houses at Karanis arguing that this was a humble house. See Alston, 'Houses and Households', 29.

expense of the shrinking domestic quarters. This process took place simultaneously with a blurring of the boundaries between public and private.[262]

Remnants of medium-sized bath installations, perhaps associated with large houses, suggest that the district was not strictly middle-range or public in nature at this time. One such house lies 35 m from L1 and R3 streets on the northeastern corner of Kom el-Dikka, where a bath was built later onto its west side. The door was flanked by two niches that probably contained sculptures. The distance between the bath and the street was sufficient to contain one to two peristyle courts. Fragmentary evidence shows that the peristyle may have been enclosed on three sides by a portico and was decorated with mosaics, marble incrustations, and paintings. The total surface of the house was calculated at 1000 m^2, almost equal to that of a large Mediterranean *domus*.[263]

Owing to the scarcity of evidence for Alexandrian villas, we rely on a series of large rural states unearthed in the Mareotis region (Fig. 54). Mariotis played an essential role in the Alexandrian economy as a wine production and maritime centre, connecting the Nile Valley to the Mediterranean cities.[264] These houses were laid either on large courtyards or peristyle plans and contained bath installations, small churches, and baptistries in many instances. *Villa rustica*, located in Huwariya, 2 km south of Marea, was a double peristyle house of almost 1500 m^2, built initially in mudbrick in the fourth century (Fig. 55). The grand entrance on the east side of the northern peristyle, leading to the court via a vestibule, along with the two spacious rooms to its north, indicate a more formal character in this area. The house possessed a chapel located on the wing between the two courts, while the southern peristyle was mostly a work-yard, judging by the evidence of a wine press, cultivation beds, a bath, and latrines. Sometime in the fifth or sixth century, the house was reconstructed with reused stone, as evidenced by the irregularly shaped and dressed columns in the peristyle. Walls were rebuilt in the *opus africanum* masonry style. The chapel was converted into a church by attaching two rooms from the eastern wing. A baptistery

[262] See also Majcherek, 'Notes on Alexandrian Habitat',141-5 for the partially excavated 'Houses H', where the domestic section had gradually moved to the upper storey, while evidence of business had developed beyond the two shops on the street side, covering an area of over 600 m^2 on the first floor.
[263] Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III*, 314-29.
[264] C. Haas, 'Alexandria and the Mareotis Region', in T. S. Burns, and J. W. Eadie (eds), *Urban Centers and Rural Contexts in Late Antiquity* (East Lansing, 2001) 47-62.

with a round basin in front of an apse was also added here, and the sanitary installations in the southern court were expanded.[265]

These houses were interpreted as monasteries or churches for a time.[266] However, evidence found in a sixth-to-eighth-century courtyard house at the port of Marea is more informative in this regard (Fig. 56). Similar to the *villa rustica*, 'House CH2' contained a latrine, a bath, a kitchen, and extensive water installations in its south wing, as well as many other utility and domestic rooms around the court. In a later phase, a church was built to the south, containing an altar in front of an apse and a baptistery. The house was void of decoration, except in the church where paintings adorned the concave and the floor of the apse (Fig. 57). The three ostraca, found from the baptismal font and dated to the seventh century, attest to the probable presence of a few monks. Approximately six names and titles in three ostraca are too small a number to indicate a monastery. Moreover, the combination of a baptistry and church is not a characteristic of Late Antique monasteries in Egypt (except the White Monastery).[267]

These small churches were all accessed only from the interior of the buildings, suggesting that they served only a small circle of acquaintances. The immediate community, would have rather used the Great Basilica and the large baptistry in Marea. These houses were originally private estates and residences of wealthy landowners, later transformed into *hospitia* or *xenodochia*. This was a common practice regarding houses situated along the route to shrines and pilgrimage sites, and is documented in the legislation of the period. These establishments were customarily operated either by the owner himself or by a member of the clergy, appointed by the

[265] F. el-Fakharani, 'Recent Excavations at Marea in Egypt', in *Das Römisch-Byzantinische Ägypten. Akten des internationalen Symposions 26-30 September 1978 in Trier* (Mainz, 1983) 175-86 at 184-5; M. Rodziewicz, 'Remarks on the Domestic and Monastic Architecture in Alexandria and Surroundings', in E.C.M. Van den Brink, M.J. de Bruyn, W. de Bruyn (eds), *The Archaeology of the Nile Delta, Egypt: Problems and Priorities: Proceedings of the Seminar Held in Cairo, 19-22 October 1986, on the Occasion of the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Netherlands Institute of Archaeology and Arabic Studies in Cairo* (Amsterdam, 1988) 267-76 at 269; Rodziewicz, 'Archaeological Evidence', 290-1 (n. 22).

[266] for a published example of these interpretations see J.B. Ward-Perkins, *The monastery of Taposiris Magna* (Alexandria, 1945) 52; Rodziewicz states that the same interpretation was suggested in discussion for two other houses he had excavated in Marea, on which see Rodziewicz, 'Remarks on the Domestic and Monastic Architecture', 267.

[267] Rodziewicz, 'Remarks on the Domestic and Monastic Architecture', 267; T. Derda, M. Gwiazda, J. Burdajewicz, 'A Private House in Marea/Philoxenite Transformed into a Monastic Institution and other Christian Hybrid Buildings in the Mareotis Region', *Journal of Coptic Studies* (2023) 107-38 at 108-15, 121-2, 125 and specially 115-121 for the ostraca and their translation.

local bishop.[268] The owner had the right to choose the person in question. Such changes did not necessarily cause the interruption of domestic functions. Domestic churches associated with private opulent residences are attested in both archaeology (Lullingston Villa) and written sources throughout the empire.[269] However, the continuation of this tradition beyond Late Antiquity is only attested in northern Egypt.[270]

Evidence of elite housing from Late Antique Alexandria and its environs demonstrates a firm continuation with the previous Hellenistic traditions. Double peristyle layouts are now crystalized on larger surfaces in both urban and rural estates.[271] The inclusion of more public structural elements such as domestic churches, baptisteries, extensive hygienic facilities, and even private hypogea in the Mareotis region added to the architectural diversity of these houses. New Late Antique construction techniques such as *opus africanum* masonry style and water proof mortar emerged. However, compared to the villas in Alexandria, the use of *spolia* in the Mareotis estates would have affected the appearance of prominent areas, such as colonnades, in terms of design and style.[272] The notable sparsity of decoration in residential quarters and their concentration in liturgical spaces from the fifth century onwards implies the dawn of new values and priorities brought by the Christian faith, rather than a lack of resources.[273] Nonetheless, our knowledge of the adornments and the types of public architectural elements, such as a variety of dining rooms, that we expect to find in urban villas of the period, is fragmentary. As we have seen in Chapter 2, Roman influences were perceived in large residential complexes in the Dakhla oasis from the Roman period. Fortunately, this region continues to provide insight into decorated reception and dining rooms in Late Antique Egypt.

[268] *CTh* 16.2.33 of AD 398; *NI* 57.2 of AD 537; *NI* 57.2 of AD 546.
[269] On literary evidence and laws on domestic churches see 119 above in chapter 1.
[270] Derda, Gwiazda, Burdajewicz, 'Private House', 121-127; On administrative relationship between aristocratic estates and the ecclesiastical institutions see Mazza, 'Households as Communities?', 278-9; Saint Macrina the younger, sister of Basil the Great, is one of the earliest aristocrats dedicating their estate house to the Christian cause by founding a convent for women, where she also resided until her death.
[271] Rodziewicz, 'Remarks on the Domestic and Monastic Architecture', 269-70.
[272] Derda, Gwiazda, Burdajewicz, 'Private House', 122.
[273] Ellis, 'Late Antique Houses', 47.

Dakhla Oasis

By the end of the third century, the settlements in Kellis areas B and C were either abandoned or underwent a change of function. A new phase of occupation emerged in Area A towards the centre of the town (Fig. 58). Here, three midsized mudbrick houses (120 m^2), dated within the fourth century (Fig. 59), were enclosed by streets to the east and the south. All three houses were accessible from the south through staggered entrance systems. This was a typical feature in Egyptian arid areas to protect the house from the desert sand. Interior stairs provided access to the roofs, which were mostly barrel-vaulted at this time. The space between the barrels would be filled with sand, ash, and debris, which were then flattened on top to enable the use of the roofed space. Walls were covered with reddish grey mud plaster. White bands framed and accentuated different types of niches, cupboards, and other architectural features according to Egyptian traditions.[274]

In 'House 3', corridor 1B connected the entrance (no. 1A) to the courtyard at the north. A distinct cooking area with two ovens was built to the west of the court, far from the storage areas and troughs. A door on the westside of corridor 1B gave way to the interior of the house. Here, a cluster of rooms surrounded a covered central court or an *aithrion* (no. 6) with a hearth. Room 7 included a staircase and was probably unroofed. This provided light and ventilation to the *aithrion* and subsequently to the surrounding rooms through clerestory windows above the doors. Access to rooms 4 and 10 was provided in a linear manner through adjacent rooms. 'House 2' encroached on 'House 1' in a later phase, creating an L-shaped layout for both houses. The main feature of this house is the presence of double central rooms (nos. 2 and 3) with flat roofs. These were interconnected by two doors and provided access to two barrel-vaulted rooms to their north and south. The light and ventilation for these surrounding rooms was provided through clerestory windows above the doors which opened into the two central rooms. A small unroofed kitchen (no. 9) was later built to the south of the house, encroaching on the street.[275]

In 'House 1', a corridor (no. 8) separated the house into two wings. On the east, a central room (no. 4) was surrounded by two sets of barrel-vaulted rooms to its north (nos. 2 and 3) and south (nos. 5 and 6). This contained a hearth, some kind of flat roof, and a ventilation system.

[274] Hope, 'Kellis in Context', 13-4; Hope, Bowen, 'Houses, Households, Household Activities', 31-3.
[275] Hope, 'Roman-Period Houses', 217-9; Hope, Bowen, 'Houses, Households, Household Activities', 33, 35-6.

Later, a kitchen (no.1) was added to the north, and a door was opened into room 2, connecting the living quarters to the kitchen. At this time, a large L-shaped room (no. 7) was built to the west of the corridor, which could also be accessed from the courtyard.[276] This partially roofed space contained a semicircular dining couch made of reused mudbrick (Fig. 60). This is a distinctly local adaptation of the *stibadium* used in Roman convivial dining, mostly found in the Late Antique apsidal reception rooms. However, the use of this furniture in a less formal context shows the inclination of the inhabitants to emulate the dining habits of Roman elites on one side, and the probability of its appropriation for local celebrations on the other.[277] Based on the evidence of papyri from the *insula*, it is suggested that room 7 was the venue for *agape*, a kind of communal meal customary among Manichaeans, who possibly inhabited the *insula* at this time according to the papyri found *in situ*.[278] These finds, along with the Coptic papyri archive found in the *insula*, have revealed facts about the lives of its inhabitants, their economy, religious beliefs, and social relationships that enable us to rank the *insula* among middle-range houses.[279]

The same architectural style can be detected in Amheida, where an elite residential district of homogeneous structures was found, ostensibly laid out as part of a unified city plan in the fourth century. Here, 'House B1' or the 'House of Serenos' (Fig. 61) was excavated. The house is named after its owner, a member of the city council, whom we know from the ostraca found at the site. This moderately large house (225 m^2) had two staggered entrances and vestibule systems to the east (no. 7) and west (no. 12), both leading to a central court (no. 2). This was covered with a flat roof, and contained a hearth and clerestory windows above the doorways. To the north, rooms 4 and 8 were identified as kitchens, based on storage shelves, a hearth, and domestic assemblage. To the east, a richly decorated room (no.13) adjacent to the vestibule, served as a reception for lesser visitors, controlling access to the interior of the house. A corridor on the west side of the stairs led to a schoolroom (no. 15), judging by a Greek *dipinto* of Homeric texts on its wall. This points to

[276] Hope, Bowen, 'Houses, Households, Household Activities', 34; Hope, 'Roman-Period Houses', 215-7.
[277] S. Alfarano, 'Architettura dei riti conviviali nell'Egitto tardoantico', in M. Livadiotti, L. M. Caliò (eds), *Theatroeideis. L'immagine della città, la città delle immagini Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Bari, 15-19 giugno 2016, Thiasos Monografie 11, vol. II, L'immagine della città romana e medievale* (Rome, 2018) 469-88 at 478-80.
[278] See references to 'our Lord, the Paraclete' and 'the most luminous soul' in *P.Kell.* G 63:26-29, in K.A. Worp (ed), *Greek Papyri from Kellis: I* (Oxford, 1995); (Hope, Bowen, 'Houses, Households, Household Activities', 49.
[279] G. Bowen, 'The Environment Within: The Archaeological Context of the Texts from House 3 at Kellis in Egypt's Dakhleh Oasis', in Di Castro and Hope, *Housing and Habitat*, 231-41.

the significance attached to classical Greek education among the inhabitants here and in the neighbourhood. The adjacent rooms 9 and 10 formed an external courtyard.[280]

To the south, a cluster of well-decorated rooms (1, 11, and 14) formed a banquet hall. Room 1 was covered with a mud-plastered and painted dome. This must have looked impressive to guests invited to this space. Inside the room, complex geometric patterns, including lozenges, octagons, and squares of varying schemes covered the walls below (Fig. 62). These were painted in vivacious combinations of vibrant colours in imitation of Roman mosaics and textiles.[281] Popular Late Antique mythological themes, such as Perseus rescuing Andromeda and the return of Odysseus (Fig. 63), were depicted above on the walls. On the east wall, a personification of Amheida or the ancient Trimithis (Fig. 64), in the guise of a woman wearing a mural crown, commemorated the acquisition of city status in AD 304 and highlighted the owner's prestige as a city official. Another wall-painting depicts the family in residence, including a woman and a child, lounging on a *kline* (Fig. 65) in front of a round *sigma* table. They are enjoying their dinner, while listening to a seated figure, who plays a double *aulos*. The combination of these carefully selected themes represents the social, cultural, and political affinities of the owner and his family with the upper Roman echelon in the city of Trimithis.[282]

The latter scene comes to life in light of the evidence of an external dining room, built in a later phase of occupation onto the street 2 to the east of the house. Here, to the south of S2, a lightly roofed area accommodated a *stibadium* (Fig. 66), built from mudbrick and debris, with an outer diameter of 4.4 m and 1.3 m in width. A square shaft of mudbrick probably supported a *sigma* table. The walls here were plastered and decorated with niches. To the north, two columns formed a tripartite entrance to this area (similar to Roman period *triclinia*) and held the roof above the table. The open space beyond the columns to the north was used for the reception and entertainment of the guests. The presence of 25 other similar rooms, all with double pillars, and a

[280] P. Davoli, *The House of Serenos. Part II, Archaeological Report in a Late-Roman Urban House at Trimithis* (New York, 2022) 41-4; A. Connor et al., 'Literacy', in Hope and Bowen, *Kellis*,185-202 at 193-5.
[281] Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 75, 79, 129, 133.
[282] A.L. Boozer, 'Tracing Everyday Life at Trimithis Dakhleh Oasis, Egypt', in *Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* (2015) 122-38 at 130; Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 131, 133, 135, 140.

north-south orientation in the region, indicates that convivial dining was a common practice here.[283]

Late Antique domestic architecture in the Dakhla oasis reveals both changes and continuities from the previous period. Mudbrick is still the ideal construction material for its cooling qualities. Staggered entrances and long corridors provide more privacy for the inhabitants as well as protection from desert sand. Central spaces/*aithria* are still common, though there is now more evidence that these were roofed, and equipped with hearths and ventilation, similar to Old Kingdom houses.[284] External courts are more frequent. Separate interior kitchens could have meant less communal activity for women but also more closeness to family.[285] The spatial diversity created by these features calls to mind the architectural complexity perceived in the papyri.[286]

Thus, Late Antique houses in Dakhla are architecturally more Egyptian in character. Contrary to Roman *domus*, these are concealed and uninviting to visitors. However, Roman influences are manifested in the vibrantly painted decorations of the wealthier houses, in the design of geometric patterns, and mythological scenes with Late Antique preferred themes. The presence of dining rooms and *stibadia* in both wealthy and middle-range houses is attributed to developments in Late Antique Mediterranean architecture, as a consequence of the increasing importance of convivial dining. This emphasizes the amplification of hierarchies, manifested in the arrangement of guests at this couch according to their social ranks, as described in Late Antique literary sources.[287] However, both the furniture and its context were adjusted and appropriated to the local possibilities, context, and use.[288] The inclination for horizontality seems to have continued into the Late Antique houses in Dakhla. Ironically, a papyrus of AD 335 from Kellis referring to features, such as a second storey, a *pylon*, a *kellion*, and a granary, reminds us, time

[283] Alfarano, 'Architettura dei riti conviviali', 470-3.
[284] Hope, Bowen, 'Houses, Households, Household Activities', 54-6; Hope, 'Roman-Period Houses', 183 (n. 13). Davoli suggests that *aithrion* mentioned in the papyri of the Roman and Late Antique period is to be interpreted as a central covered room with ventilation system similar to windcatchers which were in use up to the Arab period.
[285] Hope, 'Roman-Period Houses', 226.
[286] Boozer, 'Inside and Out', 191; Hope, 'Roman-Period Houses', 226.
[287] See 114 above.
[288] In addition to Manichaean rites mentioned in 278 above, the appropriation of this furniture is also attested in the Christian architecture, on which see Alfarano, 'Architettura dei riti conviviali', 480; Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 461-2.

and again, of the current limitations of our knowledge about housing in the oasis at this time.[289] Evidence for Egyptian townhouses in the Late Antique layers of Karanis is scarce. Therefore, we now turn to similar contemporary settlements in Upper Egyptian cities, where a combination of archaeological and papyrological evidence allows for a cross-regional comparison.

Upper Egypt

The Coptic town of Jeme (Fig. 67), on the West Bank at Thebes, has a long occupational history from 1069 BC to the ninth century AD. After an interruption between the Late kingdom and the Ptolemaic period, occupation resumed in the Roman period, when the town began to grow outside the enclosure wall. By Late Antiquity the sacred precinct of the old temple of Rameses III was covered with houses (Fig. 68). Enclosed by the Nile River to the west and a series of low mountains to the east, the town offered a safe haven to both Christian Monophysites escaping prosecutions, and refugees from the Persian and Arab invasions. The landscape to the north and south of the town was largely taken over by monastic settlements and monasteries. These religious communities had established an economic relationship with Jeme as the pivotal town in the western Theban area. Jeme was a self-sufficient community with an economy based on monastic life, agriculture, crafts, and money-lending.[290]

Similar to Karanis, Jeme was a maze of irregular narrow streets packed with multistorey mudbrick houses. In Jeme, basements were more frequent, whereas courtyards were rare, narrow, and always had a cellar below them. Barrel-vaulted ceilings could also be found on the upper floors.[291] The floor plans and access patterns of houses in Jeme have revealed much resemblance to houses in Karanis. In both settlements, the majority of houses consisted of two differently-sized rooms on each storey, and the entrance most often opened into the larger room on the first floor. The room controlled the access to a central staircase (Fig. 69), which in turn communicated individually with each room to the back, and on the upper floors. Privacy was primarily focused

[289] *P.Kellis* I 13; Hope, 'Roman-Period Houses', 226. *Pylones* have not been precisely identified in archaeology anyway and references to *pylones* are vague. In Greek it meant entrance or vestibule.
[290] T.G., Wilfong, *Women of Jeme: Lives in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt* (Ann Arbor, 2003) 3-5.
[291] Hölscher, *Excavation of Medinet Habu*, 45-6.

on these areas, while most of the ground floor space served a more public purpose. This arrangement facilitated the communal use of the house, as the upper rooms could be locked and rented separately.[292]

It seems that the communal use of the house was more possible in Karanis rather than in Jeme. Here, the evidence of Coptic papyri also shows a greater tendency to define the rights of the co-owners to the house and their concern for privacy. However, in Jeme, privacy was mostly directed to the upper floors rather than to the interior areas of the house.[293] A Coptic papyrus of AD 719 from Jeme is an agreement for the division of a property made between two female heirs named Abigaia and Elizabeth. A reconstruction of the arrangement shows that the property was literally divided into two wings flanking the staircase (Fig. 71). Small rooms (*symposion*, veranda, and storage) were ceded to Elizabeth, while Abigaia kept the two larger rooms above the entrance. The staircase and the large entrance room were declared common areas, and the heirs had the right to their own divisions from the ground to the roof. Future provisions were also made in case one of the heirs intended to build a second external staircase for their unit. Contrary to the lack of evidence for the physical separation of houses in the Roman period, it seems that this was possible and a common practice. In any case, the preference was to keep the house in its entirety.[294]

Aediculae were completely missing in Jeme, although houses here were filled with decorative elements. A series of stone door lintels (Fig. 72), sculpted with Christian symbols including rosettes, crosses, doves, as well as inscriptions and abbreviations of Christ were found here. These exhibit not only the faith of the inhabitants but also a certain amount of personal wealth which made the commissioning of such ornate pieces possible. Most rooms were furnished with arched niches used as cupboards. Niches with water-jug stands were found in the larger entrance rooms of most houses and offered refreshment to the inhabitants and the guests alike (Fig. 73). These were made either of stone or baked-brick and lime mortar, and some of them were highly ornate (Fig. 74).[295] The house of Elizabeth and Abigaia also had a water-jug holder in the common

[292] Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 322.
[293] Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 322-3; This should not be confused with the right of access defined in house sales and lease agreements, which was a continuation from Pharaonic period. See S. Allam, 'About the Right of Passage in Ancient Egypt (way-in and way-out of an estate: eisodos kai exodos)', *Fundamina* 16 (2010) 1-4.
[294] See *P.KRU* 35 of AD 719 in Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 49-53.
[295] Hölscher, *Excavation of Medinet Habu*, 45-6, 59-60.

entrance room, whereas its *symposion* to the back of the same floor seemed to be smaller and of a more private nature. Decorative elements, such as panels with moulded frames and ornate door jambs found in the entrance rooms, suggest that these were the main reception rooms, rather than *symposia*, especially by Late Antiquity.[296]

Documents that have recorded the activities of moneylenders in Jeme indicate that they conducted business with surrounding monasteries, monks, and cities within a radius of 30 km. They lent money and agricultural products at high interest rates (16 percent) and collected interest in money or kind. Seventh- to-eighth-century ostraca found in the cellar of 'House 34' attest to the financial activities of several generations of women moneylenders. Women constituted almost one-third of money lenders in this town, and contrary to the church's efforts to curb and control women's conduct, they participated autonomously in the economic life of their city. House 34 was a typical house in Jeme. Yet, the ostraca found here reveal a certain level of prosperity in this house and in a town described as miserable and grimy by its early excavators.[297]

Although the sparsity of evidence from the earlier Roman layers in Jeme does not allow for a diachronic study at a local level, the limited evidence at hand attests to the existence of houses with relatively larger lots (Fig. 75). The scanty evidence suggests that earlier houses likely had clustered access patterns, with one or two main spaces surrounded by smaller rooms. Three private Roman-style baths were also excavated underneath these structures. The obvious changes in the size of the dwellings in Jeme are justifiable, considering the influx of population recorded during Late Antiquity. In any case, a major shift in the archaeological style in the region is still implausible. Moreover, multistorey houses are generally typical of Egyptian towns across regions and periods, and the evidence attests to the city's continued wealth into the ninth century. [298]

The wealth of Jeme is more palpable in light of the evidence from another settlement located on the island of Elephantine on the Nile River to the left of Syene (Fig. 76). Here, almost

[296] Husson, *Oikia*, 270-1; Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 51; The importance of the large entrance rooms as the main reception rooms of small townhouses in Egyptian traditions is implied by Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 451.
[297] Thirty documents of ostraca, concerning business transaction of a family of moneylenders (a woman called Koloje and her family), were found in the cellar of the house 34. This archive constitutes an example of the role of women in the economy of Jeme. It is in Coptic language and dated within the mid-seventh to the mid-eighth century. see Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 117-49.
[298] Hölscher, *Excavation of Medinet Habu*, 36-9; Alston, *City*, 52; Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 3.

50 houses in several groups were built in the courtyard of the temple of Chnum around the mid-fifth century (Fig. 77). To the north and south, houses were constructed in the colonnaded portico with their backs to the courtyard wall. Two inner rows of houses were added in the open area of the court. Three regular east-west lanes of access separated these groups from one another and the surrounding houses.[299] Houses on the corners were built first, and then new ones were inserted in between or beside the others by simply attaching partition walls to the corners of the existing houses. This cost-effective system of adding composite walls on a pre-existing bed resulted in a series of homogeneous buildings in terms of disposition, size, and floor plans. Houses here shared walls, were entered from the street, and depended on it for light and ventilation. Public space on the street may have been used communally for domestic activities in the absence of courtyards. Basements were non-existent, as the stone base only allowed for vertical expansion.[300]

The interior layouts of these houses were different from other Late Antique townhouses. Here, each house consisted of one small entrance room at the front and a larger main room at the back. Stairs were not housed by a stairwell, but rather built on one side of the smaller front room. This provided visitors with unfiltered access to the upper floors and the interior of the house, thus limiting privacy. The new design was cheaper to build and occupied less space, considering the small sizes of floor plans (20 to 30 m^2). Figure 78 shows how access to the staircase was controlled by an entrance room in these house types across all sites, except on Elephantine and Philae.[301]

Uniformity, small size, lack of adornment, and any evidence of craft/trade, along with a cost-effective construction technique on public land, suggest that the settlement was a state-planned project to accommodate a homogeneous group of people and most likely the humble. Over time, some blocks were abandoned to the east of the site. These were then integrated into the existing blocks to form larger houses, in which a certain level of personal decision-making can be perceived (Fig. 79).[302] Outside the temple, other larger houses were built to the north, east and south, some of which included courtyards. House M10 (Fig. 80) even provides signs of physical

[299] F. Arnold, *Elephantine XXX: Die Nachnutzung des Chnumtempelbezirks. Wohnbebauung der Spätantike und des Frühmittelalters* (Mainz, 2003) 10, 20.
[300] P. Grossmann, *Elephantine II: Kirche und Spätantike Hausanlagen im Chnumtempelhof. Beschreibung und Typologische Untersuchung* (Mainz, 1980) 12.
[301] Grossmann, *Elephantine II*, 68-9. Examples from Philae are rare and a public function is suggested for them.
[302] Grossmann, *Elephantine II*, 13; Arnold, *Elephantine XXX*, 39.

division into two separate houses (M10 and M11) in its later stages, probably due to inheritance. Both new houses had independent stairs, courts, and even courtyard ovens, which implies personal ownership. However, the internal arrangements remained mostly the same even in these houses, which means that the new population belonged to the same social group. The average size of floor plans throughout the settlement (20-30 m^2) still fell below the average size of houses in Karanis and Jeme (40 m^2). Thus, even in the later phase, the nature of the settlement was still that of a lower social class.[303]

A comparison between houses in Jeme and Karanis shows that Late Antique townhouses were not much different in terms of internal architecture. This indicates that social circumstances remained the same for the inhabitants of these houses across the regions and over the two periods.[304] Yet, people with different sources of income lived in them. This explains the rarity of the courtyards and outbuildings in Jeme. There is also more evidence of physical separation, both in papyri and archaeology concerning Late Antique houses, which may suggest a tendency towards increased privacy. The difference between the liturgical practices of the old religions and Christianity is also reflected in the omission of the shrine niches in all Late Antique houses everywhere. Christianity encouraged its adherents to pray communally. Still, the faith of the inhabitants was expressed through inscriptions and decorative motifs in Jemean houses.[305] The settlement in the court of the Chnum temple in Elephantine is part of a Late Antique state project to reuse larger structures of any type for different purposes, including accommodation for the humble. Similar examples can also be found in Philae, Jeme, and Syene. The architectural style and floor plans here are unique to the Chnum temple and not found in other Upper Egyptian townhouses. These are therefore linked to a general lack of wealth.[306]

Change or Continuity?

[303] Arnold, *Elephantine XXX*, 131, 39-40.
[304] Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 390.
[305] Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 440-1.
[306] Arnold, *Elephantine XXX*, 21.

Hitherto, it was shown that the diachronic comparison of houses in Egypt suggests no major architectural revolution, but rather more continuity in regional architectural styles and in the diversity of house types found in the province. Contrary to the continuation suggested by the outward similarities between the private structures during the two periods under discussion, noticeable changes also occurred. Hereinafter, I will attempt to illustrate how these relate to social developments in the Late Antique empire, as we discussed in the first chapter, and to draw the main lines of evolution in domestic architecture in Egypt.

The Late Antique Roman houses, metaphorically depicted by Olympiodorus as miniature cities,[307] are attested both in the Delta region and in the chora. Evidence of urban villas is limited to a few lots in Alexandria and to the description of the Apion's estate in their family archives. However, the rural estates of the Roman aristocracy allow for conjecture on their architectural features. The use of double peristyle courts and central courtyards indicates a return to Hellenistic rather than Roman traditions and architectural forms. The increased lot sizes of houses and the presentation of new facilities of public nature into domestic spaces imply a certain level of architectural sophistication, characteristic of Late Antique villas of the Roman aristocracy. This also signals a change in the lives of the nobility and their system of patronage.[308] However, the type of public facilities adopted by Roman villas in Egypt differed from their counterparts in the Mediterranean. Here, the choice of these elements was determined by both their secondary function and the local context of the house.

In Alexandria, large houses contained larger baths, decorative statues, and mosaics,[309] which were tailored to display the grandeur and eminence of a Late Antique metropolitan patron. In the Mareotis region, a good number of rural estates not only contained elements such as baths and latrines but also other features such as private churches, baptisteries, and hypogea, rarely seen in Late Antique villas elsewhere.[310] However, no traces of apsidal dining rooms and decorated audience halls were detected here. The architecture of the dining room in the palace of the Apions remains unknown to us. The organization of space in the northern peristyle of the *Villa Rustica* suggests the existence of reception rooms to the south of the monumental entrance door, which

[307] Olympiodorus, fr. 41.1.
[308] Also noticed by both ancient and modern scholars. See 13 above for ancient sources, and 10 for modern scholarship.
[309] Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III*, 314-29.
[310] Haas, 'Alexandria and the Mareotis Region', 47.

could be accessed from the vestibule without disturbing the rest of the house. Traces of a mosaic containing elements of the old religion in the church suggest the presence of a decorated room here, belonging to the initial construction phase.[311]

In the Mareotis region, the absence of specialized reception rooms, the restriction of decoration to sacred spaces, and the overall simplicity of architectural elements in aristocratic estates contradict our expectations of a Late Antique Mediterranean *domus*. The arrangement can be associated with the tertiary use of these houses as community centres, echoing a shift in the ideology of the patrons that defined their priorities in this part of Egypt.[312] In the wake of Christianity, the purely economic nature of the relationship between Alexandria and Mareotis changed during the fifth and sixth centuries. The increasing popularity of the shrine of St. Menas, located 17 kilometres south of the region, encouraged pilgrimage.[313] In keeping with their contribution to civic euergetism, many Late Antique aristocrats also built religious foundations such as *xenodochia* or *hospitia* on their rural estates. These establishments were key to forming a sense of belonging to the community for both the owners and local inhabitants.[314] Many of these structures were neither abandoned nor subdivided. It is likely that they remained in use until the end of the sixth century and were occupied by the owners themselves.[315]

However, the house of the Apions was a differently-purposed edifice, in a region as far-flung as Oxyrhynchus in Egypt. Although the descriptions are insufficient, one might be able to establish a link between this house and the grand Late Antique structures found elsewhere in the empire. The show of status in this palace was articulated through at least one decorated reception room, if not more, a luxury bath, and its private access to the hippodrome. The 'great *oikos*' was the centre of administrative authority for the surrounding settlements and would have been buzzing with servants, clerks, and clients throughout the day. It is unclear whether this was a classical peristyle house in layout, or how the boundary between public and private was defined. We can assume that the availability of space in large houses generally allowed for such separation, as it is

[311] Rodziewicz, 'Archaeological Evidence', 290-1 (no. 22).
[312] Derda, Gwiazda, Burdajewicz, 'Private House', 113-5; Ellis, 'End of the Roman House', 92.
[313] Haas, 'Alexandria and the Mareotis Region', 48-9.
[314] Mazza, 'Households as Communities?' 278-9; The continued euergetism of the Roman elite is also observed by Ellis in the East, who also notes the decline of architectural aesthetics outside the religious context. See Ellis, 'Late Antique Houses', 47.
[315] Alston, *City*, 121; Derda, Gwiazda, Burdajewicz, 'Private House', 125.

also attested in similar Late Antique houses elsewhere in the East. These houses were grander and more public in nature than their predecessors. However, as suggested by Ellis, even in these houses, public and private could not be mixed. Other landowning families, including the houses of Theon or Timagenes, referenced to in the papyri, may have possessed comparable residences. Similar to the Apions, it is plausible that some of these houses held offices and persisted until their fall was brought due to their loyalty to the Empire at the time of the Persian invasion in AD 604.[316] The presence of notables or responsible citizens, who collectively shared expenses regarding public offices, is attested further into the seventh century. However, offices are attached to personal names rather than the *oikoi*.[317]

The 'House of Serenos' in Amheida, generally rated as upper-middle-class, does not equate to the Apions' *oikos* or to the standard villas of the time in terms of size, decoration, and facilities. The house and most probably its neighbouring structures show greater similarities to Egyptian architectural traditions. However, the interior decoration and specific elements attest to the continuation of the Roman way of life in the oasis into the fourth century AD. The vivaciously decorated reception rooms, both at the entrance and within the house, suggest that Serenos, as a typical Late Antique patron, could receive a variety of clients. The iconography represented in the banquet room conveys a message of grandeur.[318] Apsidal dining rooms are absent from houses in Egypt, although mudbrick *stibadia* are found in the archaeology of domestic spaces in the Oasis. Here, these couches are placed in open, or partially covered, rectangular spaces with a tripartite entrance. Therefore, convivial dining might have occurred wherever we observe a similar space.[319] Baths are generally absent from the domestic context in the oasis.[320]

Other middle-range houses with different degrees of wealth and diversity in architectural styles are attested in many areas in Egypt, both in the papyri and in archaeology.[321] These houses

[316] See 170 above; A series of letters report transfer of property tax to the office of tax exactors related to these houses at different times: *P.Oxy.* L 3583 of AD 444; *P.Oxy.* XVI 1887 of AD 538; *SB* XXIV 15955 of AD 540; *P.Oxy.* I 126 of AD 572; Mazza, 'Households as Communities?' 270-2, 280; Ellis, 'End of the Roman House', 576.
[317] *P.Laur*. III 77 of AD 603; *P.Würzb*. XVIIII of AD 622; Mazza, 'Households as Communities?' 271-2.
[318] Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 461.
[319] Alfarano, 'Architettura dei riti conviviali', 470-3.
[320] Hope, Bowen, 'Houses, Households, Household Activities', 51.
[321] Patermouthis family archive from Syene are discussed above in the first section of this chapter regarding houses in Late Antique papyri (pages 66-70). For a recollection, the criteria for identifying middle-class houses include use of decoration that counterfeits houses of the aristocracy, evidence of craft, trade or industry, and size of the structure. See Ellis, 'Middles Class Houses', 417.

mostly adhere to Egyptian housing traditions, which were inherently more private than classical houses. However, signs of increased architectural diversity are more detectable in larger houses with an *aithrion* or an *aule*, such as those in the oasis, Alexandria, and even those described in the Syene papyri, rather than in smaller abodes in Jeme and Elephantine. We have already shown how the use of various Egyptian architectural features formed an *insula* of self-sufficient houses with diverse floor plans in Kellis Area A. The presence of a *stibadium* in 'House 1' is a communal rather than a public component. The peripheral positioning of the reception room in relation to the domestic quarters further implies a concern for the privacy of the rest of the house.[322] Evidence of papyri indicates the presence of a small-scale garment production business in 'House 3' and evidence of carpentry in 'House 2'.[323] However, compared to houses of the previous period, the organization of space in these houses, as shown above in the third section of this chapter, is rather conducive to privacy.[324]

The situation is different in the Kom-el Dikka district in Alexandria, where houses follow the pattern of central open courtyards and provide decisive evidence of artisanal and commercial activities. Here, Majcherek points to a simplification of the structures compared to the previous Roman urban villas buried under the district, but also to the emergence of a new architectural style. The organization of public versus private areas along the vertical axis recalls to mind the arrangement of rooms mentioned in the Syene Papyri. However, the blurring of the boundaries between public and private in Alexandrian houses stems from the increasing growth of the commercial section here, compared to Syene, where houses were largely residential. Despite the availability of space by virtue of large lots in Alexandria, evidence of domestic activity was also found in ground floor rooms and in close proximity to industrial units.[325]

Multistorey townhouses in Jeme also show much continuity with houses at Karanis in terms of internal organization, size, and variety of floor plans. Hence, Depraetere argues that socially

[322] Alfarano, 'Architettura dei riti conviviali', 480; Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 461-2.
[323] A collection of 6 papyri, found in ceramic jars in House 2 of Area A in Kellis, repeatedly mentioned a man named Tithoes. One of these documents (*P.Kell.G.* 8-12), which are all dated to the second half of the fourth century, describe him as 'Tithoes, son of Petesis, carpenter'. For a translation of these documents see K.A. Worp (ed), *Greek Papyri from Kellis: I* (Oxford, 1995); The evidence regarding weaving and textile production business are included in the Coptic papyri *Kell. Copt* 33, 75, 76, 78, 79, 81 82 and 103. For a detailed discussion, analysis, and translation of these documents in the context of House 3 of Area A in Kellis, see Bowen, 'The Environment Within', 235-8.
[324] Hope, 'Roman-Period Houses', 227.
[325] Majcherek, 'Notes on Alexandrian Habitat', 141-3.

homogeneous people lived in both settlements and that the social structure did not change much either. However, his statement in this regard implicitly suggests that privacy was more a point of concern in Jeme than in Karanis.[326] This brings to mind a similar anxiety in defining the house shares expressed in the papyri of the period. Alston's egalitarian treatment of Late Antique Egyptian houses in Jeme, Kom el-Dikka and Elephantine as humble dwellings, that looked like monastic cells, is generally not agreed upon. Evidence of industrial activity, business, and financial wealth found in the two former settlements excludes them from this interpretation. In any case, his remark on the possible inclination for privacy associated with the contemporary ideals of monastic life and the rise of the concept of individuality, that characterized Late Antique society, is noteworthy.[327]

There is no physical evidence to suggest that ideology impacted the internal organization of houses and the architecture itself.[328] However, evidence of Christianity and even other new faiths such as Manichaeism is perceived from the papyri found in domestic contexts starting in the early-fourth century.[329] *Aediculae*, which were structural elements related to ancient religions, disappeared from all house types everywhere at about the same time. From the fifth century onwards, Christian frescoes and other religious motifs and icons constituted the only decorative aspects of the domestic sphere in all house types. Domestic churches and baptisteries in the rural estates of Roman nobility were actual architectural elements. These processes existed alongside an observable decline in the decorative and aesthetic aspects of the domestic sphere. These changes should not be underestimated. Considering the emergence of monastic cells and monasteries that housed zealous followers of the new faith, it is possible that Christianity had as much impact on the lifestyle of Late Antique average Egyptians as it did on the Roman aristocracy.

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[326] 'In some dwellings, rooms may have been suitable for renting purposes or for occupation by people other than the immediate household, but this is less strongly the case than in Karanis.' Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 322, 440.
[327] Alston, *City*, 121-3.
[328] Alston argues that Alexandrian Jews lived in the same houses as we normally find in Egypt, although the space was gendered in their houses according to Philo. Alston, *City*, 98-102; Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 440-1.
[329] See no. 278 above for evidence of Manichaean faith; For evidence of Christianity see *P.Kell.G* 48 of AD 335, found in House 3 of Insula A in Kellis, regarding the manumission of a female slave. One of the reasons of the decision is reported in line 4 'I acknowledge that I have set you free because of my exceptional Christianity', but the writer continues in line 5 'under Zeus, Earth and Sun'. The statement is significant in that it shows the continuity and appropriation of old traditions alongside a new faith.

Evidence of the 'middle-class'[330] in Late Antique Egyptian society is not limited to archaeological records. The papyri inform us of the existence of local employees involved in the administration of the great houses, whose landholdings were scattered in different provinces.[331] These intermediaries managed the lands at different levels (renting or exploiting them) and liaised between the owners and the local population. Entering this career path could have provided many with the opportunity to climb the social ladder and accumulate wealth.[332] The workings of the great *oikoi* could also have benefited the tenants in two ways. Renting from major landowners, who could invest in their properties and provide their tenants with loans and patronage, was an advantageous deal. Thus, the *oikoi*, regardless of their size, played a cultural and entrepreneurial role within their communities.[333]

Small-sized houses are frequently found in the urban fabric of many Late Antique cities, mostly created as a result of 'subdivision'. This was not merely a Late Antique socio-economic phenomenon but an architectural style in its own right. In Egypt, most examples are characterized by the division of a portico into identical rows of cellular structures.[334] Houses in the temple of Chnum were also built with a specific architectural style involving a modular system of adding walls called 'wall edge development' by Arnold. Similar to elsewhere in the Eastern Empire, the new walls here did not cut into the original stone base, but rather stayed on top. The architecture itself followed the townhouse model typical of the region. However, the particular circumstances of the site are also partly responsible for producing these low-quality houses. Built with their backs against the enclosure wall, these houses were poorly lit and ventilated, and their interior arrangement left less room for privacy, as we might expect from the humble houses of all the periods.[335]

[330] For a definition of middle-class in Late-Antique society and methods of interpreting their evidence see Zanini, 'Artisans and Traders'.
[331] *SB* XII 11079 is a deed of surety of AD 571 in which Apions as landlords are represented by a domestic servant named Menas; Also see the papyri mentioned in 253 and 257 above.
[332] *P.Oxy*. XXXVI 2780 (AD 553) is a declaration of Aurelios Timotheos, for having received his payment for his service of furnishing water for public bath of Oxyrhynchus on behalf of his landlady. The money was received through Ioannes, the cashier of FI. Gabrielia.
[333] Bagnall, *Egypt*, 149; Mazza, 'Households as Communities?', 282-3.
[334] Ellis, 'End of the Roman House', 567.
[335] Arnold, *Elephantine XXX*, 131.

Two points should be kept in mind while interpreting these houses as poor. The outcome of subdivision is always a structure of lower quality but not necessarily poor (e.g. 'House of Frescoes' in Tipasa, Fig. 10).[336] Arnold also finds similarities between these houses and the *tabernae* built on porticoed streets, which enjoyed a standard of quality for their stone foundations.[337] Thus, even if these houses are humble, in my opinion, it is the first time those in need eventually possess a dwelling so sturdy that (contrary to the huts) subsisted through ages. As a matter of fact, the humble were valued for the first time with the emergence of Christianity.

Late Antique Egypt also witnessed the emergence of new construction techniques. The *opus africanum* masonry style, waterproof mortars, and construction with stone were more common in northern Egypt, where the architecture seemed to parallel contemporary Mediterranean trends.[338] In the interior regions, a variety of barrel vaults came to cover the above-ground rooms. The solidity of vaults as complete mudbrick roofs made without the use of wood, which was rare and of low quality in the Egyptian *chora*, was the reason for the popularity of this roof type. However, these belong to both the Greek and Eastern traditions, and their interpretation requires more detailed analysis. Domes were Late Antique architectural developments, but remained rare in the domestic context during this period. [339] The pattern of reuse and repurposing of older structures was a frequently attested phenomenon in the Late Antique empire. However, this was not new in Egypt. Some first-century emperors also used *spolia* from the Old Kingdom temples to build new structures.[340]

Concluding Remarks

A diachronic comparison of housing traditions in Egypt during the Roman period and Late Antiquity reflects a complex interplay of change and continuity, influenced by a multitude of factors, arising from both local conditions and broader Mediterranean social developments. In this

[336] Ellis, 'End of the Roman House', 568-9, 572.
[337] Arnold, *Elephantine XXX*, 131; Ellis, 'Shedding Light', 296.
[338] Majcherek, 'Notes on Alexandrian Habitat', 141.
[339] Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 74-75.
[340] R.S. Bagnall, P. Davoli, 'Archaeological Work on Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, 2000-2009', *American Journal of Archaeology* 115 (2011) 103-157 at 125.

equation, the identity of inhabitants, defined by their profession and ideology, was instrumental in determining the use of space and formation of the living environment. Late Antique Egypt provides a nuanced picture of housing, encompassing both classical and Egyptian house types, as well as persisting regional architectural styles from the earlier period. It also offers insight into the developments in both style and architectural techniques that arise from Egypt's ongoing adaptation and integration into its greater changing Mediterranean world.

These developments were manifested in various ways in Egyptian houses and classical houses. The Late Antique classical houses in Egypt seem to have grown considerably larger. The open courtyards and double peristyle plans indicate a return to Hellenistic rather than Roman traditions. However, they also adopted a more public character by incorporating a variety of new structural features of both public and private natures. This implies a major change in the nature and an increase in the significance of Roman patronage in Late Antique society. In any case, the types of elements adopted in these houses depended on their secondary use and their local context. Roman *domus* at this time partly served as public buildings or venues for administrative power. The presence of a secondary function further influenced the organization of space and the dichotomy between public and private. The classical house was initially open to visitors, and the demarcation between public and private was defined based on invitation. With the introduction of new public elements into the Late Antique Roman domus, it seems that the lines between the two are blurring more than before, though not entirely mixed. The complete absence of large Egyptian-style houses (*dipourgia* and *tripourgia*) from our records, where the delineation between public and private is so emphasized, is noteworthy in light of the new developments in Roman elite housing.

Larger Egyptian houses (*aithrion* type) also witnessed the addition of a variety of architectural forms. This was also perceived in the papyri from Syene and crystallized in Alexandria, where the birth of a new architectural style was recorded. In the oasis, a variety of characteristically Egyptian spaces was added to houses, creating a diversity in floor plans and interior arrangements that seem to deliberately conceal domestic activities. Despite the evidence of home businesses and crafts, matters of privacy were further enhanced in these structures compared to the previous *aithrion* houses in the area. Egyptian townhouses did not change much structurally. The Egyptian tradition of multifamily occupation continued into Late Antiquity.

However, the inhabitants' anxiety for privacy is reflected in the precise formulas for defining house divisions in the papyri. However, there is little physical evidence of such divisions in houses, especially in the earlier period, compared to Late Antiquity.

The sparsity of architectural evidence representative of different social classes in a given locale does not allow us to judge the percentage of social classes with certainty, and our interpretation is always subject to change as more evidence is unearthed. However, the current state of evidence demonstrates that the architectural evolution in Egypt was part of a broader Mediterranean narrative, one that was marked by both transformation and the enduring legacy of cultures rooted in this ancient society. There is an obvious decline in the number and types of elite houses. Although these became larger, they were most probably occupied by the owners well into the end of the period. Evidence of a wide array of middle-range houses, customarily associated with middle social classes, whose presence is also attested in the papyri, is instead abundant in Egypt. Meanwhile, a new Mediterranean-wide architectural style in Late Antiquity called 'subdivision' also generated distinctively humble houses and residential areas of high density.

These developments do not represent a society in decline, as has been argued for the Late Antique Empire elsewhere. The idea of a polarized society did not hold for Egypt, where signs of prosperity continued beyond the period in question. In fact, the controversy regarding the increased modesty in most housing traditions, styles, and decorations in the relatively wealthy Late Antique Egyptian cities is still something to contend with. This might relate to the rise of the new Christian ideology, the influence of which may not have changed conventional domestic architecture but extends beyond its limits. These influences manifest in the formation of new dwellings and communities that housed a class of the population who played a significant role in the economy and culture of Late Antique society. As Ellis points out, 'By the sixth and seventh centuries even leading theologians and politicians may have been living in houses that earlier ages would have regarded as no more than huts', because 'money was simply invested elsewhere'. [341]

[341] Ellis, 'Late Antique Houses', 47.

General Conclusion

In the three preceding chapters, in line with the main question of the present research, we endeavoured to show what changed or continued in houses and housing practices in Egypt from the early Roman period to Late Antiquity, and under what influences. We tried to bring to light even the slightest changes in the domestic architecture of Roman and Late Antique Egypt, while also remaining conscious of continuities. Based on these findings, it is now possible to create a picture of the daily lives of Late Antique inhabitants in this province of the Empire. We can also see that changes may have been partly related to a cultural evolution brought by the greater shared Mediterranean culture rather than a wholesale social change within Egypt. My initial enquiry was based on the assumption that the house encapsulates the values and norms of its inhabitants, who were in constant interaction with their outer social context. As fragmentary and patchy as our evidence of architecture may seem, we can still safely conclude that the house is a 'barometer of social change'. However, this does not imply that society is the only influential factor in the formation of houses. Our interpretation also depends on our view of Roman culture, the context of the empire, Egypt, and the house itself.

Roman culture was never a homogeneous entity. We showed how the overall plan of the ideal Roman *domus* was shaped by the hybridity of the Etruscan *atrium* and the Hellenistic Greek peristyle. This by no means suggests that the Roman *domus* of the imperial period was not Roman in character. This rather lays bare the heterogeneity of Roman identity as a result of constant conquests, due to which a shared Mediterranean culture was shaped by the confluence of Roman values and those of the conquered. In fact, the orchestrated combination of painting and mosaic decorations, elements of water installation, as well as the open style of the dining rooms, are distinct Roman features. Contrary to the conservative nature of Greek architecture, where the *androne*s are deliberately concealed, Roman houses were designed to show the wealth and status of the *domini* in the traditionally stratified Roman society. Roman-period elite houses in Alexandria and Marina combine some of these influences with existing Graeco-Egyptian traditions. Together with monumental mudbrick houses in the Dakhla, which also contained Roman architectural elements, such as *atria*, these houses present local variations of Roman *domus* in Egypt that ultimately follow the same shorthand common throughout the empire.

Furthermore, Egypt had gone through several phases of subjugation by imperial powers such as the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and finally the Romans during its long history, each leaving its own footprint on the identity of Egypt. Cultural products were exchanged across regions, which may have ultimately served a totally different purpose in their new context. Thus, by the Roman period, a creolization of these influences had already impacted the Egyptian house. The use of Greek vocabulary to describe components of local houses became common from the Ptolemaic period onwards, sometimes describing different structural elements in their new application. This process continued into the Roman and Late Antique periods and can be detected in the adaptation of words such as *symposion* in Coptic papyri and the birth of the Coptic language itself. The variety of architectural terminology in the papyri found across the Egyptian localities during Late Antiquity is another indication of the diversification of responses to the introduced cultural values over time. Nonetheless, it is incorrect to assume that houses in Egypt were architecturally Greek, and archaeology, as we already witnessed, does not imply that either.

That Egypt is a land of old, well-established cultures and practices is evident in the continuity of architectural techniques with sundried mudbrick, house types such as multistorey townhouses, and to some extent the *aithrion* house from the Late Kingdom. These forms represented middle-range houses of all times in Egypt with minor developments. Moreover, papyri also mention large local-style houses with monumental gates and towers. The variety and continuity of these local forms, which were (in contrast to the Graeco-Roman house) characteristically more introverted, private, and uninviting to the outside world, chronicle the resilience and endurance of the Egyptian culture on the one hand, and the significance of climatic conditions in the formation of houses on the other hand. However, people with various cultural backgrounds lived in them. Some of the *dipourgia* and *tripourgia* houses were occupied by Roman elites. Karanis was traditionally a Greek colony, characterized by the use of various Greek-style vaults and Graeco-Roman decorations of shrine niches in a completely native style of architecture. Examples of classical elements such as peristyles and *atria* were manifested in the Roman period at Kellis. The presence of Roman staples among the archaeological finds and the classical inclinations of *aithrion* houses in the oasis suggests that the new age was felt in the lives of the inhabitants, even at this distant point from the capital.

Thus, our record of Roman-period houses reflects the cultural complications and diversity of forms that we should expect from Roman Egypt. Both Roman culture and Egyptian society were complicated and multilayered; so were their responses to change. By the Roman period, the term Egyptian encompassed both Greek and Egyptian identities. By contrast, Roman culture did not have an ethnic but a political implication, and Roman-ness was a matter of social status. As far as the house was a show of grandeur, it was a sign of affiliation with the ruling class,[342] although this affinity was also expressed in different ways and did not imply a change in identity. We can find Roman elites living in both Classical- and Egyptian-style large houses during the first three centuries, at least based on the papyri. However, we are unsure if they used these houses in the same way as the Egyptians would. The papyri also report a proliferation of wealthier houses during the second and third centuries in Egypt, implying economic growth during this time.

The Late Antique period is marked by the rise of landowning aristocrats, who became influential local figures. Late Antique *domus*, while still a symbol of status, also became the hub of political power on a local level. Everywhere, the house of the new age was well-appointed and well-suited to its new purpose: 'a town' by itself with a few public features, made private. These developments were directly related to changes in the function and values the new owners invested in their houses, as well as the type of patronage they offered to their community. However, even these houses were neither homogeneous across the Egyptian expanses, nor were they closely similar to Roman villas known from other parts of the empire. Local Architectural styles, climatic conditions, a secondary or tertiary purpose, the immediate context (urban or rural area, district, and neighborhood), and the role that the owners played in their communities were sources of disparities between elite houses in the Mareotis region and larger estates, such as the palace of Apion in Oxyrhynchus.

The evidence attests to the existence of the Roman aristocracy, even as far as Oxyrhynchus in the Nile Valley, with their increased wealth, continuous euergetism, and a change in their social role until the end of the period. Evidence of papyrology regarding the great *oikoi* also suggests that these semi-private/public institutions may have been instrumental in the production and

[342] During the first three centuries of Roman rule, Egypt was depoliticized. The terms Roman, Egyptian, and Greek where all ethnic designations. After the third century, politics returned to Egypt with the growth of Christianity. At this time, Roman identity became mostly a matter of political affiliation rather than an ethnic identity.

distribution of wealth in their local communities. The general lack of evidence regarding Roman *domus* in the urban context does not imply ruralisation and decadence of Late Antique civic structures. I already mentioned that fourth-century Alexandria witnessed the revival of civic infrastructure and public buildings, such as large-scale baths, theatres, meeting halls, colonnaded streets, and cisterns in the Kom el-Dikka district. These remained in use until the eighth century. The palace of the Apions was called an *epoikion* (rural estate), although this was just outside the city gates and adjacent to the hippodrome. By the fifth century, the city likely expanded further beyond the house. We also know that Oxyrhynchus was a prosperous major urban centre during Late Antiquity. Finally, Kellis, had just obtained city status at the beginning of the fourth century. Further excavations in Kellis area B, where a district of upper-middle-class houses was identified, may yield valuable results in future.

The small number of extant Late Antique villas in Egypt does not necessarily imply a bipolar society. In fact, in Egypt, evidence of a wide array of middle-range houses constitutes a relatively large portion of our evidence in housing, which indicates continuity in the distribution of wealth with the previous period. From Alexandria, to the oasis, and Jeme, houses mostly adhere to Egyptian architectural traditions and demonstrate various degrees of wealth based on several factors. These include evidence of trade, craftsmanship, or business, as well as decorations or material culture that indicate an inclination towards the upper echelons of society. Specific features, such as the domestic oratory in House D in Alexandria and the presence of *stibadia* in Late Antique middle-range houses in Dakhla, represent aspirations to new cultural trends. However, the implications of these cultural staples may have changed in their new setting.

Similar to aristocratic houses, these mid-range residences show signs of increased architectural complexity and diversity in floor plans compared to the first three centuries. This complexity is also reflected in the papyri of the period. The only difference between tower-houses in Jeme and their predecessors in Karanis seems to be the omission of evidence of personal worship. These houses structurally remained the same over the two periods. It is only based on the stone-carved architectural elements and papyrological evidence that we know Jeme was relatively well-to-do. Thus, one cannot conclude solely based on the continuities in architectural forms that change did not occur. Some of these forms had long existed in Egypt, and their continuation can be attributed to several factors, such as their desirability in the Egyptian geographical setting. Their

interpretation requires a better perception of the architectural forms of previous time periods in Egypt. Ultimately, it can be deduced that people belonging to the same social strata lived in both settlements.

Humble houses were generally invisible in archaeology across the Empire before Late Antiquity due to their low-quality construction. Thus, the interpretation of hamlets is mostly based on their material culture. It is uncertain whether shops on the colonnaded streets should be regarded as poor at all. Small houses created as a result of subdivision in Egypt and elsewhere during Late Antiquity are similar to shops on account of their stone base. In any case, the construction above is typically of low quality, and the location is not as prominent as that of a colonnaded portico. Special site conditions, which do not allow for stratigraphy, and the sparsity of material culture found in these houses obscure the interpretations. In the contexts of Egypt and the eastern cities of the Empire, which were economically and politically stable during the time, this cannot be attributed to economic decline. As suggested by excavators, these low-quality settlements were state-run projects to provide the poor with affordable housing.

Christianity was as much Roman as classical culture. Coptic culture in Egypt originated from mainstream Christianity and remains part of the Egyptian world to the present day. Christianity was also the impetus for the emergence of influential monastic communities and individuals, who assumed pivotal roles in society at different levels. They established their own institutions and resided in specific types of dwellings, such as monasteries and monastic cells. Thus, its influence on the Late Antique way of life requires further exploration. Christian influences in Late Antique houses include private churches, baptisteries, and religious paintings in Roman villas, as well as Christian symbols in Jemean houses. However, Christianity had little impact on the architectural design of houses, their floor plans, and access patterns. Tracing ideological influences in the absence of decoration and material culture, which can reveal changes in the pattern of use and the function of space, is often impossible.

In general, evidence of housing in Late Antique Egypt suggests the continuity of an empire in which change and transformation, impact, and impression were fundamental and ongoing processes. However, change might be more tangible in the lives of the upper echelon of society, whose *oikoi* now operated as both imperial and social/religious institutions on local levels and

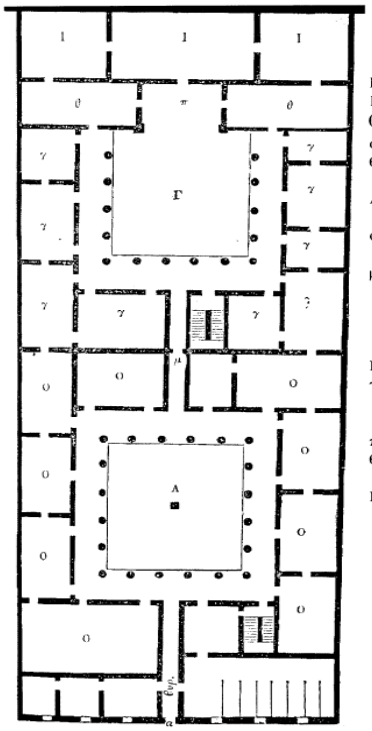
were in direct contact with the central power. Regardless of its function, Late Antique Roman houses in Egypt, similar to elsewhere in the Empire, assumed a more public character than before. Most of these houses remained operational to the end of the period. However, it is uncertain whether financial power was or remained their monopoly or even part of the values of the Roman elite. This was demonstrated in the modest architectural elements used in the reconstruction of the Roman rural villas in Marea.

Conversely, things may not have changed as much for ordinary people, who constituted a large part of the social texture. However, even in these houses, the overall state of evidence has revealed various tendencies in different regions of Egypt. In Alexandria, more space was allocated to commercial activities and production in houses. Elsewhere, evidence from papyri and archaeology demonstrates some degree of increased privacy and a sharper separation between public and private along the vertical plane. This may have been a prelude to the later vertical arrangements of medieval houses, with distinctively public and work spaces on lower floors and better apartments on the upper floors. In any case, diversity in architectural forms is the characteristic of most houses in Egypt during the Late Antique period. Finally, public resources were allocated to provide accommodation for the humble. Developments in the administration of the empire had reached even the farthest Egyptian regions, indicating its health and flexibility.

Our knowledge of housing remains quite fragmentary. No single settlement has reared a complete array of houses to allow for a judgment on the social texture in that locale. Many of these changes, including ideology or identity, may not be reflected in architecture alone, which would be an empty shell without the contextual analysis of its content. The striking architectural modesty of houses in Jeme would have caused any viewer to miss their financial wealth at first glance. This also applies to shops, as it is difficult to classify them as poor housing with certainty. Therefore, more comprehensive and detailed studies at local levels can fill in the gaps and help create a clearer understanding of change in daily lives and behavioural norms. As one scholar states, ‘the record of analysis of a room is more informative than the excavation of a whole settlement’.[343]

[343] A.L. Boozer, *Housing Empire: The Archaeology of Daily Life in Roman Amheida, Egypt* (Doctoral Thesis; Ann Arbour, 2007)

Appendix: Figures



Key to a Greek Houseplan Based on Vitruvius (adapted from Becker [1866])

α. αὔλειος θύρα [Door to Courtyard].
θυρ. θυρωεῖον or θυρῶν [Passage into House].
A. αὐλη of the Andronitis [Courtyard of Men's Quarters].
ο. Various saloons and chambers of the Andronitis.
μ. μέταυλος, here a regular μέσαυλος, forming the only communication between the Andronitis and Gynaeconitis [i.e. Passages].
Γ. Court of the Gynaeconitis.
γ. The various divisions of the Gynaeconitis with the ordinary eating and storerooms, kitchen, &c.
π. παραστᾶς, παστᾶς, or προστάς.
θ. θάλαμος and ἀμφιθάλαμος [Bedrooms].
I. ἱστῶνες, or rooms for the looms, and woolen manufactures.

Fig. 1: Reconstruction of a Greek house based on Vitruvius, with separate *andronitis* and *gynaikonitis* arranged around two different courtyards (Antonaccio, 'Architecture and Behaviour', 533).

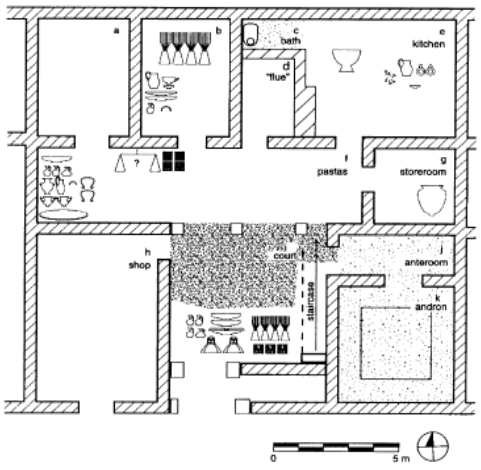


Fig. 2: Plan of 'House Avii4' in Olynthus (Cahill, 'Olynthus and Greek Town', 512).

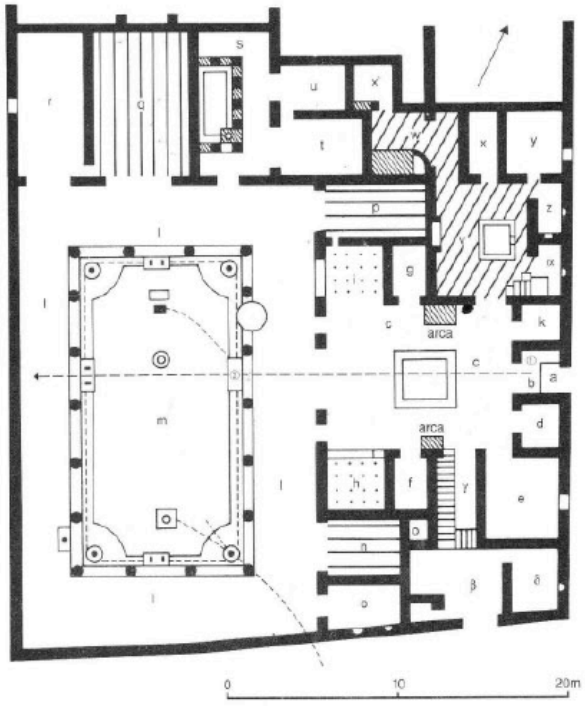


Fig. 3: Plan of the 'House of the Vetii' at Pompeii (Clark, *Roman House*, 120).

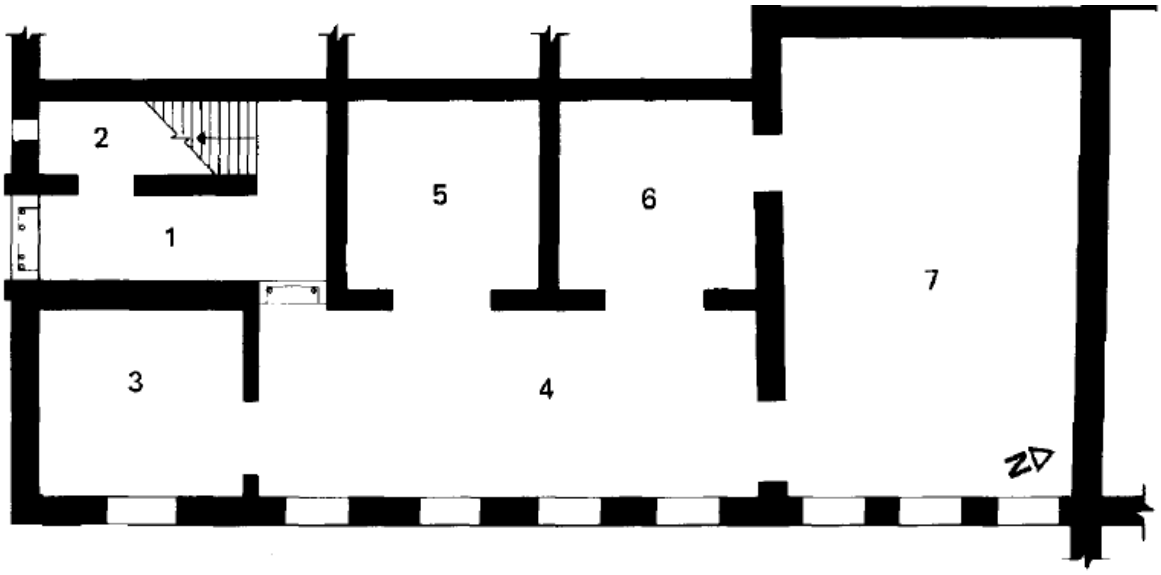


Fig. 4: Plan of the 'House of the Graffiti' in Ostia (Hermansen, *Ostia,* 35).

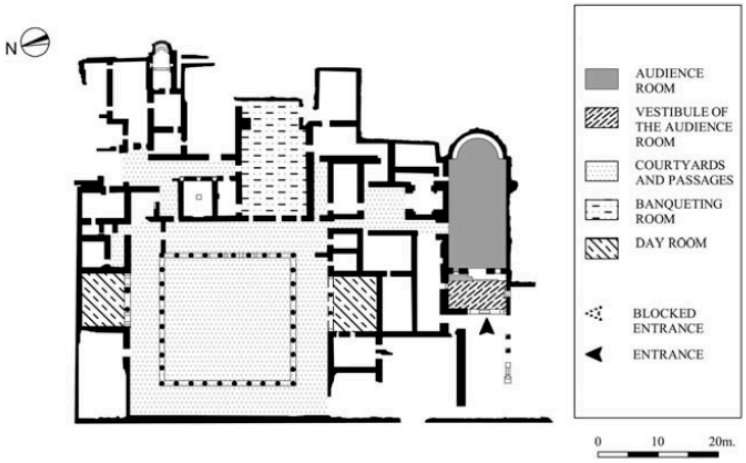


Fig. 5: Plan of the 'Villa above the Theatre' at Ephesus (Özgenel, 'Public Use', 247).

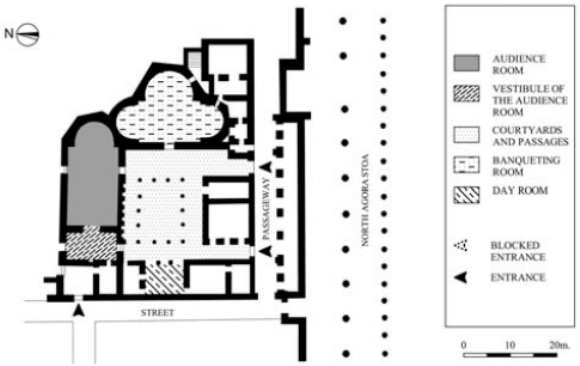


Fig. 6: Plan of the 'Bishop's House' at Aphrodisias (Özgenel, 'Public Use', 241).

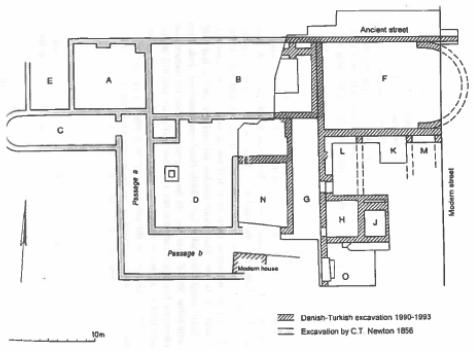


Fig. 7: Plan of the house in Halicarnassus (Ellis, 'Middle Class', 430).

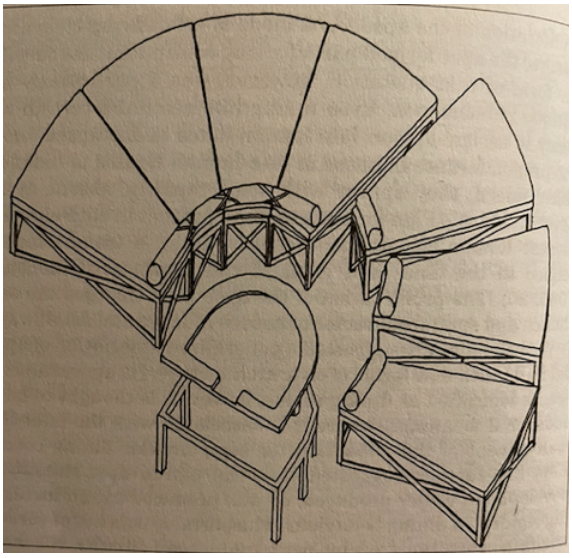


Fig. 8: Reconstruction of a segmented wooden *stibadia* and its *sigma* from the Villa of the Falconer, Argos (Bowes, *Houses and Society*, 56).

Fig. 9: Christian wall painting in a private chapel in 'Lullingstone Villa' (https://read-mosaics.blogspot.com/p/lullingstone-roman-villa.html).

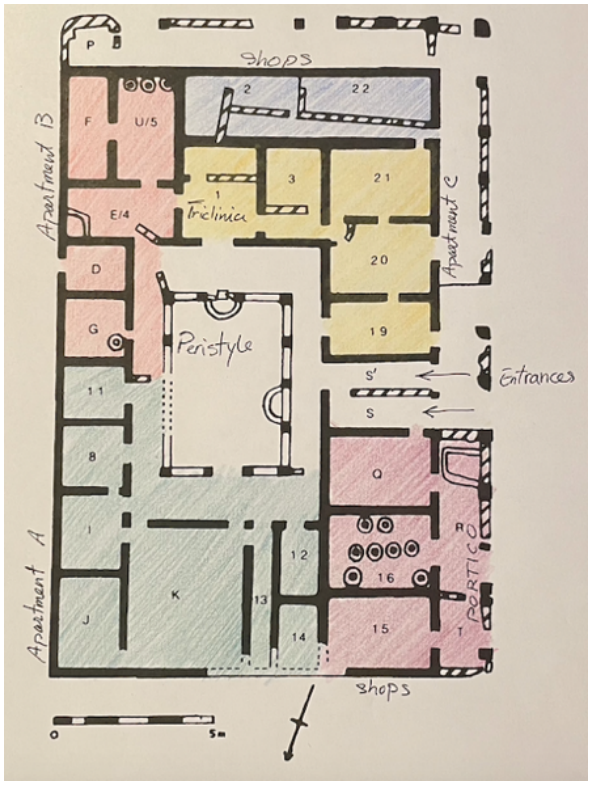


Fig. 10: Plan of the ‘House of Frescoes’ at Tipasa (Ellis, ‘End of the Roman House’, 568).

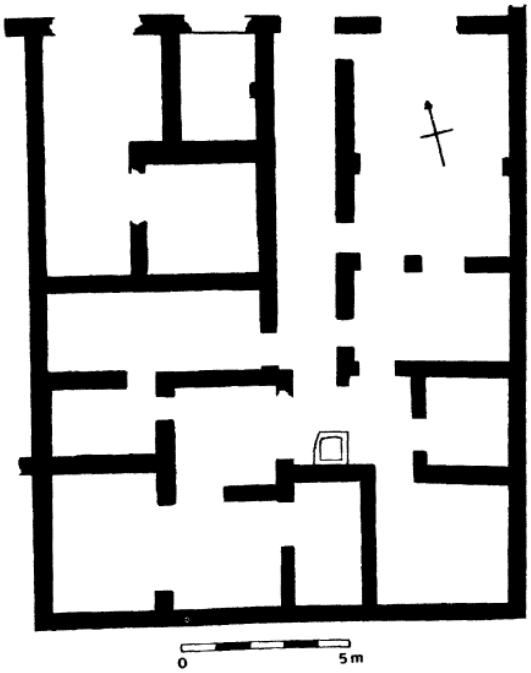


Fig. 11: Fourth-century city block at Utica, Tunisia (Ellis, ‘Middle Class Houses’, 419-20).

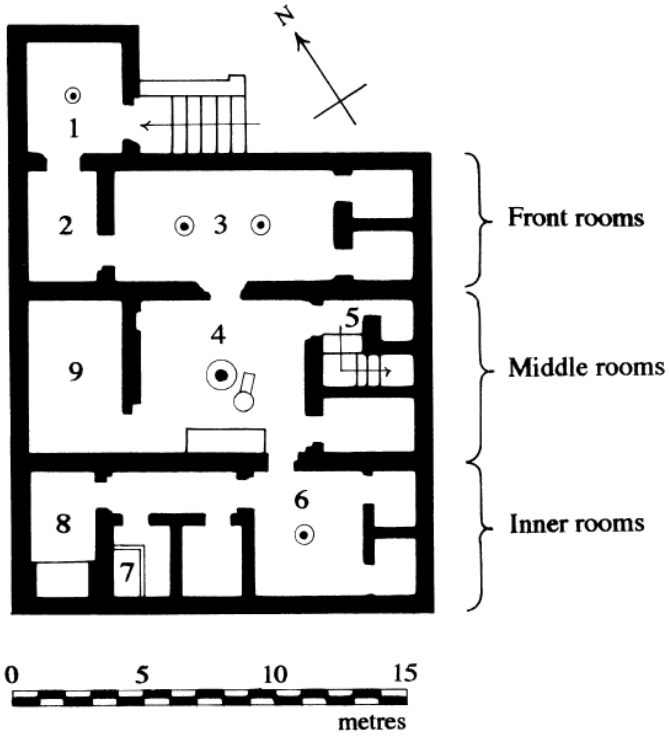


Fig. 12: Plan of a large Amarna house. Key:1. Stepped and porched entrance 2. Antechamber 3. Corridor 4. Central space 5. Stairs (Spence, 'Three-Dimensional Form', 126).

Fig. 13: Limestone model of a tower- house, Graeco-Roman period (Davoli, 'Classical Influences', 178).

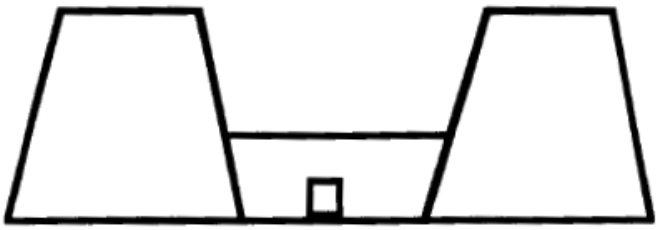


Fig. 14: The reconstruction of *oikia dipurgia* by Alston (Alston, 'Houses and Households', 31).

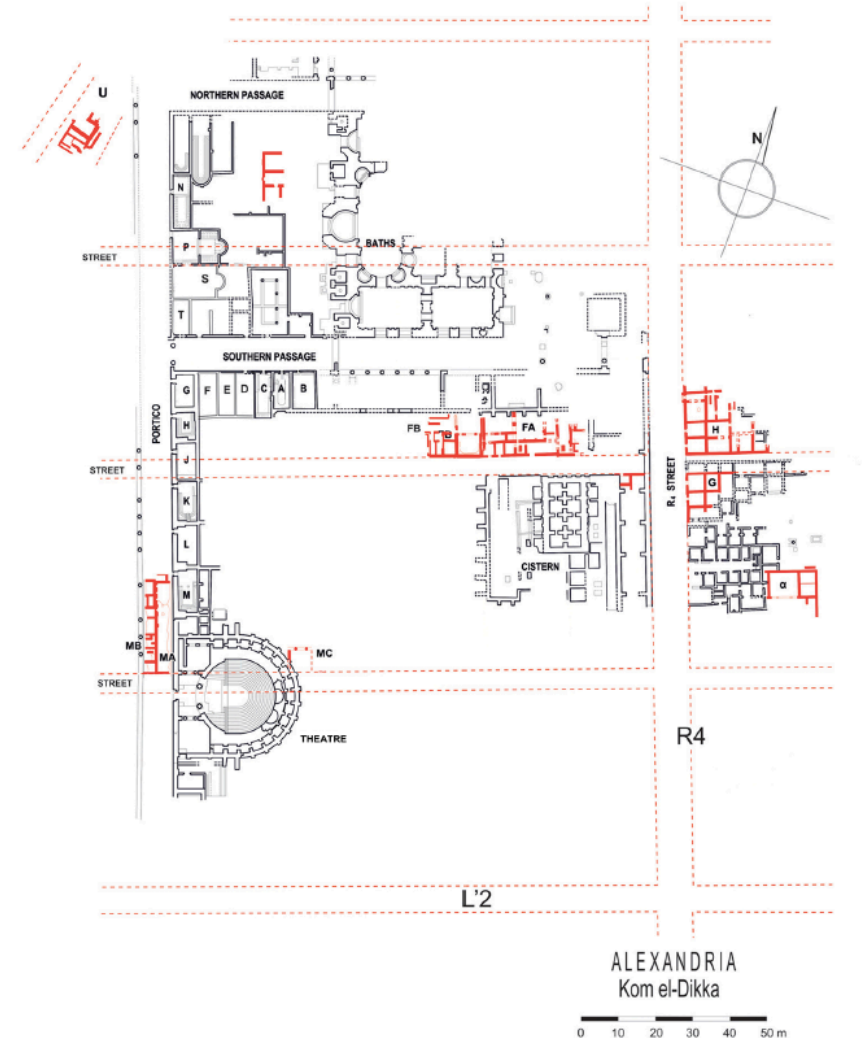


Fig. 15: Plan of Kom el-Dikka quarter with the Roman-period houses and streets outlined in red (Majcherek, 'Streets and Houses', 3).

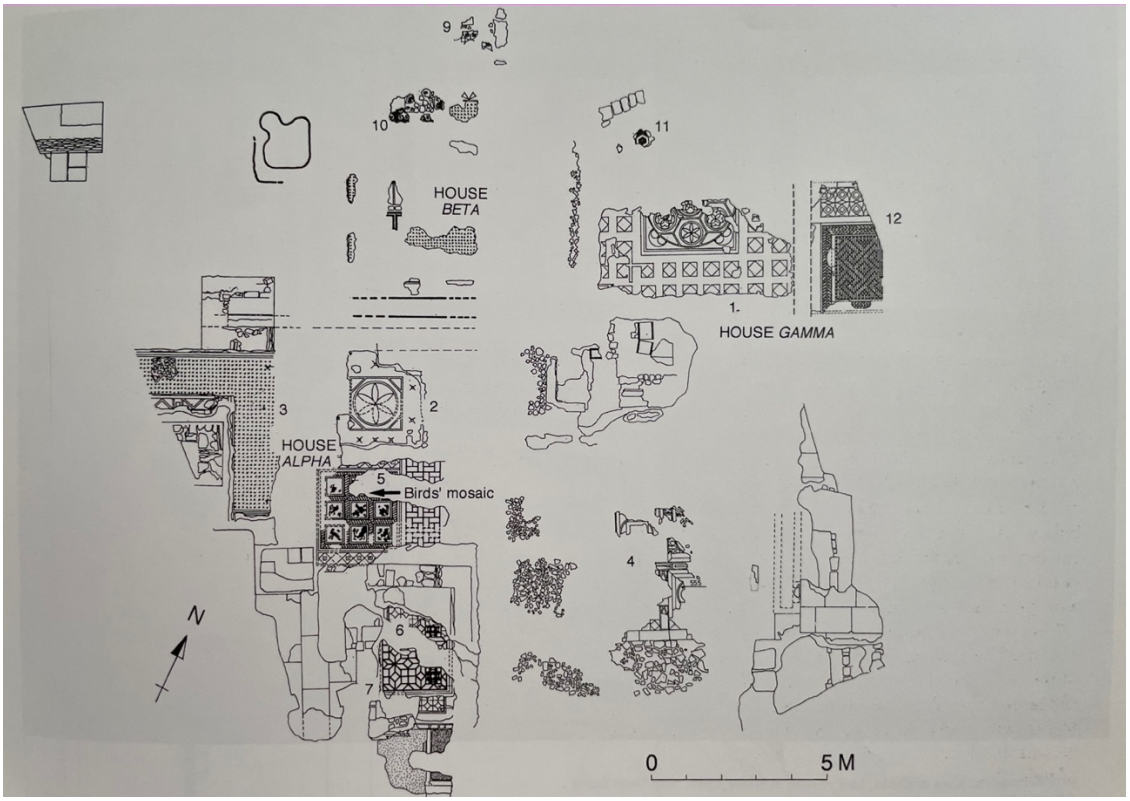


Fig. 16: Roman houses with mosaics under the Late Antique ‘House B’. House Alfa (Mosaics 2, 3, 5, 6, 7), House Beta (mosaics 9, 10) and House Gamma (mosaics 1, 4, 11, 12), (McKenzie, *Architecture of Alexandria*, 181).

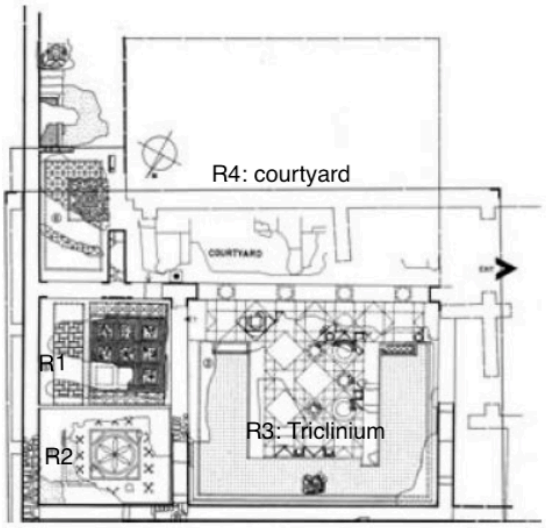


Fig. 17: Plan of the Roman period ‘House Alfa’ (Kołątaj et al., *Villa of the Birds*, 17).

Fig. 18: Mosaic of the birds in ‘House Alfa’ (McKenzie, *Architecture of Alexandria*, 182).

Fig. 19: Limestone cornice measuring 95 by 52 found in the courtyard of ‘House Alfa’ in Alexandria that once crowned a Doric frieze above the entrance door of the *triclinium* (Kołątaj et al., *Villa of the Birds*, 18).

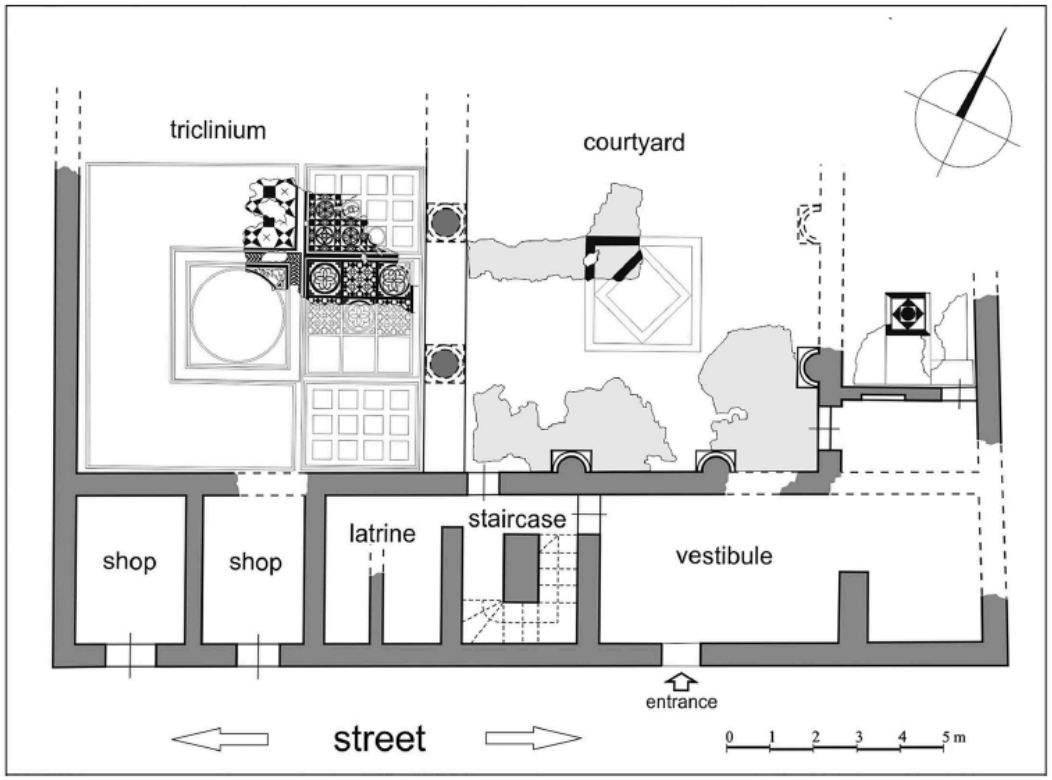


Fig. 20: G. Plan of ‘House FA’ (Majcherek, ‘Streets and Houses’, 5).

Fig. 21: Floor mosaic in the *triclinium* of ‘House FA’ (Majcherek, ‘Houses of Alexandria’, 205).

Fig. 22: A pseudo-peristyle courtyard in Alexandria, with walls executed in *opus isodorum* (Majcherek, 'Streets and Houses', 2).

Fig. 23: Stepped entrance to one of the houses in Alexandria (Majcherek, 'Streets and Houses', 4).

Fig. 24: Courtyard of ‘House H9’ in Antiphrae with free-standing columns (Bakowska-Czerner, Czerner, ‘House H9’, 76).

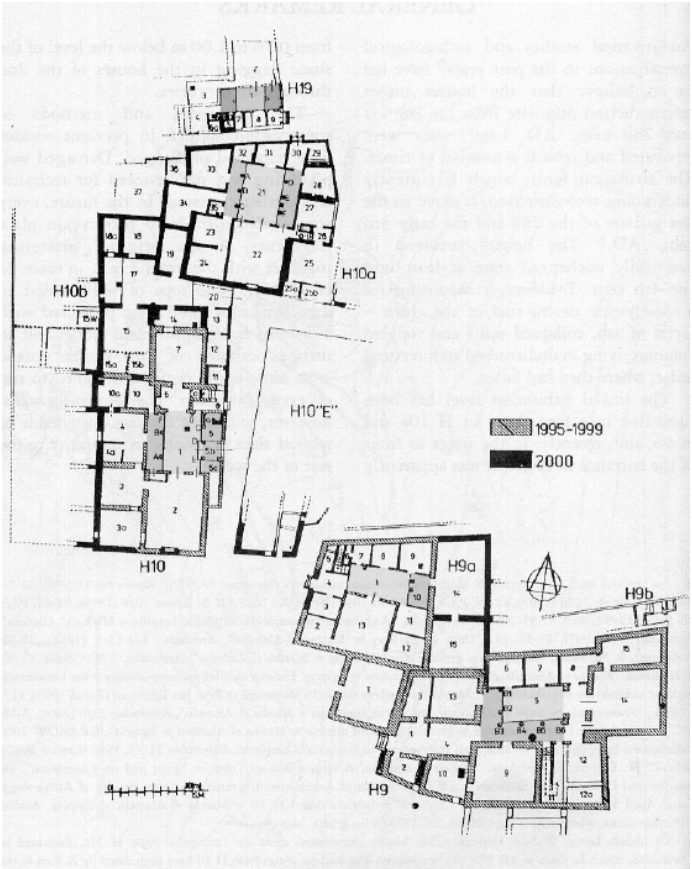


Fig. 25: Plan of the early Roman villas in Marina el-Alamein (Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, Fig. 60).

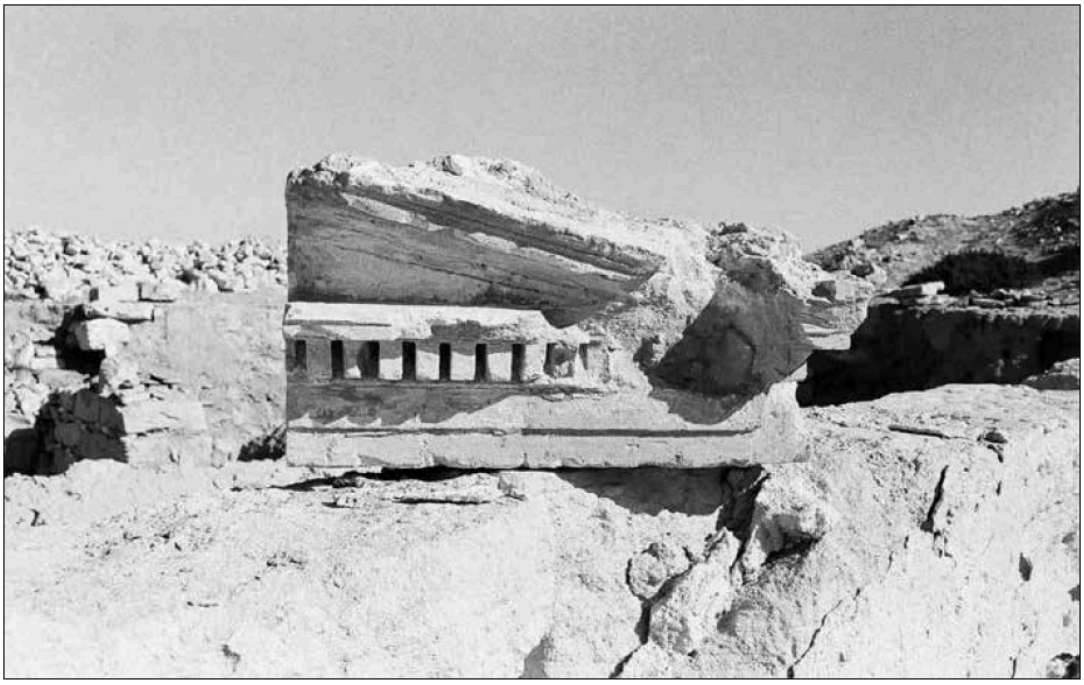


Fig. 26: Fragmentary Pediment executed in pseudo-Corinthian order found in the ‘House H9’ in Marina el-Alamein (Bakowska-Czerner, Czerner, ‘House H9’, 81).

Fig. 27: Partial reconstruction of the interior decoration of the *oikos* of the ‘House H9’ and its domestic shrine, based on the preserved wall plaster. (Bąkowska-Czerner, Czerner, ‘Marina el-Alamein’, 10).

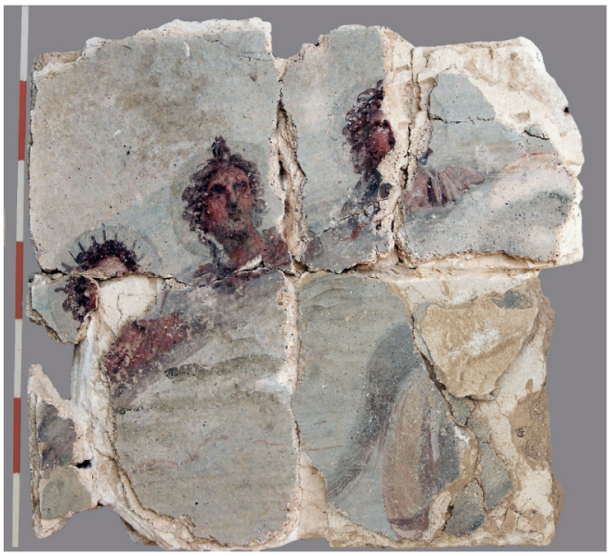


Fig. 28: Wall painting of the three gods Helios, Harpocrates and Serapis, in the *oikos* of 'House H10' (Bąkowska-Czerner, Czerner, 'Marina el-Alamein', 10).

Fig. 29: Plan of ancient Kellis, areas B and C, east of the centre (Hope, 'Kellis in Context', 5).

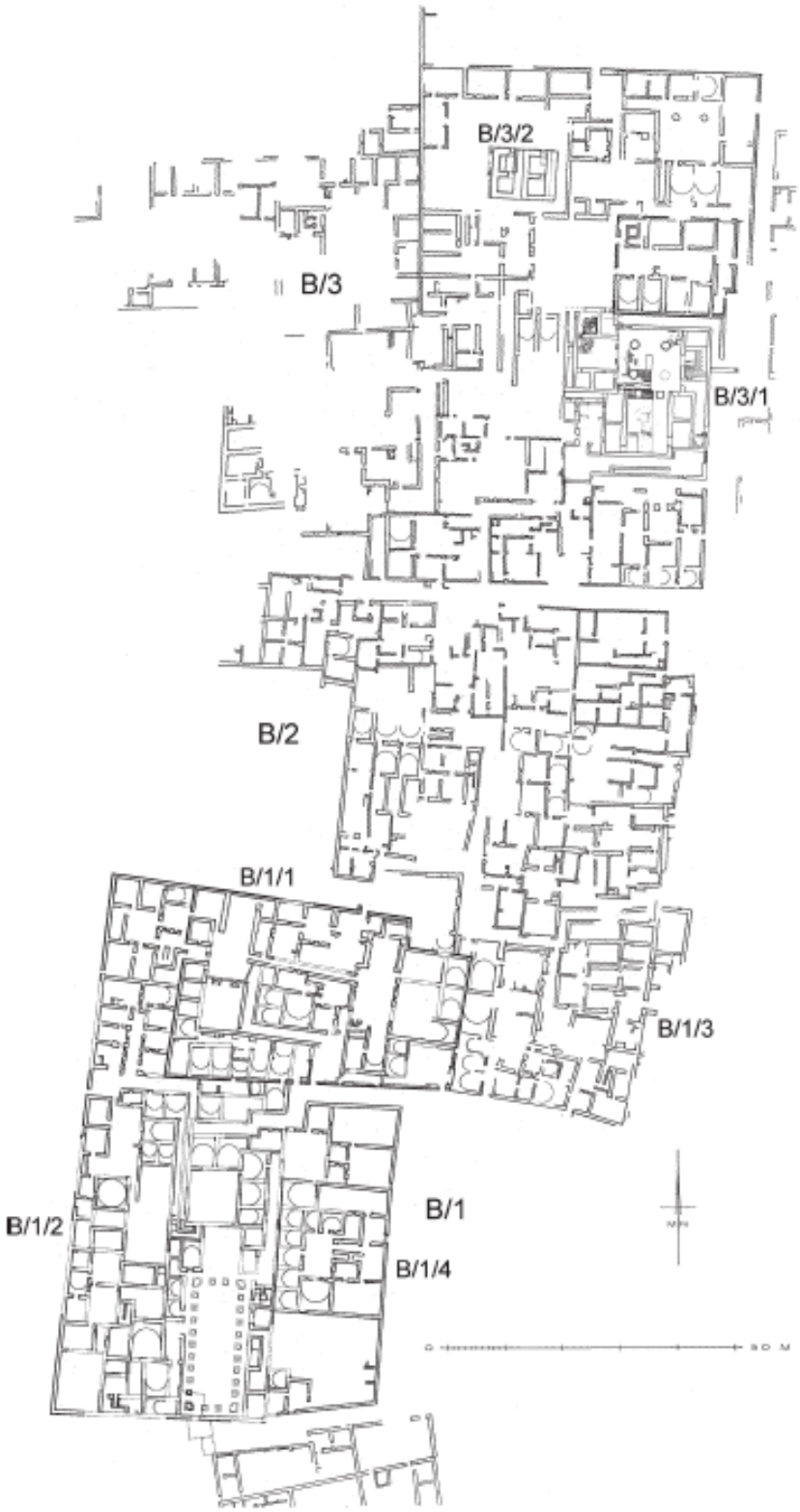


Fig. 30: Plan of the complex B (Hope, Bowen, ‘Houses’, 16).

Fig. 31: Colonnaded court of ‘House B1/2’ in Kellis (Whitehouse, ‘Paintings’ 59).

Fig. 32: ‘Tumbling Blocks’ motif on plaster fallen from the roof in ‘House B1/2’ (Whitehouse, ‘Paintings’ 60).

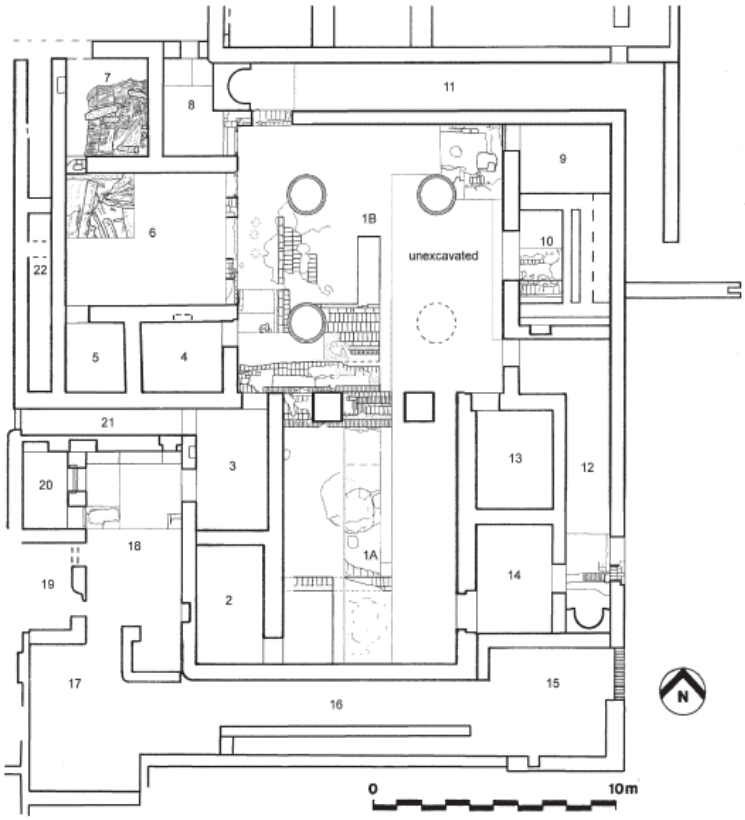


Fig. 33: Plan of ‘House B3/1’ in Kellis (Hope, Bowen, ‘Houses’, 20).

Fig. 34: Apsidal niche at the end of corridors in ‘House B3/1’ (Whitehouse, ‘Paintings’, 62).

Fig. 35: Decorations on the north wall of room 1b in ‘House B3/1’ with depictions of birds on pedestals on the right and centre and an unidentified female image on the left (Whitehouse, ‘Paintings’, 63).

Fig. 36: The wall paper pattern with intersecting circles in the room 1a. of ‘House B3/1’ (Whitehouse, ‘Paintings’, 61).

Fig. 37: Imitation of *opus isodorum* in paint on the north wall of room 6 in 'House B/3/1' (Whitehouse, 'Paintings', 68).

Fig. 38: Goddess Isis and Serapis-Helios in octagonal sections fallen from the roof in the room 1a of 'House B3/1' (Hope, Whitehouse, 'A Painted Residence', 324).

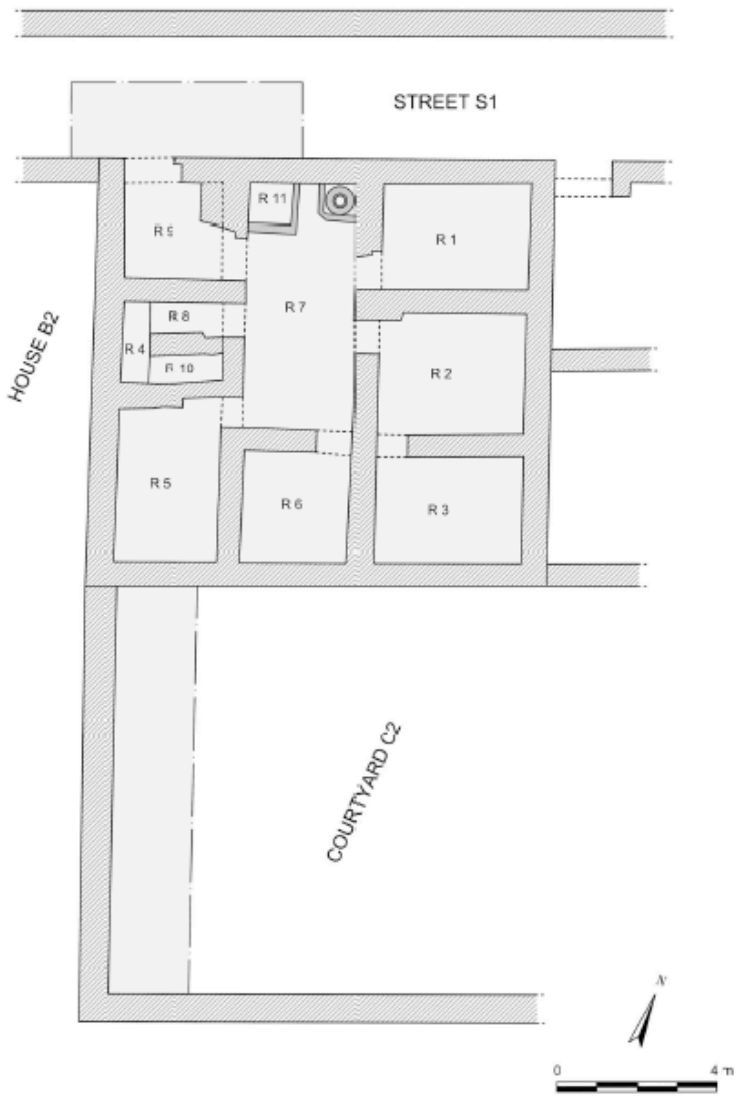


Fig. 39: Plan of ‘House B2’ with courtyard C2 to its south and street S2 to the north (Boozer, *Amheida II*, 56).

Fig. 40. Plan of the village of Karanis, with level C houses and *insulae* divisions (Depraetere, *Archaeological Studies*, 80).

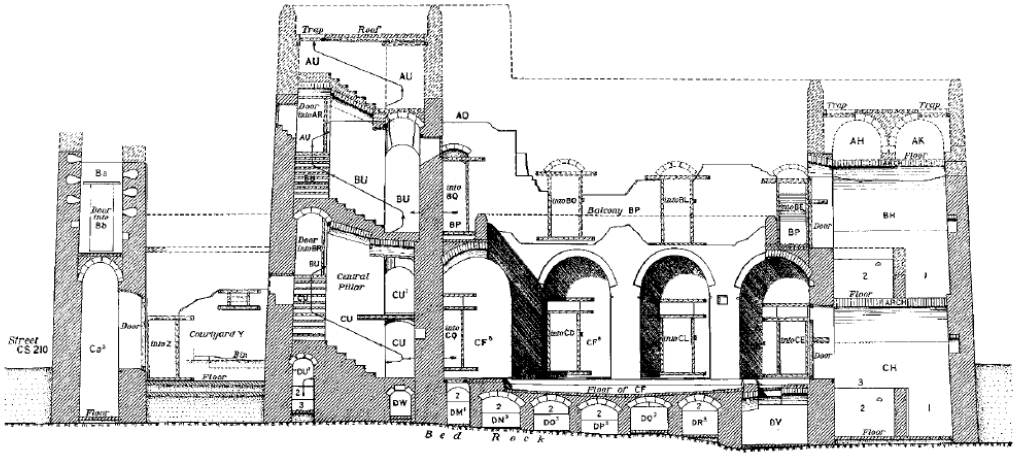


Fig. 41: Section view of 'House C51' in Karanis (Gazda, *Karanis an Egyptian Town,* 22).

Fig. 42. Above: The interior view of houses near the temple in Karanis (Gazda, *Karanis*, 19), Below: 3D reconstruction of the interior of 'House C45' with 3D models of the objects found in the same room from Kelsey Museum (Wendrich et al., 'Karanis in 3D', 237).

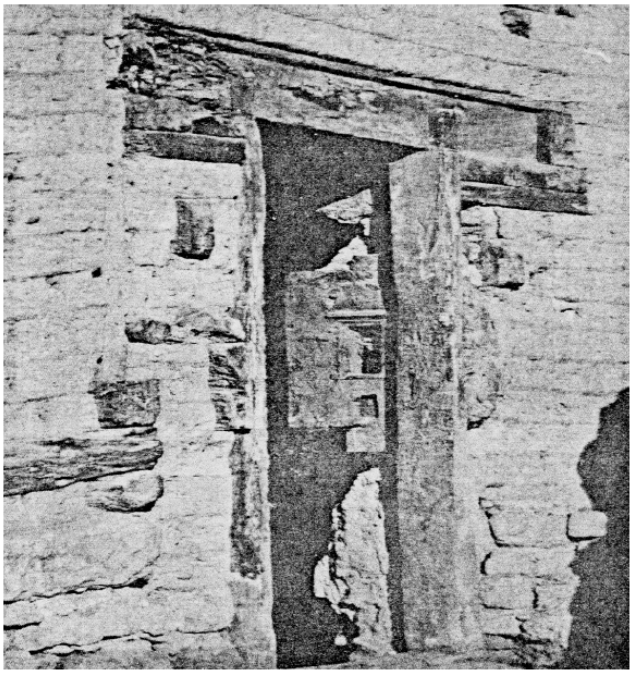


Fig. 43: Front door of ‘House C50’ in Karanis with a bolt case inside the frame (Abdelwahed, *Houses in Greco-Roman Egypt*, 16).

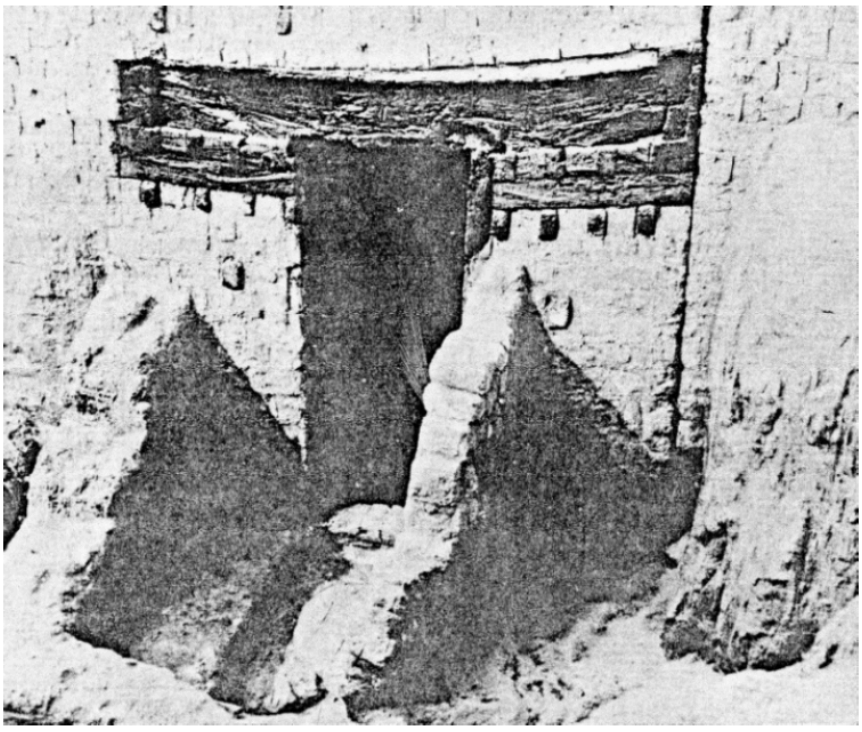


Fig: 44: Entrance of ‘House C68’ in Karanis including a windbreak (Abdelwahed, *Houses in Greco-Roman Egypt*, 16).

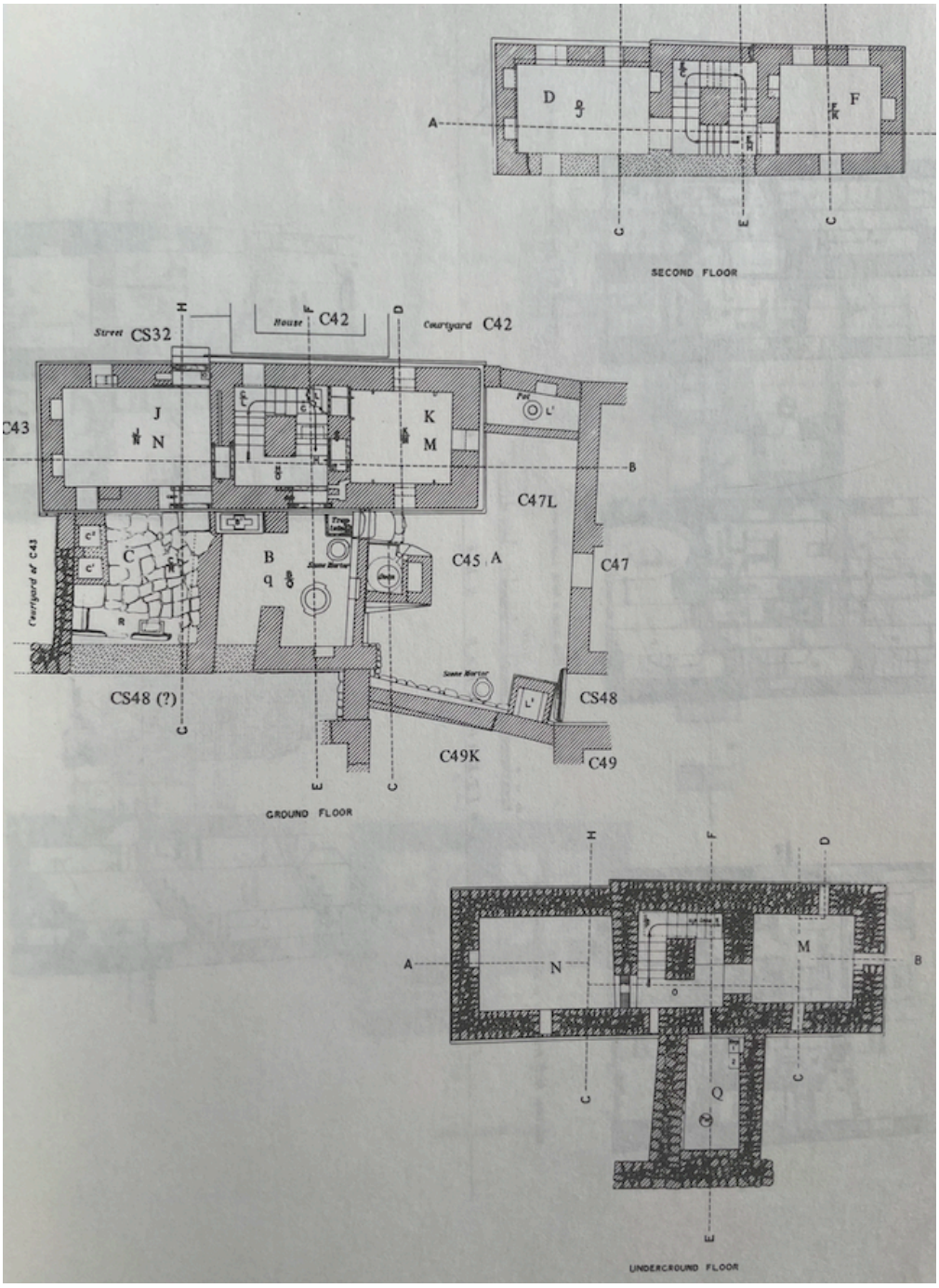


Fig. 45: Floor Plans of ‘House C45’ in Karanis (Husselman, *Karanis*, Plan 29).

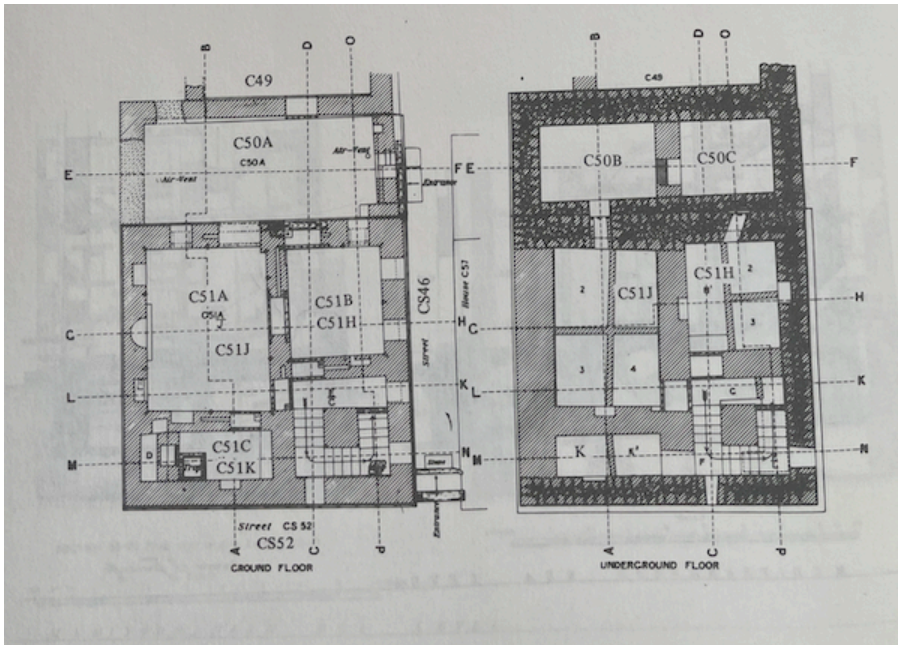


Fig. 46: Floor Plans of ‘House C50-51’ in Karanis (Husselman, *Karanis*, Plan 27).

Fig. 47: Aedicula in ‘House C119’ (Husselman, *Karanis*, Plate 73a).

Fig. 48: A Painting from ‘House B50’ in Karanis depicting Isis suckling Harpokrates on the right, Herron is riding a horse on the left (Abdelwahed, *Houses in Greco-Roman Egypt*, 47).

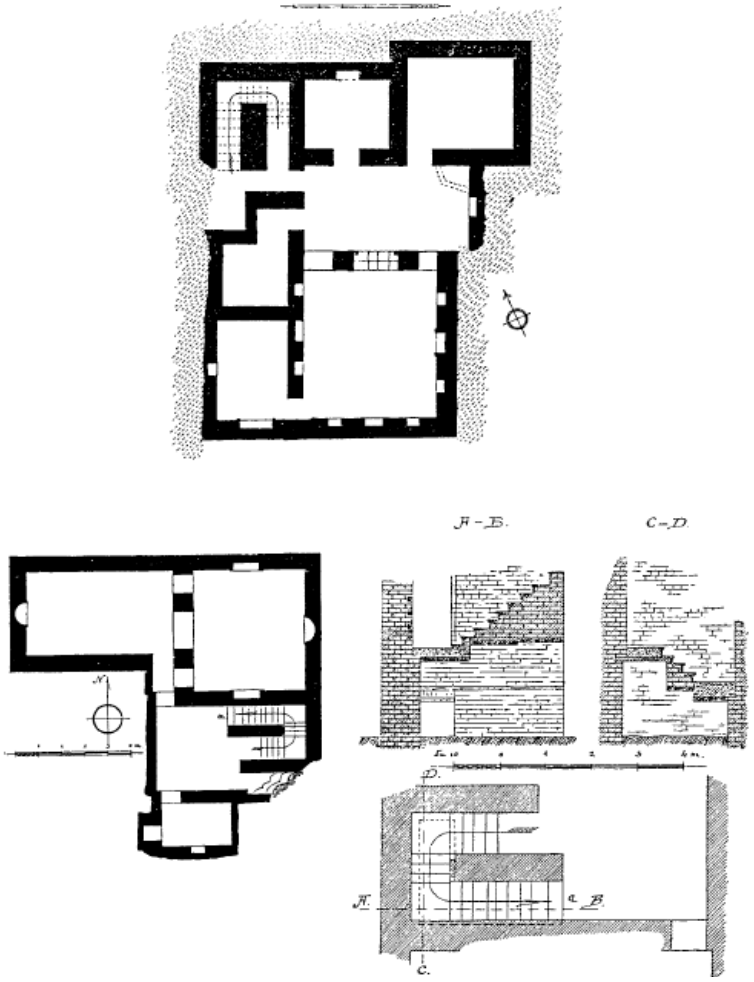


Fig. 49: Mudbrick *aithrion* houses in Theadelphia (Davoli, ‘Classical influences’, 179).

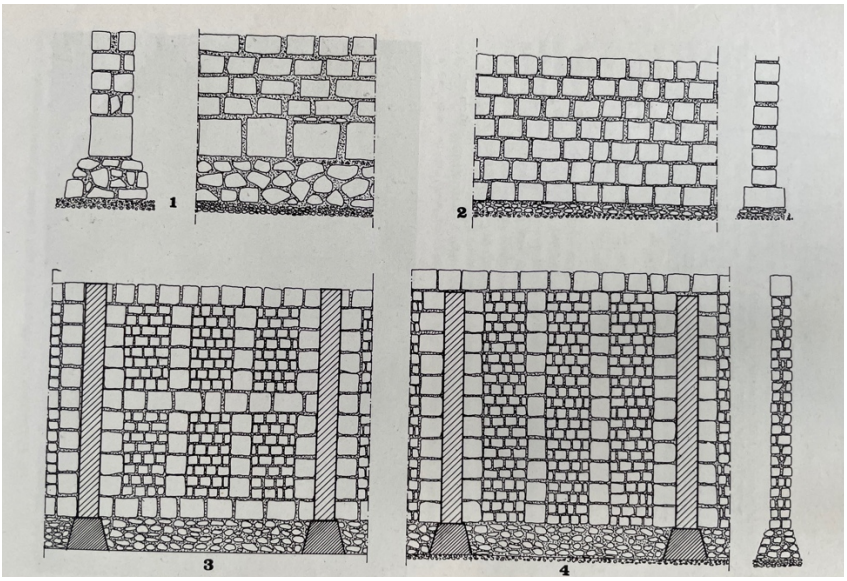


Fig. 50: *Opus Africanum* drawn from the intact parts of the walls in houses of R4 Street (Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III*, 64, Fig. 48).

Fig. 51: Plan of Late Antique houses on the east of R4 Street, built on top of the earlier Roman-period houses (Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III*, Plan III).

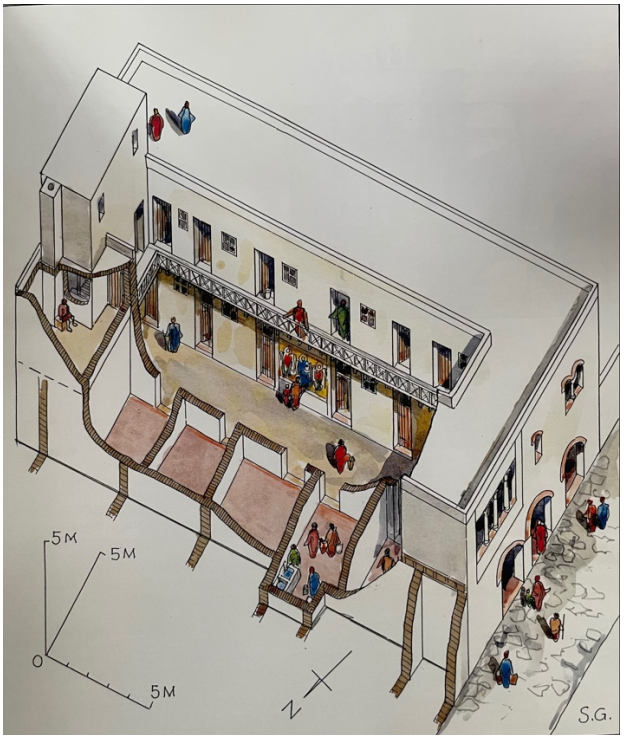


Fig. 52: An axonometric reconstruction of ‘House D’ (McKenzie, *Architecture of Alexandria*, 217).

Fig. 53: Fresco of Madonna and child in the courtyard of ‘House D’ (Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III*, 206).

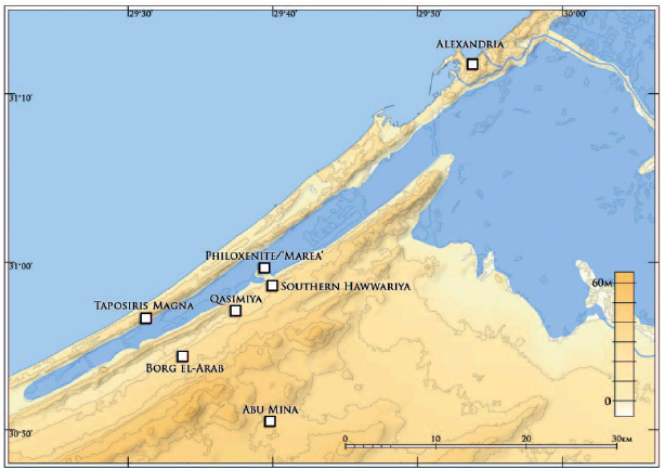


Fig. 54: Map of Mareotis region showing the location of large houses with private churches and baths (Derda, Gwiazda, Burdajewicz, 'Private House', 133).

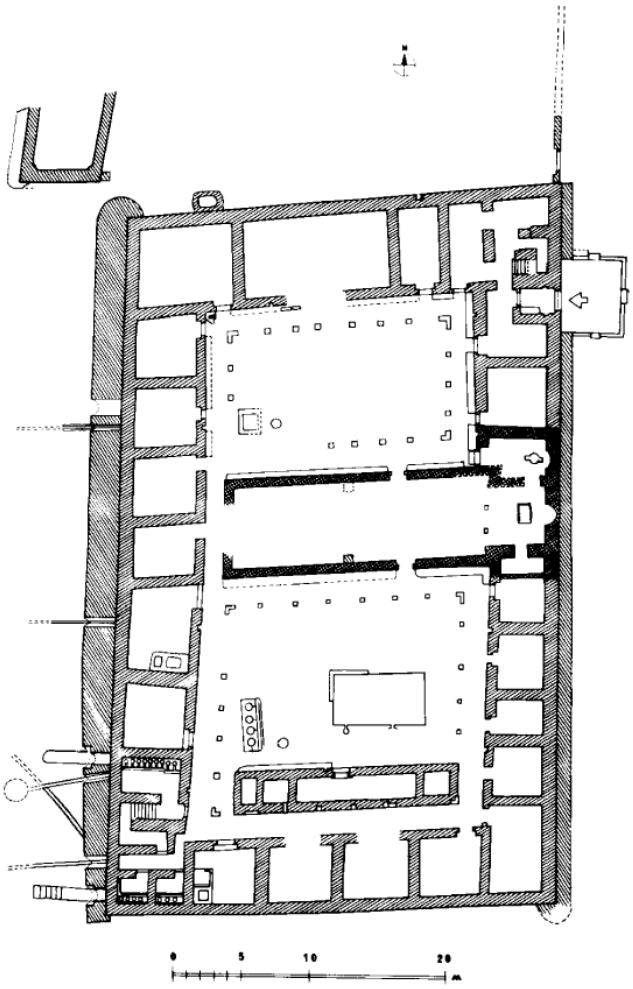


Fig. 55: Floor plan of 'Villa Rustica' in Huwariya (Rodziewicz, 'Remarks on the Domestic and Monastic Architecture', 274).

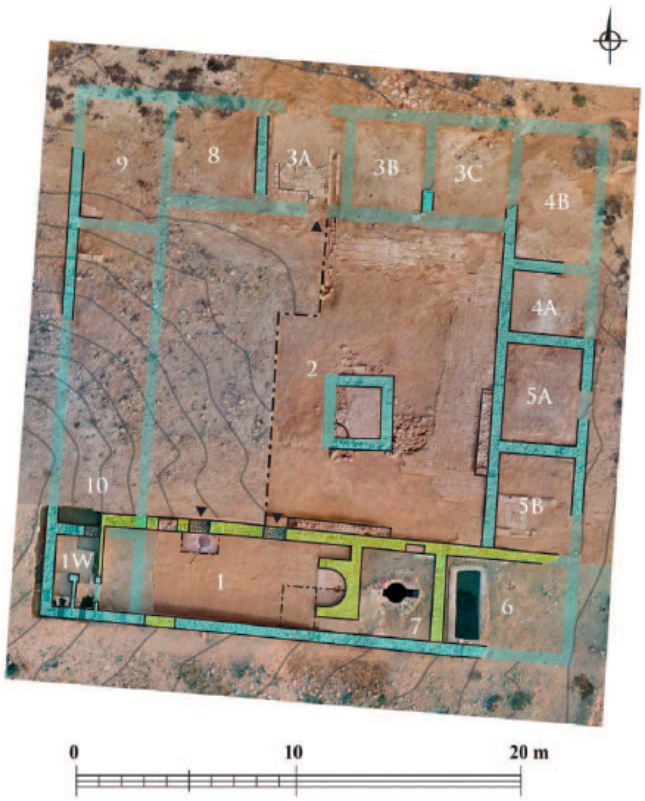


Fig. 56: Orthophoto plan of ‘House CH2’ in Marea (Derda, Gwiazda, Burdajewicz, ‘Private House’, 135).

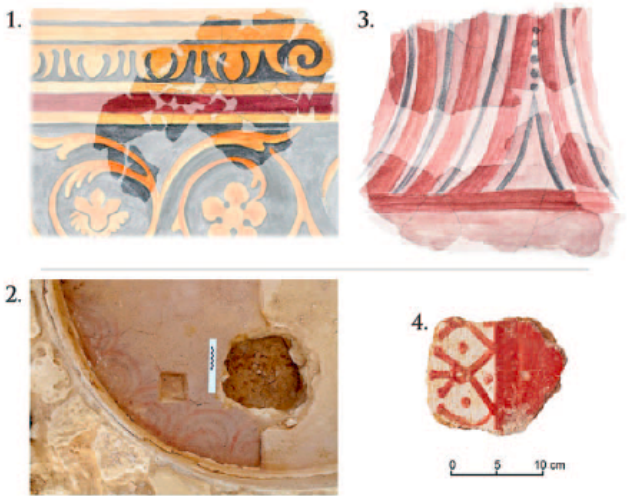


Fig. 57: Reconstruction of paintings from the apse of the ‘House CH2’ and part of the painted floor in the apse (Derda, Gwiazda, Burdajewicz, ‘Private House’, 137).

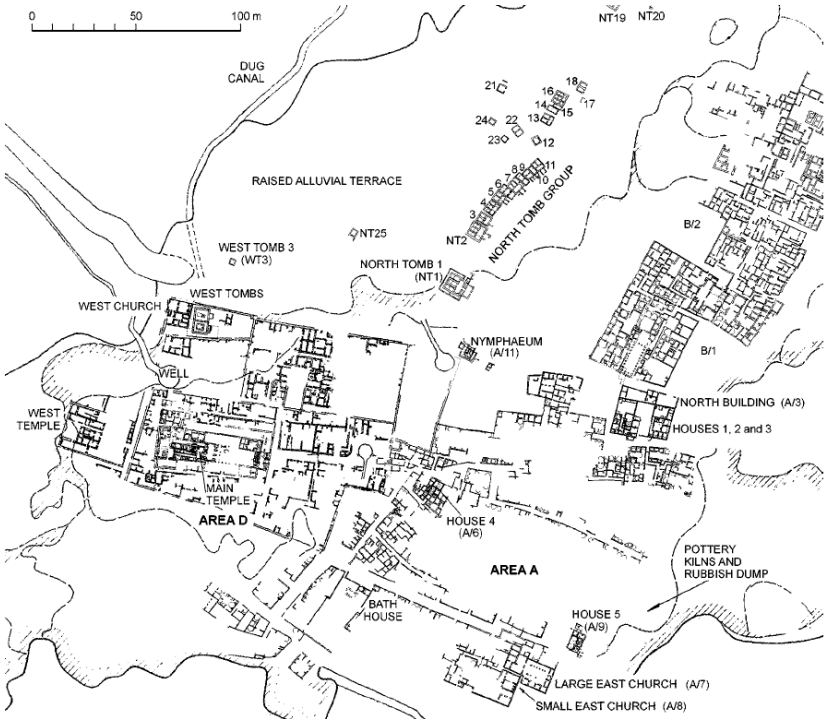


Fig. 58: Plan of Late Antique Kellis with Areas A and D (Hope, 'Roman-Period Houses of Kellis', 202).

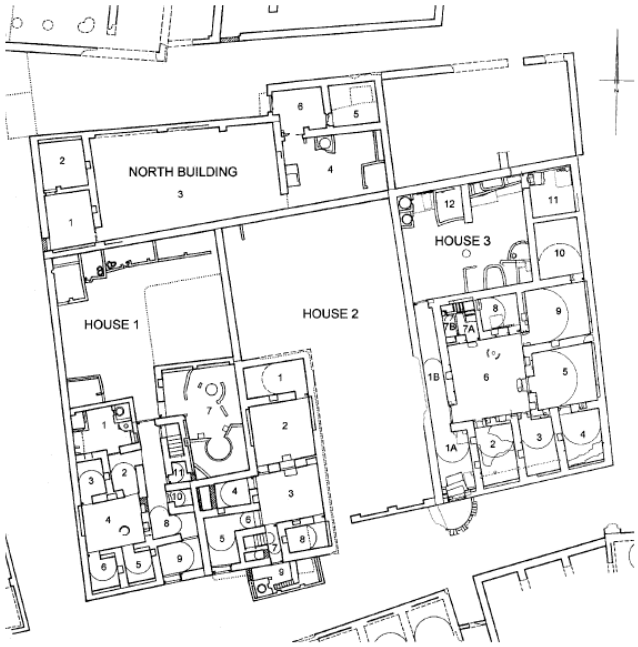


Fig. 59: Plan of the *insula* including houses 1 to 4, Kellis Area A (Hope, 'Roman-Period Houses of Kellis', 214).

Fig. 60: Mudbrick *stibadium* in ‘House 3’, room 7, in Kellis Area A (Hope, Bowen, ‘Houses, Households, Household Activities’, 34).

Fig. 61: Plan of the fourth-century ‘House of Serenos’ in Amheida (Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 43).

Fig. 62: ‘House of Serenos’, the north wall of the reception room 1 with geometric wall papers below, and painted scenes above (Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 132).

Fig. 63: House of Serenos, return of Odysseus (Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 134).

Fig. 64: Personification of Amheida (Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 137).

Fig. 65: Figural scene of the Family reclining on a *kline* (Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 142).

Fig. 66: 'House of Serenos', virtual reconstruction of the exterior dining room and *stibadium* (Davoli, *House of Serenos*, 100).

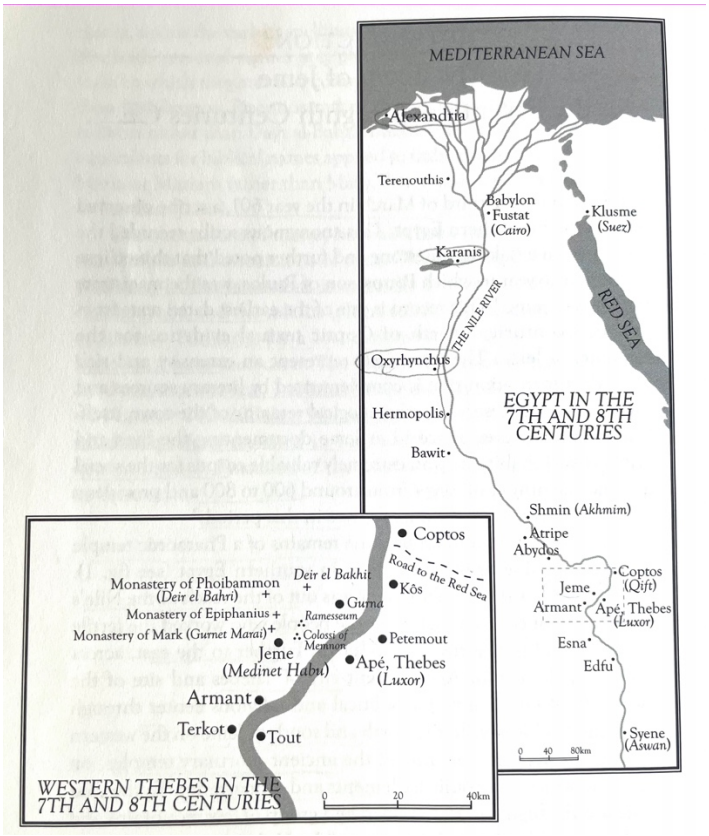


Fig. 67: Map of Egypt and the western Theban area in the seventh and the eight Centuries (Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 2).

Fig. 68: Map of the Coptic town of Jeme with houses built over and around the temple precinct and the girdle wall (U. Hölscher, *The Excavation of Medinet Habu, Volume I: General Plans and Views* (Chicago, 1934) Plate 32).

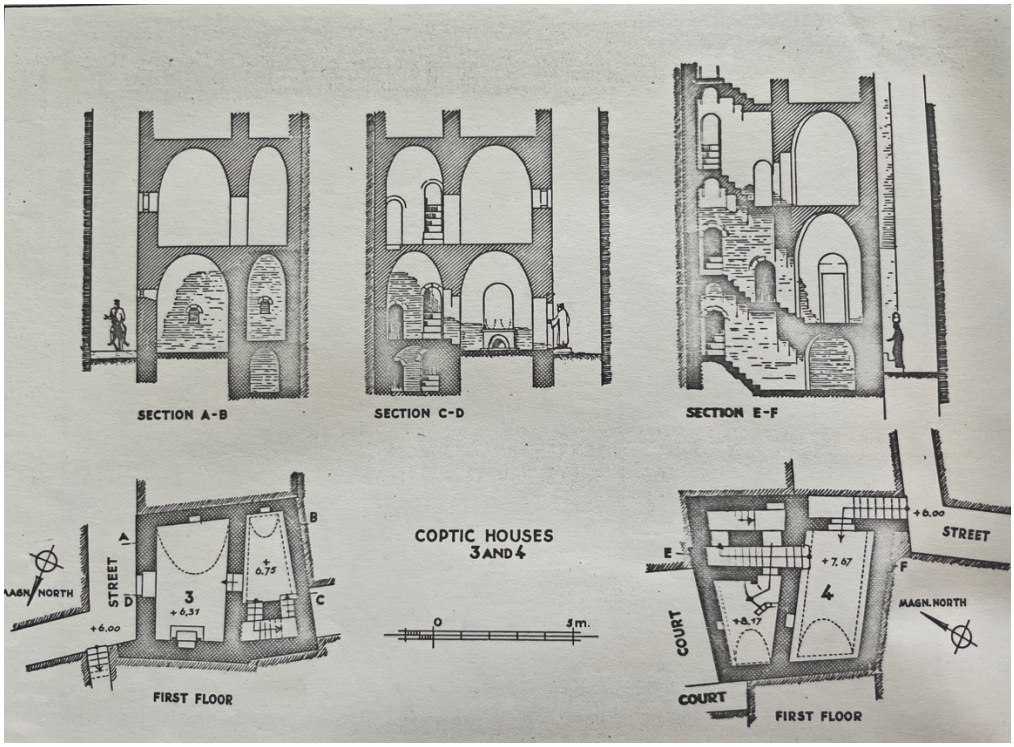


Fig. 69: Plan and section of houses 3 and 4 in Jeme (Hölscher, *Excavation of Medinet Habu V*, Plate 41).

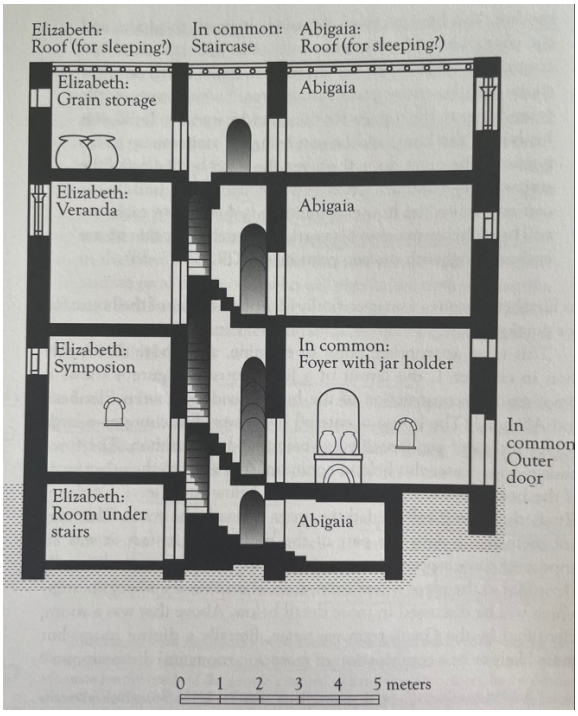


Fig. 71: A reconstruction of the 'House of Elizabeth and Abigaia' *(*Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 53).

Fig. 72: Ornamented door lintels from Coptic houses (Hölscher, *Excavation of Medinet Habu* V, Plate 36.A).

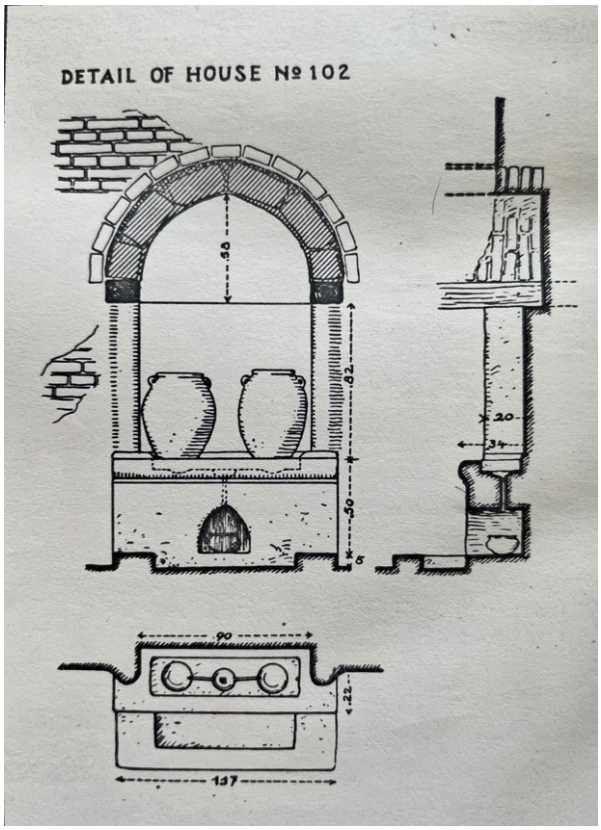


Fig. 73: Water-jug niche in house 102 (Hölscher, *Excavation of Medinet Habu V*, Plate 43.C).

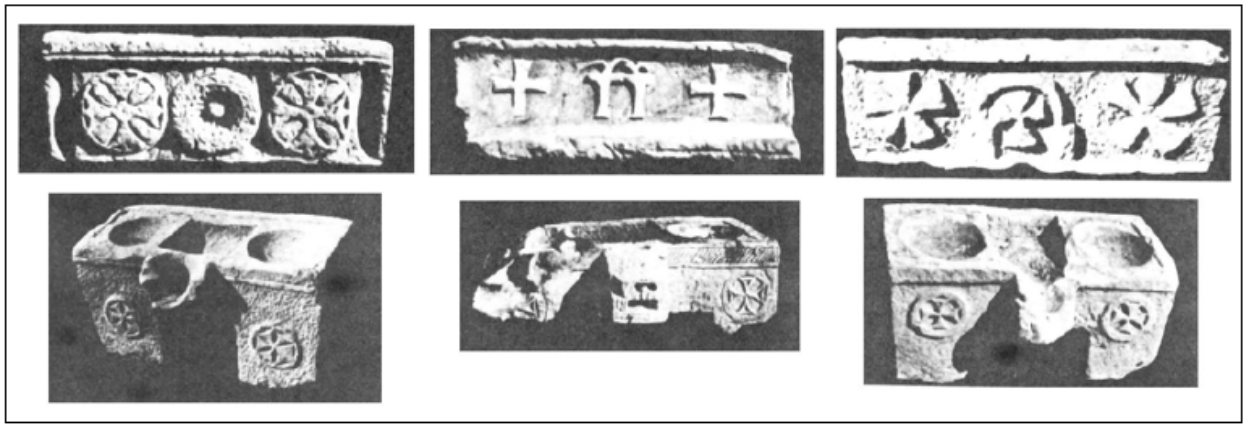


Fig. 74: Water-jug stands found in Jeme (Hölscher, *Excavation of Medinet Habu V*, Plate 36.B*).*

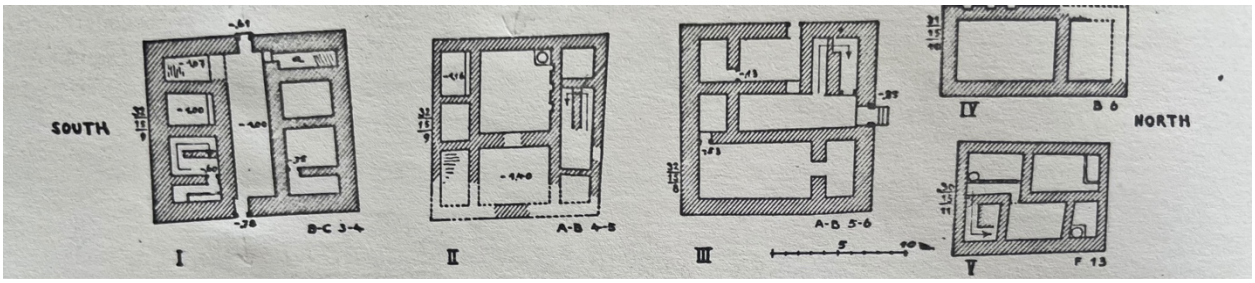


Fig. 75: Roman-Period houses in Jeme (Hölscher, *Excavation of Medinet Habu V*, 39).

Fig. 76: Map of Elephantine and its surroundings (Arnold, *Elephantine XXXII*, 16).

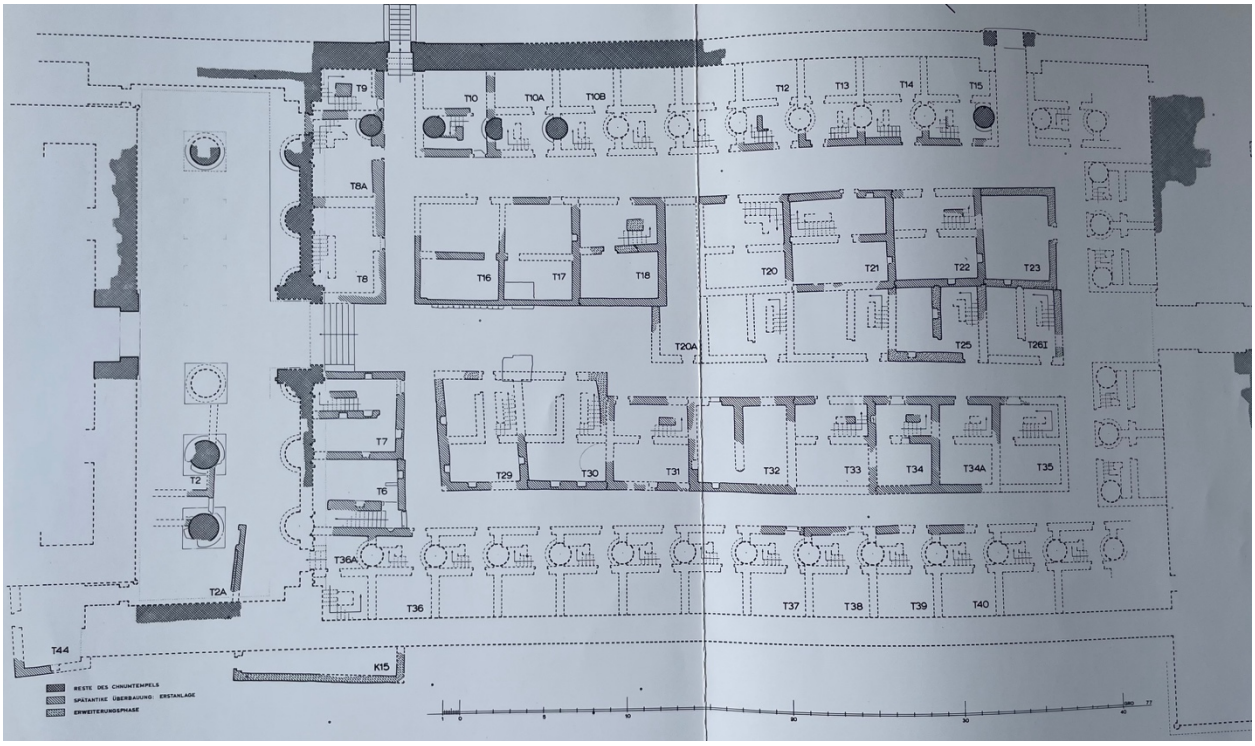


Fig. 77: First phase of development in the courtyard of the Temple of Chnum (Grossmann, *Elephantine II*, Plate 26).

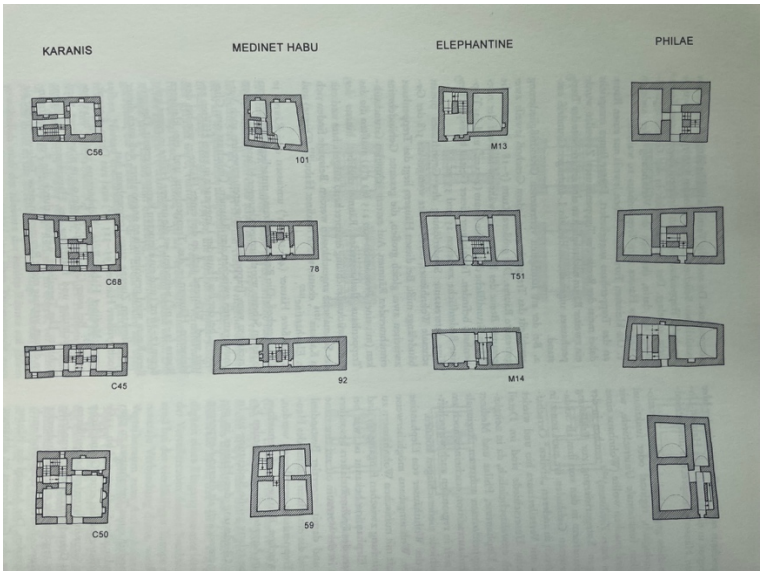


Fig. 78: A comparison between the floor plans of houses in four different Late Antique settlements (Arnold, *Elephantine XXX,* 184).

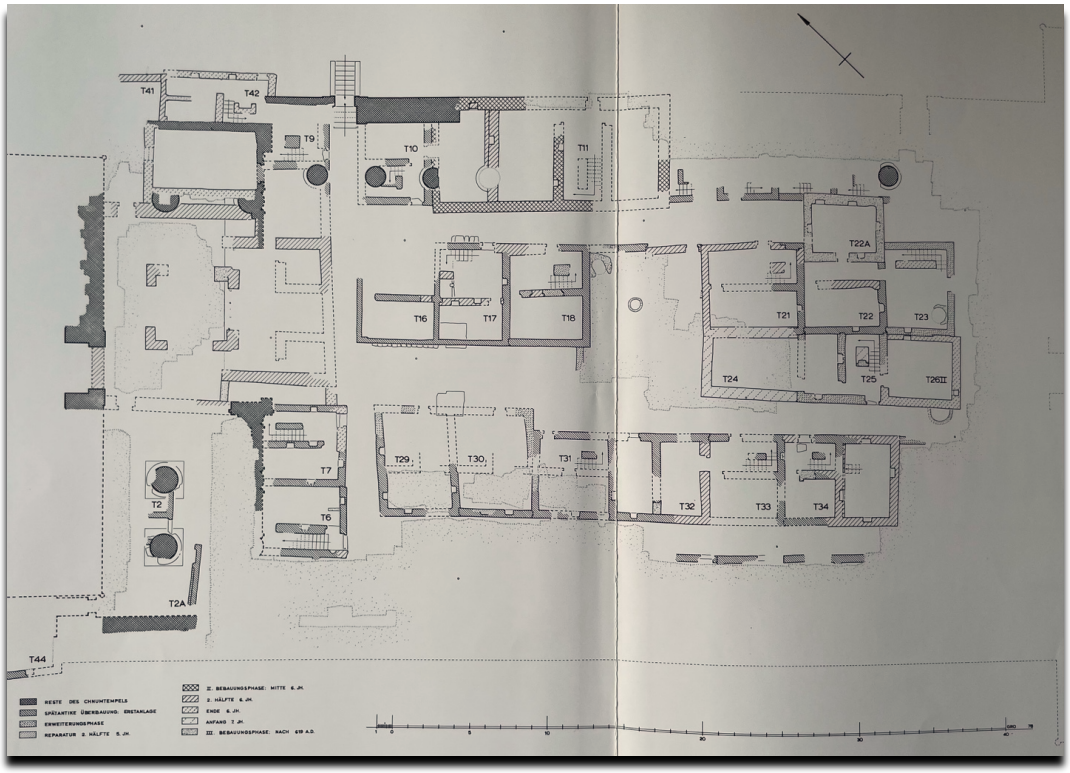


Fig. 79: Second phase of development in the courtyard of the Temple of Chnum (Grossmann, *Elephantine II*, Plate 26).

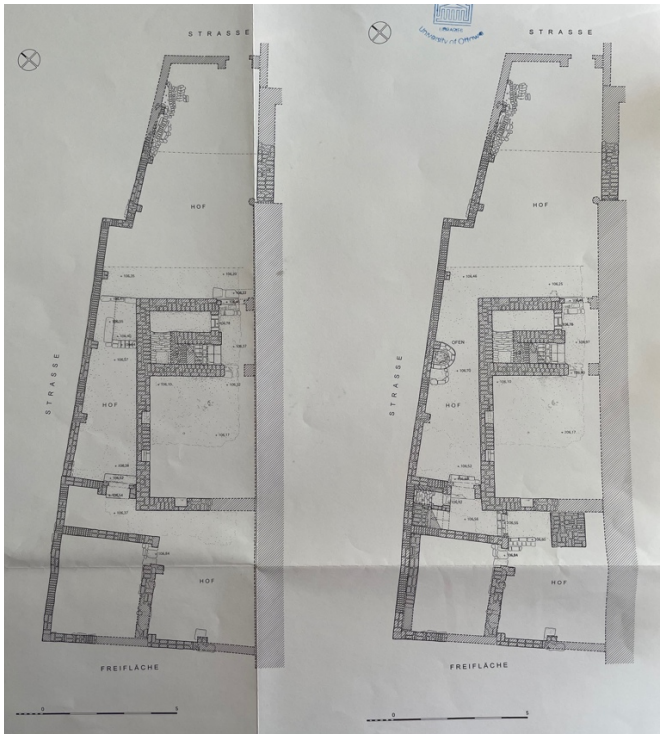


Fig. 80: House M10-11 on the east side of the temple of Chnum (Arnold, *Elephantine XXX*, Plate IV).

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