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The House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos and Other Residences in Cyprus and Cyrenaica: Local Phenomena in a Global Empire

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The House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos and Other Residences in Cyprus and Cyrenaica: Local Phenomena in a Global Empire

Abstract: An effective approach to the study of Roman provincial houses is to examine how global architectural trends influenced the residential architecture of local urban elites. In the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus and Cyrenaica (Libya), which formed part of the Ptolemaic kingdom during the Hellenistic period, provide a typical example of this phenomenon.
The House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos (Cyprus), which represents both a typical and a distinctive example of regional residential architecture, provides a good example to start from. Its architecture is rooted in the Hellenistic housing tradition but also exhibits architectural features (e.g. private baths) and decorative elements (e.g. a particular type of Corinthian capital), that emerged and became widespread during Imperial times. Similar global phenomena, though producing different local results, can be observed in urban houses in Cyrenaica. This paper endeavours to identify the glocal aspects of housing in these provinces, as well as the local responses that developed within a global framework.

Keywords: Cyprus, Cyrenaica, residential architecture, architectural decoration, globalization

Abstract: Un approccio efficace allo studio delle abitazioni delle province romane consiste nell'esaminare in che modo le tendenze architettoniche globali abbiano influenzato l'architettura residenziale delle élites urbane locali. Nel Mediterraneo orientale, Cipro e la Cirenaica (Libia), che durante il periodo ellenistico fecero parte del regno tolemaico, offrono chiari esempi di questo fenomeno.
La Casa di Orfeo a Nea Paphos (Cipro), che rappresenta al tempo stesso un esempio tipico e distintivo dell'architettura residenziale regionale, costituisce un valido punto di partenza. La sua architettura affonda le radici nella tradizione abitativa ellenistica, ma presenta anche caratteristiche architettoniche (ad esempio terme private) ed elementi decorativi (come una particolare tipologia di capitello corinzio) che emersero e si diffusero ampiamente in età imperiale. Fenomeni globali analoghi, pur producendo esiti locali differenti, sono osservabili anche nelle abitazioni urbane della Cirenaica. Il presente contributo si propone di individuare gli aspetti "glocali" dell'abitare in queste province, nonché le risposte locali sviluppatesi all'interno di una cornice globale.

Parole chiave: Cipro, Cirenaica, architettura domestica, decorazione architettonica, globalizzazione

Introduction

The study of private architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean shows that during the Imperial period, provincial elites determined the grafting of new formal demands into the decorative traditions of the regions in which they lived. This grafting process results from the negotiation between the local substrate and broader fashions, and may be described as a form of prismatic refraction. This concept derives from the theoretical framework of glocalization as outlined by V. Roudometof[1] who defines glocality as e*xperiencing the global locally or through local lenses*[2]. In recent years, the adoption of such a theoretical framework has gone hand in hand with the widely accepted abandonment of the concept of Romanization. A good example of this theoretical shift is that even provincial architectures that took their inspiration from public monumental types are no longer interpreted in current literature as 'Romanized', but rather as expressions of the histories of the social groups that produce them[3].

While maintaining a position of critical objectivity, our aim is to test, within the field of residential architecture, the applicability of the theory of glocalisation, conceived as a rejection of the traditional centre–periphery dichotomy in favour of analysing the ways in which global flows were locally adapted and reconfigured. It is in this context, through a multifaceted analysis of architecture shaped by the individual choices, that one can reflect on the ethnic and religious affiliations of the house's inhabitants. In this sense, one can paraphrase the well-known saying: Show me where you live, and I'll tell you who you are… Accordingly, the analysis presented here takes into account anthropological debates on multiculturalism, identity, and hybridity, alongside cognitive approaches to material culture and the study of past societies[4].

M.R., D.M., P.P., E.G.

Theoretical and historical framework

Global phenomena, when refracted through local conditions, find a particularly revealing expression in domestic architecture, where cultural exchange is shaped as much by negotiation as by imitation. In this context, inherited building traditions intersect with broader (global) trends, producing hybrid (glocal) forms that reflect both global influences and local continuities. Unlike public architecture—where innovation often appears through the use of imported marble or the replication of official models—domestic buildings register a subtler dialogue between external forms and local practice. Their layouts, decorative schemes, and construction methods express the social identities and aspirations of their inhabitants, while also embodying the material realities of locally available stone and craftsmanship. Thus, across different urban and provincial settings, or even within a single city, domestic architecture provides a valuable way to see how global architectural styles were reinterpreted locally and how individual choices shaped the reception of wider cultural forms[5].

[1] Roudometof 2016a; 2016b.
[2] Roudometof 2016b, 399; see also Roudometof, Dessì 2022; Montoya González 2024.
[3] Mazzilli 2020, 6–8.
[4] See Palmiè 2013 for a general in-depth analysis.
[5] What is presented here forms part of the Project 'Residence as a self-presentation of urban elites. Architecture and decoration of the House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos, the ancient capital of Cyprus' financed by the National Science Centre in Poland, project no. 2017/27/B/HS3/01131. This Project aims to investigate the architecture of the House of Orpheus within the broader context of cultural transition from Ptolemaic to Roman rule in the Eastern Mediterranean, and follow the developments during the Imperial period up to the threshold of Late Antiquity; on the project and its results, see: https://houseoforpheusproject.wnks.uw.edu.pl/ (accessed 21.09.2025)

The methodological approach followed here refers to a conception of material culture resulting from inter-connectivity, that is, from the exchange of artefacts and ideas deriving from different cultural contexts. However, it must be stressed that it is not always possible to determine the origins and meanings of the artefacts and ideas that came into play. These matters must, of necessity, be left to the specialized studies that form the basis of each research area[6].

The paper focuses on Cyprus and Cyrenaica, two regions that came under Roman rule in the first century BCE. Both were strongly influenced by the Alexandrian cultural heritage and, consequently, by the sophisticated architectural traditions that spread from the Egyptian metropolis across the Mediterranean. Unlike Egypt, under whose dominion they both were, which carried a rich homogeneous cultural past, these provinces were transformed over the centuries by territorial adjustments and historical events. This statement does not imply a degree of original 'cultural purity', which no one could support knowing the intense intercultural exchanges characterizing the history of Cyprus and Cyrenaica. Therefore, the two regions have always led scholars to question aspects regarding the identity of these territories[7].

If one looks at the main domestic complexes of Cypriot and Cyrenaican cities dating from the late second century BCE to the sixth century CE, their architectural configurations, both in plan and elevation, can be interpreted as the expression of a glocal phenomenon. It is, in fact, possible to recognize the refraction of components of varied space-time origin, but also specific forms and styles that are characteristic of each of these cultural regions. The architectural traditions established for centuries in both Cyprus and Cyrenaica were tangible expressions of continuity and authority, visually articulating the identity of elites who perpetuated inherited power across generations.

Fig. 1. Map of the Eastern Mediterranean (retrieved from Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mediterranean_Basin_and_Near_East_before_1000_AD_topographic_map.jpg, accessed 4/07/2022).

[6] Conversely, see Pitts, Versluys 2015, 6: *The emptiness of much commonly used terminology in archaeological and historical studies becomes especially clear when the processes and mechanisms underlying such phenomena must be articulated. For example, it is common to encounter terms such as 'inter-culturality', 'crossroads of cultures', 'hybridity', 'confluence' or, popular in the French tradition, 'transferts-culturels' or 'métissage' – most of the time without an adequate explanation of what these concepts exactly mean or imply, especially for the interpretation of material culture*'.

[7] Pensabene, Gasparini 2017, 655–656, 659–660, 676–677; Pensabene, Gasparini 2019, 175–176; Pensabene, Gasparini 2020, 164–165; Pensabene, Gasparini 2021, 330–331, Gasparini 2023a, 213-223, Gasparini 2023b, 129-148; Gasparini 2023c.

The provinces here considered, the overseas possessions of the Ptolemies, entered the orbit of Republican politics in the first century BCE. However, it was only during the reign of Augustus that the new Roman administration introduced changes in their political and social status. Under Roman imperial rule, these provinces did not play a leading role. They enjoyed, however, a period of prosperity which, for Cyprus, was due to its location at the crossroads of trade routes, between East and West (Fig. 1). The significance of Cyprus in Roman trading networks is well testified by the evidence provided by amphorae[8].

Cyprus was a minor senatorial province and did not offer good prospects of promotion in the senatorial *cursus honorum*. Nevertheless, the constant presence of officials on the island is attested in important towns, especially the *caput provinciae,* where the proconsul was accompanied by a *quaestor provinciae*, a *legatus pro praetore* and auxiliary staff[9].

Roman citizenship was relatively rare among the natives of Cyprus before the beginning of the third century CE, and Cypriots rarely reached high-ranking Roman nobility status[10]. Furthermore, even when members of the local elite were awarded Roman citizenship, they chose the Greek language to represent themselves in public monuments[11]. Moreover, the island does not seem to have attracted many wealthy Romans to settle there permanently. Several *negatiatores* were residing in Cyprus already during the Republic, acting 'as a link to the highest levels of Roman society for the local elites[12]. Roman imperial policy appears to have shown little interest in imposing allochthonous models, with procedures that earlier scholarship would labelled as Romanizing endeavours[13]. Nevertheless, the gradual adoption of Roman standards is visible throughout the material culture, including the residential architecture and, within it, the use of space and its decoration. This phenomenon escalated during the reign of the Severan dynasty, whose policy was oriented towards the East. Therefore, the architectural remains left by these provincial societies testify to their integration into a global cultural universe that accompanied the political, economic, and social order established by Rome.

In recent archaeological debates, studies on Roman provincial housing have focused on the mutual relations between the forces of globalization and the specificity related to localism, understood, *inter alia*, as an attachment to tradition. Pausanias, at the beginning of the second century CE, pointed out many times Cyprus' cultural affinities with Greece (e.g., Paus. 10.24.3; 1.3.2; 1.6.6; 1.6.8 etc.). This emphasis on Cyprus as part of Greece's cultural heritage is highly significant for the articulation of the cultural identity of the Greeks under Roman rule[14]. This approach has highlighted the differing extents of willingness for, and diversity of, cultural change in a province when it became part of the Roman Empire. As already noted, owners are to be seen as active agents in the refraction process of global trends through local lenses. Beyond these broader reflections on the interaction between global and local dynamics, it is equally important to acknowledge the role of individual agency. Personal choices – shaped by education, cultural habitus, social aspiration, and, not least, material wealth – played a decisive role in determining the architectural expression of urban residences.

Economic prosperity and the growing urban elite class were reflected in

[8] Kaldeli 2009, 365–386; Michaelides 1996, 142-152; Kaldeli, Williams, Michaelides 2022, 63–78.
[9] Eck 1972–1973, 250–253; Hussein 2021, 36–48; Mitford 1980, 1292–1308; Nowakowski 2010, 5, note 2; Thomasson 1984, 295–302.
[10] Hussein 2021, 34, 71–73; Mitford 1980, 1362–1366.
[11] Hussein 2021, 65.
[12] Hussein 2021, 60–61.
[13] Michaelides 1999, 119.
[14] see Hussein 2021, 14–16.

developments in both public and private architecture[15]. The increase in the affluence of urban residences is well-illustrated by the House of Orpheus at Nea Paphos, which serves as the main case study on which this discussion is based.

E.G.

The House of Orpheus at Nea Paphos: planimetric layout and transformations

Domestic architecture is fairly well documented in Nea Paphos, the capital of Roman Cyprus. The known houses differ in terms of orientation, size, layout, and decoration, as well as date, illustrating in variety of ways a local response within the global framework[16]. The House of Orpheus is neither the grandest nor the richest residence; however, it represents a typical and, at the same time, unique example of residential architecture in Roman Cyprus, and thus deserves particular attention. Furthermore, the planimetric layout and the architectural decoration epitomise the phenomenon of glocalisation on an island marked by a long history of occupation and extensive developments in domestic architecture.

The name House of Orpheus (given after the most outstanding feature of the house, the mosaic depicting Orpheus and the Beasts) refers to the remains occupying an area of ca. 1,200 square meters, which were systematically investigated between 1982 and 1992, with further intermittent excavations until 2013[17]. The origin of the development of the area dates back to the Hellenistic period when the city was laid out on a grid of streets forming rectangular *insulae*[18]. Probably already at that time, the area later occupied by the House of Orpheus was divided into plots slightly over 14 m wide with buildings aligned along the E-W axis. The full interpretation of the area remains uncertain because the western part of the *insula* has not survived, preventing the precise determination of the original length of the plots, and because the southern part has not yet been fully excavated, making it impossible to establish the width of the fourth plot. The earliest phase of occupation is confirmed not only by modest remains of architecture but also by several finds, the earliest of which date to the fourth century BCE[19]. From that time until its final abandonment the residence was rebuilt and decorated several times. Notably, remains of early Roman structures were found under the Orpheus mosaic when it was lifted for conservation[20]. Archaeological evidence, however, indicates that the most important changes occurred in the late second/early third century CE, a period corresponding to the city's greatest prosperity, when it bore the honorary title Σεβαστὴ Κλαυδία Φλαβία Πάφος, ἡ ἱερὰ μητρόπολις τῶν κατὰ Κύπρον πόλεων (*Sebaste Claudia Flavia Paphos, the sacred metropolis of the cities of Cyprus*).

[15] Michaelides 1996, 143.

[16] In fact, the residential buildings are one of the best-known features of the site, thanks to the work of Polish and Cypriot archaeologists, undertaken since the 1960s: the Villa of Theseus (Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2019; Lichocka 2021; Medeksza 1992: 1998); the 'Hellenistic' House (Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2019, Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2021); the House of Dionysus (Kondoleon 1994; Nicolaou 1967), the House of Aion (Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2019; Jastrzębowska 2019). Recently, thanks to the work of French archaeologists, one more house, located at the foot of Fabrika hill, immediately outside the city walls on the north-east, was added to the catalogue of known residences (Balandier, Guitrand 2016, 125–36; Balandier, de Pontbriand 2020).

[17] Interim reports of excavations conducted by D. Michaelides were published regularly in the *Annual Report of the Department of Antiquities Cyprus* (1983-1998) and the *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* (1983-1993); and a number of artefacts have been studied in more detail (publications listed in Rekowska *et al.* 2019, 201, note 16; 215–8; Rekowska *et al.* 2021a, 38, 40). Since 2018, non-invasive research is being carried out as part of the new abovementioned project.

[18] Miszk, Ostrowski, Papuci-Władyka 2020; Młynarczyk 1990, 162, fig. 16; Papuci-Władyka 2020, 83, pl. 5.

[19] *ARDAC* 1985, 45; *ARDAC* 1990, 58–59.

[20] *ARDAC* 1990, 58-9; Michaelides 1991, 4–5; cf. also Rekowska *et al.* 2021b.

This heyday is reflected in the elite residential architecture of the city. It may, to some extent be connected to an influx of new inhabitants from the Italian Peninsula or elsewhere in the Empire, the increasing identification of the local elite with the Roman Empire, or both. It is worth noting that the first phase of development of the Villa of Theseus and the decoration of the House of Dionysus coincide chronologically[21].

In this light, the transformation of the House of Orpheus during this period can thus be interpreted as a spatial manifestation of the broader cultural dynamics that defined Roman Cyprus. In architectural terms, the house encapsulates the interplay between global Imperial influences and local agency – a process that aligns closely with the theoretical framework of glocalisation. The House of Orpheus was modified in the spirit of Roman domestic architecture not only reflecting the aesthetic and social ambitions of its inhabitants but also offering insight into the ways in which provincial elites redefined imperial models within their own cultural and material environment.

In the transformation of the House of Orpheus the emphasis was placed on a clear division of private and public space; and, then the public space was given an appropriate architectural setting. These modifications were made possible through increasing the area of the entire residence by joining together adjacent structures and modifying them (Fig. 2)[22].

The architectural development of the House of Orpheus was inevitably conditioned by the pre-existing structures, which did not allow for a completely free reorganisation of space. The traditional sequence of *atrium-tablinum-peristylium*, characteristic of Roman domestic architecture in the Western provinces[23], was not introduced on a large scale in houses of the Greek East during the imperial period, and this residence was no exception. Nevertheless, its plan reveals selected spatial and visual strategies that reflect an engagement with Roman domestic ideals[24]. Efforts were made to articulate the rooms according to Roman rules of accessibility, visibility, and hierarchical spatial order, something most evident in the northernmost sector of the house. As a result, this part was turned into an official reception area of public nature, characterized by conspicuous luxury signalling the owner's social standing and cultural sophistication. This process of adaptation was not limited to a single episode. The archaeological record – architectural remains beneath the mosaics, the two construction phases of the baths, and the presence of walls bearing at least two layers of painted plaster – suggests that the rearrangement of the residence had begun already during the earlier Roman period. Thus, the successive phases of rebuilding should be understood as part of a broader continuum of architectural negotiation between local tradition and imperial models, where earlier Hellenistic layouts were selectively integrated into the evolving Romanised framework of domestic representation[25].

It would seem that ex-unit 2 retained the layout dating back to the earliest period of the insula's spatial arrangement (Fig. 3). Thus, the house was organized around the central rectangular courtyard, with rooms of relatively equal size clustered around its eastern western, and northern sides. These could be identified as *cubicula*, although, in accordance to the Roman principles of multi-functionality of some rooms in a house, their functions likely varied according to need and occasion. Such caution is warranted, as the street-front walls on the east remain undefined and therefore do not allow a clear conclusion as to whether the rooms on this side (R 20, R 21) were accessible from the

[21] House of Dionysus: Kondoleon 1994; Villa of Theseus: Medeksza 1992, Medeksza 1998; Lichocka 2021.
[22] The substantial increase in the area of the entire residence also included ex-units 3 and 4, where the new colonnaded courtyard was constructed. However, as the southern part of the complex is still under study, our analysis is limited to the interpretation of two units in the northern part.
[23] Hales 2003, 97–134; Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 47.
[24] Hales 2003, 207–243.
[25] *ARDAC* 1984, 45.

street or solely from within the house. The only substantial alteration of this unit was its expansion to the south through incorporating a section of street A, part of which was turned into a storage space (R 40)[26].

Fig. 2. Plan of Nea Paphos: 1. The House of Orpheus; 2. The Villa of Theseus; 3. The 'Hellenistic' House; 4. The House of Aion; 5. The House of Dionysos; 6. The Roman House (based on the orthophoto of site, Carleton Immersive Media Studio for the GCI, https://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/field_projects/paphos/overview.html, accessed 4/07/2022).

Some features indicate that the ex-unit 1 originally shared a comparable configuration, but its later transformation completely altered its nature. This rebuilding is clearly visible in the masonry – through wall joins, blocked entrances, and newly opened passages in existing walls. The reuse of earlier architectural elements reinforces this interpretation. Notably, three column-shaft segments, possibly originating from the original peristyle, were incorporated into the construction of the southern wall of room R 7, while additional spolia appear throughout the complex (Fig. 4).

Following the rebuilding, the layout and spatial logic of the 'new' northern wing were completely different, going well beyond the needs of ordinary domestic life. Although

[26] *ARDAC* 1988, 55–56.

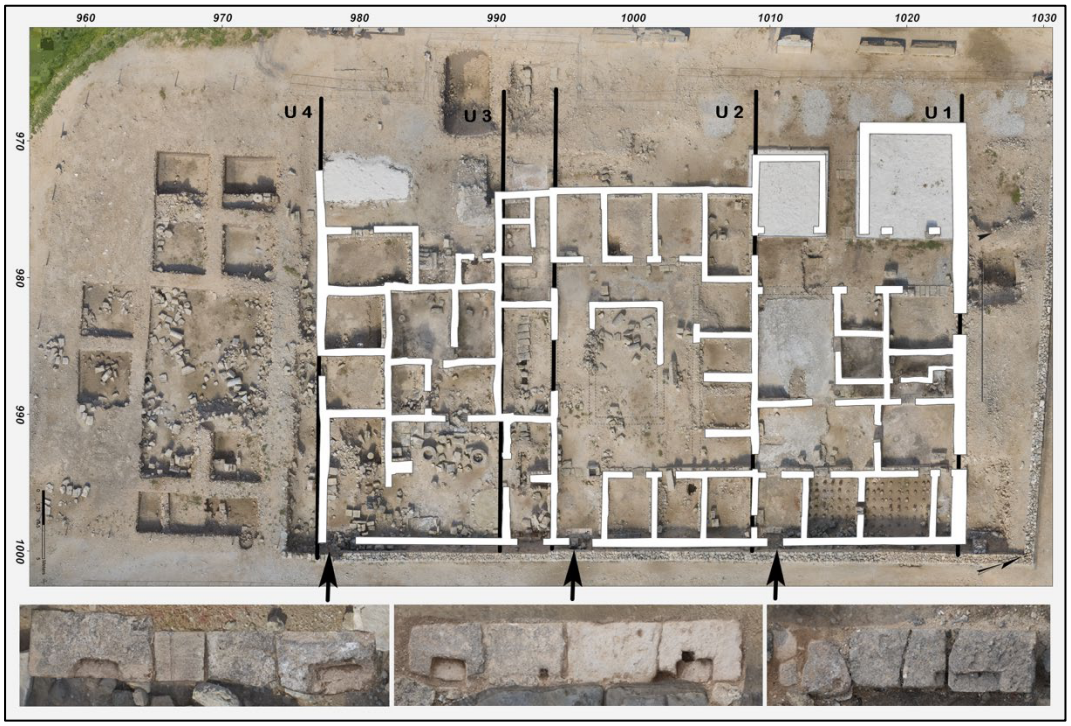

Fig. 3. The House of Orpheus (orthophoto by M. Gładki and plan by J. Kaniszewski, both retrieved from https://houseoforpheusproject.wnks.uw.edu.pl/two_d_documentation/, accessed 1/05/2024, and processed by M. Rekowska).

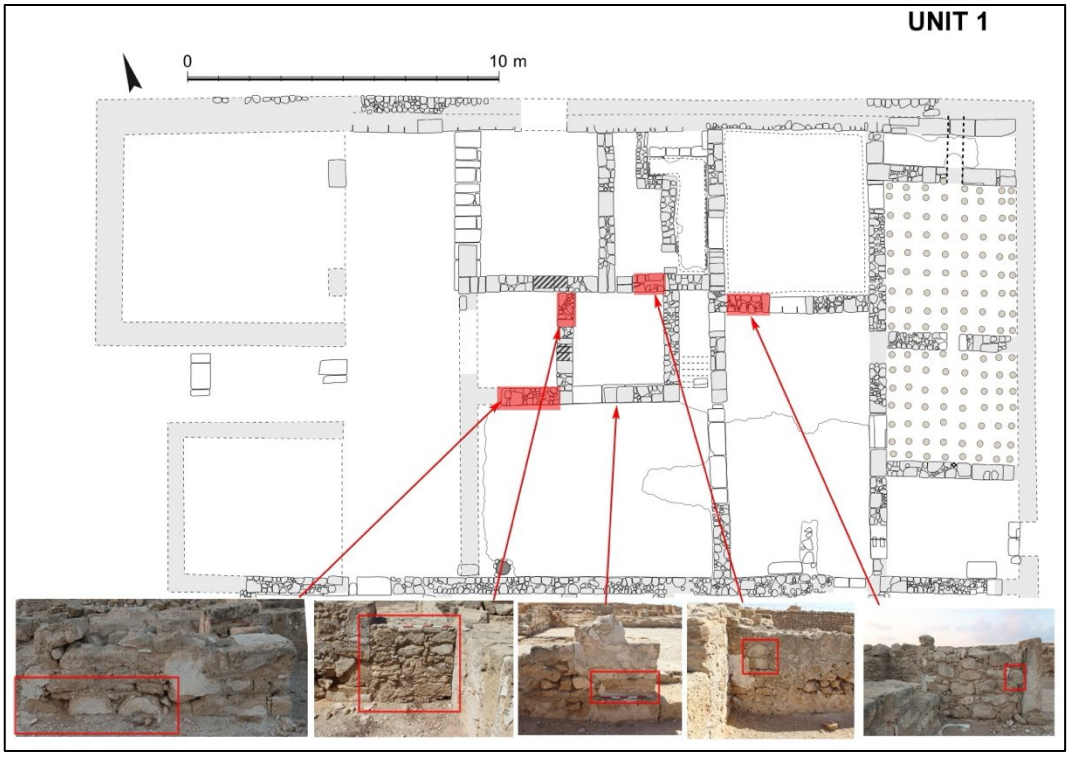

Fig. 4. The House of Orpheus, traces of rebuilding in the ex-unit 1 (plan by J. Kaniszewski, retrieved from https://houseoforpheusproject.wnks.uw.edu.pl/two_d_documentation/, accessed 1/05/2024; photos by M. Rekowska).

physically separated, it communicated with the rest of the house (ex-unit 2) by two narrow passages ensuring maximum privacy for the family in the living quarters. While direct parallels for this configuration are difficult to identify among other known houses, its layout nonetheless reflects the conceptual framework of a Roman-style residence – one that integrated global architectural principles into a distinctly local context. In this sense, the

house represents a glocal expression of domestic architecture, where imperial ideals were reinterpreted through the prism of local materiality, craftsmanship, and spatial tradition.

The new northern wing was divided into two sectors by what seems to have been an open-air courtyard, which not only separated but also visually connected the two functional zones. The western sector was occupied by reception rooms, and the eastern one by a bath complex (Fig. 5). This spatial juxtaposition reflects a deliberate orchestration of architectural experience designed to facilitate both display and sociability.

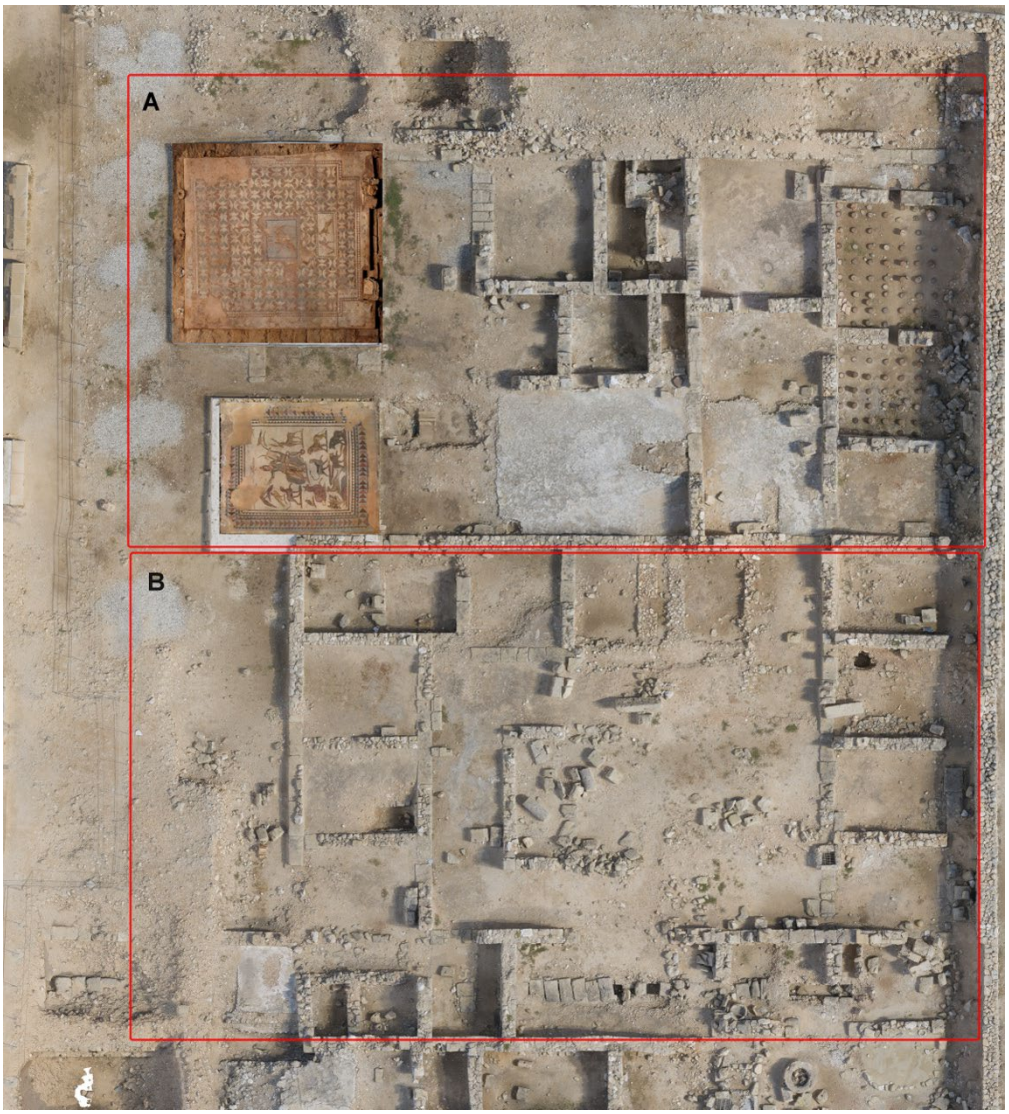

Fig. 5. The House of Orpheus: A – public zone; B – private zone (ortophoto by M. Gładki, photos of mosaics Courtesy of the Getty Conservation Institute, retrieved from https://houseoforpheusproject.wnks.uw.edu.pl/two_d_documentation/, accessed 1/05/2024)

The core of the western sector was formed by two lavishly decorated rooms of unequal size. The larger of the two (45.5 m^2) was paved with a mosaic of a repeating pattern of polychrome peltae covering the entire floor, into which two adjacent figurative panels are set, neither of which is centrally placed. The one representing Hercules and the lion is placed opposite the threshold, to be seen by the guests entering the room. The other, depicting an Amazon standing by her horse, is placed upside-down in relation to the Hercules panel, and is to be viewed from inside the room. The panels are set in such a way as to leave a wide band of peltae on all but the eastern side. Several fresco fragments with elaborate polychrome floral and geometrical designs testify to the decoration of the walls. The hall was accessed through an impressive triple entrance, its central door framed by painted pillars the remains of which are still in place. Taken together, the room's large

size, architectural layout, decorative programme, and the positioning of the panels indicate that it functioned as a triclinium - the main reception and dining hall of the residence[27].

The smaller room (ca. 21.7 m^2) is no less remarkable. It is paved with a mosaic depicting Orpheus and the beasts, framed by a polychrome geometric border. Orpheus in eastern attire, sitting on a rock and playing the cithara, is surrounded by fifteen animals[28]. The most striking feature of the mosaic is an inscription (in large Greek capitals) placed above Orpheus' head. The first few letters are missing but the reading of the inscription poses no problem: it gives a three-part Latin name [Tit]*os* (or [Gai]*os*) *Pinnios Restitutos* followed by the verb *epoiei*. The names are well attested in Roman epigraphy belonging to people of different ranks[29], however the formula consisting of *tria nomina* is rather rarely encountered in Cyprus and seems to indicate that the person in question had a certain social standing, something not associated with mosaic makers. Although the verb used in the inscription usually refers to an artist making a work of art, by this period the meaning had already begun to shift from active to factitive – thus, *Restitutos* must have been the person who commissioned or financed the mosaic.

A large number of fresco fragments found on top of the mosaic, as well as a small section of fresco (with areas of red and ochre-yellow) still adhering to the southern wall show that the room was decorated with intricate geometric and floral designs[30]. The room, even though smaller than the neighbouring *triclinium*, was no less significant. The exquisite mosaic and the inscription with the name of its 'creator' suggest that this space functioned as a kind of audience hall, where the house owner would most likely display his wealth, sophistication, aesthetic sensibility, and erudition to his special guests.

This prestigious suite was directly accessible from the northern street, one of the urban thoroughfares connecting the residential quarter to the harbour – a choice that underscores the owner's social visibility and engagement with the urban environment. Based on the archaeological evidence, we can suggest the circuit followed by a visitor within the house. The entrance led through an anteroom (R 10) with a rectangular niche in the southern wall, perhaps for a statue or a lamp. From here, turning right one could enter the narrow and elongated space on the N-S axis, a kind of ambulatory giving direct access to the reception rooms while also providing light to the room with the Orpheus mosaic. A room (R 7) between the two reception rooms, with an entrance much larger than a simple doorway, might have served as an *exedra*. Finally, through the open courtyard, one could access the baths in the eastern sector of this part of the house (Fig. 6), completing a carefully choreographed route that balanced public display with controlled intimacy.

The baths represent a two-phase structure, initially built in the early Roman period and then rebuilt through the annexation of additional space to the west. Thus, a set of parallel rooms (R 11–R14) was added to the core of the heated rooms (R 16 and R 17), along the eastern street. This modified the baths' size (up to 176m^2), their layout, as well as the circulation route[31]. It should be noted that the baths were built atop pre-existing structures, which influenced their layout. The identification of the individual rooms is based on their layout and distinctive features, such as the heating apparatus, as well as logical deduction (Fig. 7).

The baths were organized around an elongated rectangular hall (R 14) oriented N-S, which presumably functioned both as an *apodyterium* and a *frigidarium* and was likely equipped with a-now-lost built pool in the SW corner, a function consistent with similarly sized bath suites elsewhere in the Roman world, where such multifunctionality was a

[27] Michaelides 1991, 5-7.
[28] Michaelides 1986.
[29] *SEG* 36, 1263bis; Cayla 2018, 370; Donderer 1989, 73; Michaelides 1986, 485–486; Michaelides 2004.
[30] Michaelides 1991, 9.
[31] Rekowska *et al.* 2021b; Rekowska, Michaelides, forthcoming.

pragmatic and spatially efficient solution[32]. This hall also served as a central passage, connecting the rest of the house: the passage to the west led to the courtyard and the reception area beyond, while the southern route provided access to the private quarters. The doorway to the north led to room R 13, through which one could access the *latrinae* (R 12). Another door on the eastern side opened into one of the heated rooms (R 17). The two heated rooms were equipped with underfloor and wall heating, the one on the north, closest to the *praefurnium* being the *caldarium* (R 16), and with the *tepidarium* (R 17) further to the south. It is to be noted that two complementary solutions were used for heating the walls: *cuniculi* (air-conduits, the lower part of which communicated with the hypocaust) and spacer pins for creating the necessary cavity in the walls[33]. This combination demonstrates not only technical ingenuity and local ability to adapt Roman heating practices, tailored to the architectural constraints of the site.

Fig. 6. The House of Orpheus: reception rooms (ortophoto by M. Gładki, photos of mosaics Courtesy of the Getty Conservation Institute, https://houseoforpheusproject.wnks.uw.edu.pl/two_d_documentation/, accessed 1/05/2024; compiled by M. Rekowska).

This bath complex was accessible from both inside and outside the house: an independent entrance from the eastern street through vestibule R 18, as well as the second *apodyterium* (R 19) right next to the street entrance suggest a dual use: private and public. The incorporation of Roman-style baths within a private residence was in itself a potent marker of cultural affiliation and social status, aligning the owner with the broader imperial ideal of cultivated leisure (*otium*). In this light, the mere presence of Roman-style baths in a private residence is an obvious manifestation of global tendencies common to an affluent elite class of a certain social status. In the context of Cyprus and from the

[32] Rekowska *et al.* 2021b, 349.
[33] Rekowska *et al.* 2021b.

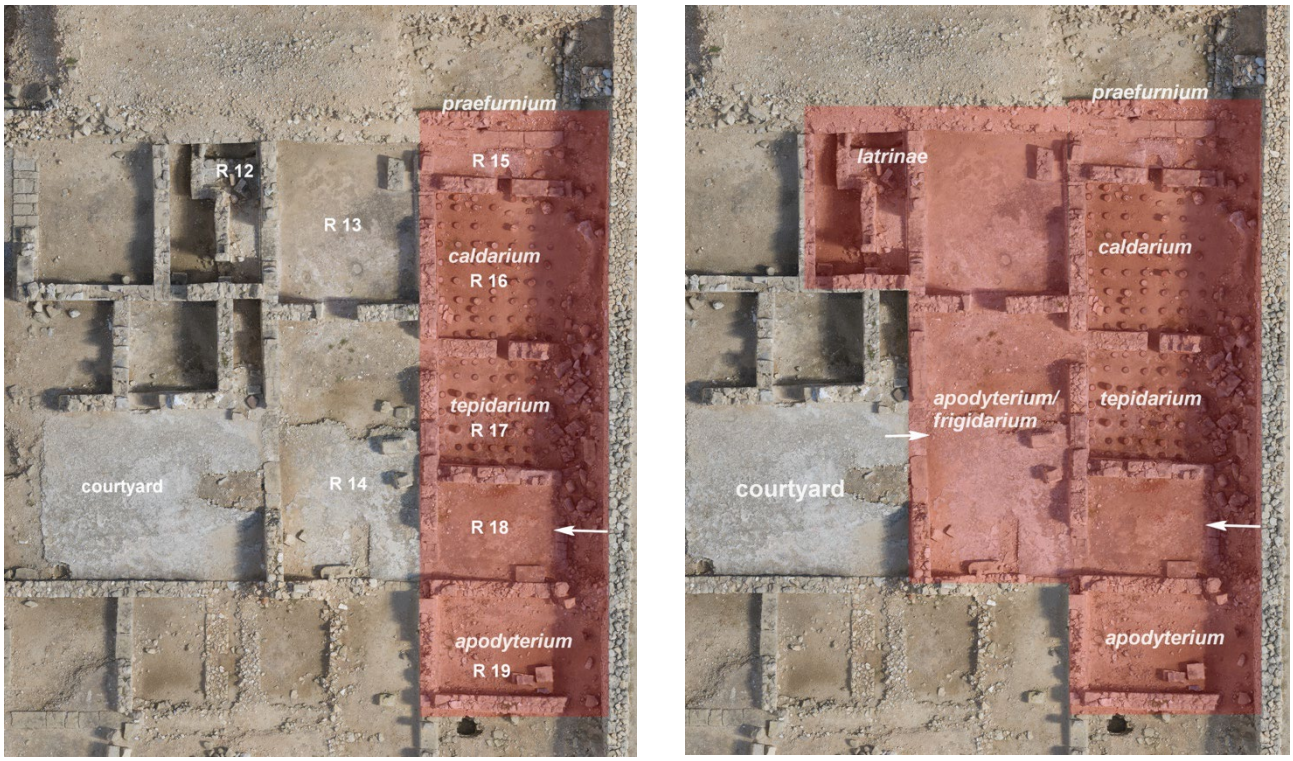

Fig. 7. The House of Orpheus: on the left – baths, the 1st phase; b – baths, the 2nd phase (orthophoto by M. Gładki retrieved from https://houseoforpheusproject.wnks.uw.edu.pl/two_d_documentation/, accessed 1/05/2024, compiled by M. Rekowska).

evidence hitherto available, it is all the more important to point out that the presence of bathing installations is an unusual rather than a common feature of wealthy private homes. It is also necessary to emphasise that what distinguishes some of these baths is their dual function: although intended for private use, they could also be made available to outsiders; and this benevolence might be interpreted as a manifestation of the owners' benevolence or their sense of civic responsibility towards the local community. This functional duality is not unparalleled in Cyprus; it can also be found in the Villa of Theseus at Nea Paphos, and the House of the Gladiators and the Building of Eustolios at Kourion[34]. Finally, the use of spacer-pins, a simple, economical yet efficient heating system, attested only in a few regions of the eastern Mediterranean, particularly Crete and Cilicia, was widely used in Cyprus. While technologically rooted in Roman practice, its selective adoption on the island reveals a distinctive local response to global cultural norms. Thus, the baths of the House of Orpheus, with their dual functionality and innovative engineering, stand as a material manifestation of glocalisation – a dialogue between imperial forms and regional agency, between universal models and local pragmatism.

'Path of prestige' and self-presentation in the House of Orpheus

The spatial organization of the House of Orpheus clearly demonstrates a division into private and public space. The private part (ex-unit 2) provided the family with comfort and intimacy, while the public section (ex-unit 1) was open to guests and designed to receive and impress them. The latter, comprising two mosaic-paved halls, a courtyard and baths, although communicating with the private quarters, could function as a completely autonomous Unit.

A well-thought-out layout ensured effective circulation for both the members of the household and visitors (including *familiares*, *amici*, *clientes*), and allowed to *channel the*

[34] Christodoulou 2014, 88–90, 93–94, 97–98; Daszewski 1976, 194–206.

flow of these categories around the house[35]. The spatial constraints imposed by earlier structures rooted in the Greek architectural tradition stimulated the inventiveness of the builders, who sought to achieve the desired results while adapting Roman spatial principles. Central to this design logic was the regulation of visibility and access within the house. Accessibility to individual rooms was carefully controlled, enabling deliberate management of what could be seen and by whom, whether invited or uninvited guests. This approach closely aligned with the principles governing the layout of the Roman house. Such control was reinforced by a well-planned external communication system and a coherent internal circulation scheme (Fig. 8). The careful monitoring of movement through domestic space served a dual purpose: it ensured privacy and authority for the household while simultaneously enabling curated displays of wealth, status, and cultural affiliation.

Both quarters (living and representative) were connected by two narrow transitional passages – a western one near the reception rooms, and an eastern one close to the baths. This allowed household members to use the baths discreetly, even with official guests elsewhere in the house. At the same time, it allowed the host to communicate directly with the reception rooms. Such subtle architectural mediation underscores the duality of the house: a space of intimacy and spectacle, where everyday life coexisted with moments of ceremonial display.

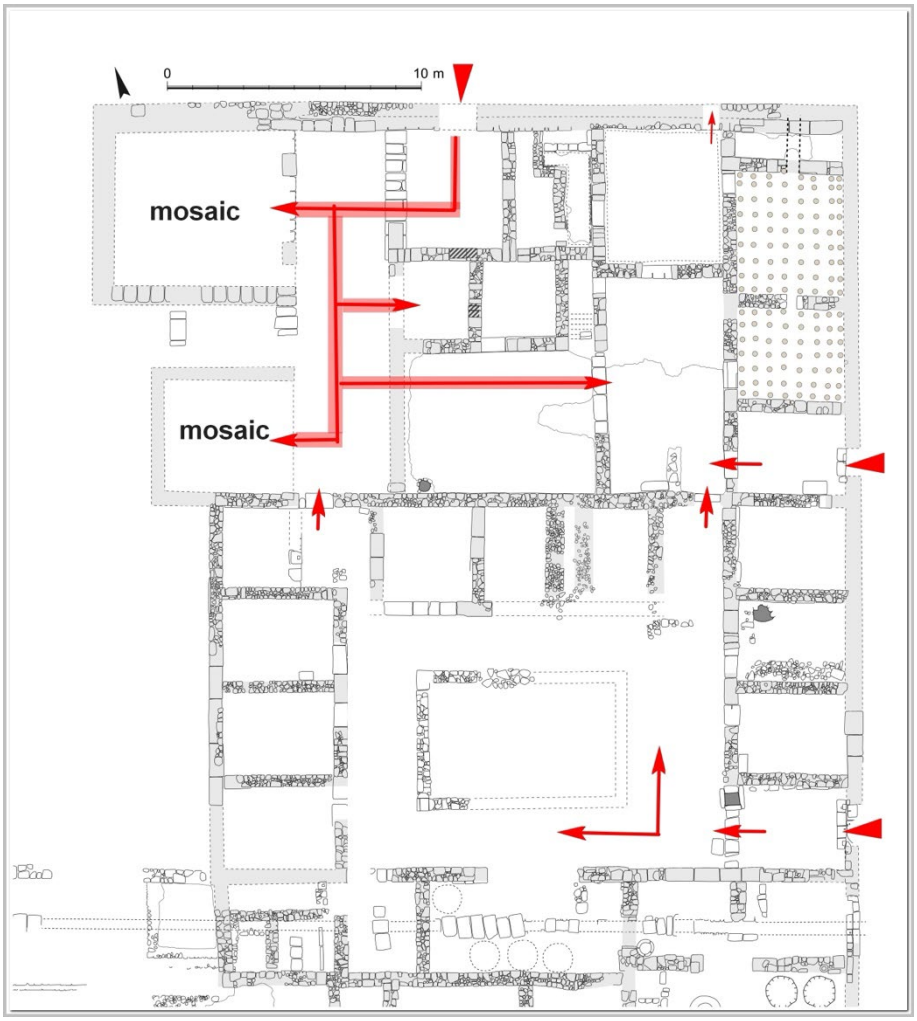

Fig. 8. The House of Orpheus: patterns of circulation (plan by J. Kaniszewski, retrieved from https://houseoforpheusproject.wnks.uw.edu.pl/two_d_documentation/, accessed 1/05/2024, compiled by M. Rekowska).

[35] Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 38.

The prestigious wing had two separate means of access for people from outside, emphasising the hierarchical management of guests. As mentioned above, the northern entrance led to the reception area. From that point onwards, access to other parts of the house depended on the status of the visitors, who were carefully guided to different rooms, according to their rank and relationship with the owner. Some ordinary clients would be received in the *exedra*. Official and esteemed guests could be invited to a banquet in a *triclinium* with a mosaic decorated with representations of an Amazon and Hercules, while the *amici* could share more sophisticated celebrations in the room with the Orpheus mosaic (*oecus*). A similar triple layout defines the reception area in elite houses in Roman North Africa[36], suggesting a shared Mediterranean vocabulary of social spatiality. The architectural and functional sophistication of this prestigious wing can be interpreted as a manifestation of the outstanding social status of the owner of the house, undoubtedly a wealthy individual holding an important position in the local urban community. It also reflects his engagement with Roman values of self-presentation and civic responsibility. His position in the social hierarchy is evidenced by the presence of baths that could, on occasion, be opened to a wider group of users – and making the baths available to the community was certainly a manifestation of his euergetism – a gesture of both moral virtue and political positioning. At the same time, a bath suite influenced by models coming from Italy, might be interpreted as a determinant of the owner's *Romanitas.*

The residence can be considered a model example of how to adapt a house to the needs of the Roman elite, as demonstrated by the way in which the rooms have been arranged and the features included. Ex-unit 1 was redesigned to provide an appropriate setting for the self-presentation of a high-status Roman citizen. Meanwhile, the private section (ex-unit 2) remained largely unchanged to serve the needs of the family. This contrast between traditional Hellenistic domestic architecture and 'new' Roman residential model must be viewed in a 'glocal' context.

M.R., D.M.

Local materials and globalizing trends in Cyprus and Cyrenaica

As demonstrated by the history of the House of Orpheus, under the Roman Empire a class of wealthy owners, including newcomers, began to grow in strength thanks to the economic prosperity of the island. During the Severan era, this social and economic expansion was accompanied by a wide-ranging architectural development. The same trends can be detected in Cyrenaica, but in both regions, the newly created or restored domestic buildings immediately display a substantial difference when compared with large public constructions. In the latter, massively imported marble elements predominated, whereas in the residences of Cyprus and Cyrenaica, peristyle colonnades and other architectural features were made of local stone[37]. The continuity in the materials used was certainly determined by the incidence of the local production circuits. Therefore, local stones can be considered as the real and metaphorical image of places and lives, part of a world that became larger, but which did not undergo a real homologation[38].

However, the continuity in the use of local materials does not appear only in residential architecture, but also in several temples. These buildings show stronger adherence to architectural traditions for planimetric arrangements and elevations, probably as a consequence of commissions from *collegia* and private worshippers instead of Imperial administration. Suffice it to mention the Temple of Zeus at Salamis, with its narrow

[36] Rebuffat 1969, 662 n. 1.
[37] Pensabene, Gasparini 2017, 659–661.
[38] Gasparini 2023a, 213-223.

front square (the so-called Agora)[39]. In its first phase, dated to the second century BCE, and also in the reconstructions of the Imperial age, local calcarenite was continuously used for carving free Corinthian capitals derived from Alexandrian types, that is, with water-leaf volutes that start directly behind the leaves of the lower ring, without the use of caules and calyces (fig. 9). However, the different rendering of the acanthus reveals the phases in which these restorations took place since the sculptural process followed the new tastes shaped on marble artefacts displayed in public monuments such as the sanctuaries, agoras, theatres, and baths at Nea Paphos, Kourion and Salamis[40].

Fig. 9. Salamis, Temple of Zeus: Corinthian Capitals from the front-square (P. Pensabene Archive, photo by P. Pensabene, elaborated by E. Gasparini).

At Cyrene, in the restoration of the *cella* of the Temple of Zeus, dated to the mid-second century CE, marble entablatures were used, with shafts in cipollino marble, and entablatures, capitals, and bases imported from Proconnesos (Fig. 10)[41]. However, in the same city, Corinthian capitals carved from local stone and reproducing Asiatic forms can also be found. These are attested in several buildings to the south of the Agora, dated to between the middle of the second and the beginning of the third century CE, including the Temple of the Octagonal Bases, the Tetrastyle Temple, the Propylaeum of the Agora (Fig. 11), the Temple of the Muses, as well as the front porch of the Prytaneum Fig. 12)[42]. When compared with contemporary Cypriot buildings, these examples attest to a greater

[39] Argout *et al*. 1975, 122–141; Callot 2019, 502–509; Yon 2019, 37–50.
[40] Barker 2016; Christou 2013; Grawehr 2019; Kiessel 2013; Sinos *et al.* 1990 ; Pensabene, Gasparini 2023, 87-102.
[41] Pensabene 2006, 233; Walker, Matthews 1996, 307–16; Gasparini 2023a, 213-233.
[42] Stucchi 1965, 255–277; Stucchi 1967, 55–59; Stucchi, Bacchielli 1983, 76-91, 95–104; Ensoli 2000, 77–78, 86; Luni, Mei 2007, 33–58.

presence of ‘normal’ Corinthian capitals, incorporating all the canonical elements of the vegetal apparatus. The same can be observed in the Houses of Jason Magnus at Cyrene, of Leukaktios at Ptolemais, in the House of the Rhodian Peristyle at Teuchira, and in the House by the Public Baths at Apollonia (Fig. 13)[43]. These choices imply a willingness to speak a common language through which the Roman world recognized and declared itself as a distinct and interconnected entity. However, the use of local stone strongly marks these artefacts as glocal responses to global trends.

Fig. 10. Cyrene, Temple of Zeus: Attic base in Proconnesian marble (P. Pensabene Archive, photo by P. Pensabene, elaborated by E. Gasparini).

As for Cypriot capitals, a recurring carving method has to be stressed, consisting in the assemblage of two superimposed blocks. This working process is attested not only for the large ‘free’ specimens of the Alexandrian tradition, such as the above-mentioned series from the Temple of Zeus at Salamis, or a few pieces from a monumental building connected to the Paphos Agora (Fig. 14), but also for the simplified capitals – the so-called Nabatean – that, for instance, decorated the Temples of Apollo Hylates at Kourion and that of Aphrodite at Amathous, which were likewise carved from two superimposed blocks [44]. The same processing method is also found in smaller capitals of the free Corinthian type, such as those found reused in the post-residence phase in the southern part of the House of Orpheus[45]. The carving method in two blocks is also used for capitals of the simplified type, as those now near the fishpond of the House of Dionysos at Nea Paphos, and in the Apsed Building at Kourion. It is a technique originally used for compensating the poor quality of the stone, as well as the difficulty of extracting large blocks from the quarries. However, in Cyrenaica, the production of capitals in two separate blocks is not attested,

[43] Pensabene, Gasparini 2017, 669–71 and Gasparini 2023a, 213-233 with further bibliography.
[44] Brzozowska 2016, 57, fig. 12; Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2019, 94, fig. 6; Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2020, 49-59; Pensabene, Gasparini 2020, 157–161; Pensabene, Gasparini 2021, 324–326; Gasparini 2025, 311-334.
[45]Although the layout of the southern part of the house is not included in the discussion due to its ongoing study, it should be mentioned that Corinthian capitals were found there. On the basis of these, it is possible to analyse the Corinthian order used in the Severan residence. More on the architectural decoration in the House of Orpheus can be found at: https://houseoforpheusproject.wnks.uw.edu.pl/database/ (accessed, 13.03.2026).

even though the local sandstone is not particularly compact. This indicates that, in regions where the method was used, such as Cyprus, the practice was not solely dictated by technical necessities. Rather, it formed part of the artisan heritage of local workshops, and was applied even to smaller artefacts that would not require the joining of two blocks.

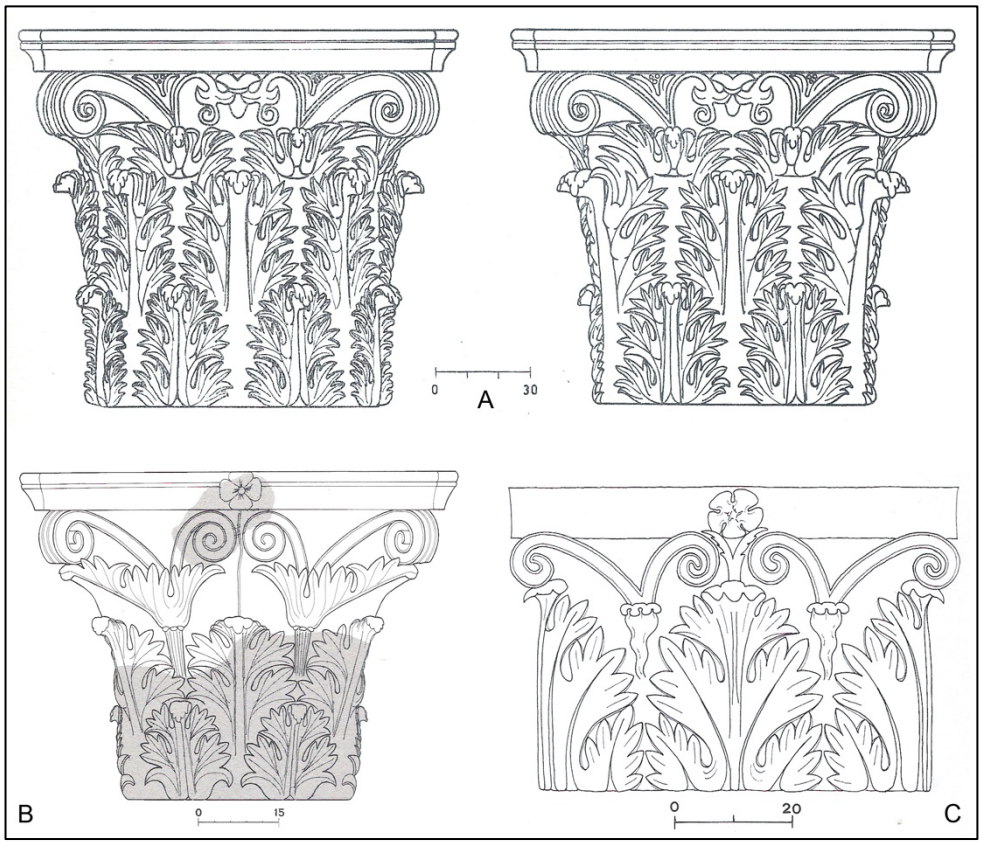

Fig. 11. Cyrene, Corinthian capitals from public buildings: A –Temple of the Octagonal Bases; B – Tetrastyle Temple; C – Propyleum of the Agora (elaborated by E. Gasparini, Courtesy of L'Erma di Bretschneider. A: Stucchi 1965, 261, fig. 169; B, C: Stucchi Bacchielli 1983, 79, fig. 50; 98, fig. 66).

The marbling of public buildings in the main cities of Cyprus had one of its consequences in the renewed diffusion of both 'normal' and 'free' Corinthian capitals: these show the complete rendering of the vegetal apparatus, differently from the simplified examples that predominate at an earlier stage. Even if the acanthus is now replaced by the prickly Asiatic type, the heritage of Hellenism is not forgotten, remaining inscribed in an architectural culture in transit toward new forms.

A clear example of this phenomenon can be found in Nea Paphos. Corinthian capitals from the Hellenistic period are not preserved in the House of Orpheus, perhaps due to the multiple reconstructions it underwent over the centuries. However, some elements dating to the mid-Imperial age belong to the free Corinthian type, inspired by Hellenistic tradition but profoundly transformed, especially in the rendering of the leaves, which are carved according to the standardized forms of marble capitals produced in Asia Minor from the second century CE (Fig. 15)[46]. The same structural transformation of the acanthus appears in a specimen by the Agora of the city, where the fusion of the ogival and triangular shadow-zones in a single large area of an irregularly elliptical or arched shape can be recognized.

P.P., E.G.

[46] Rekowska et al. 2023, cat. nos 58, 60.

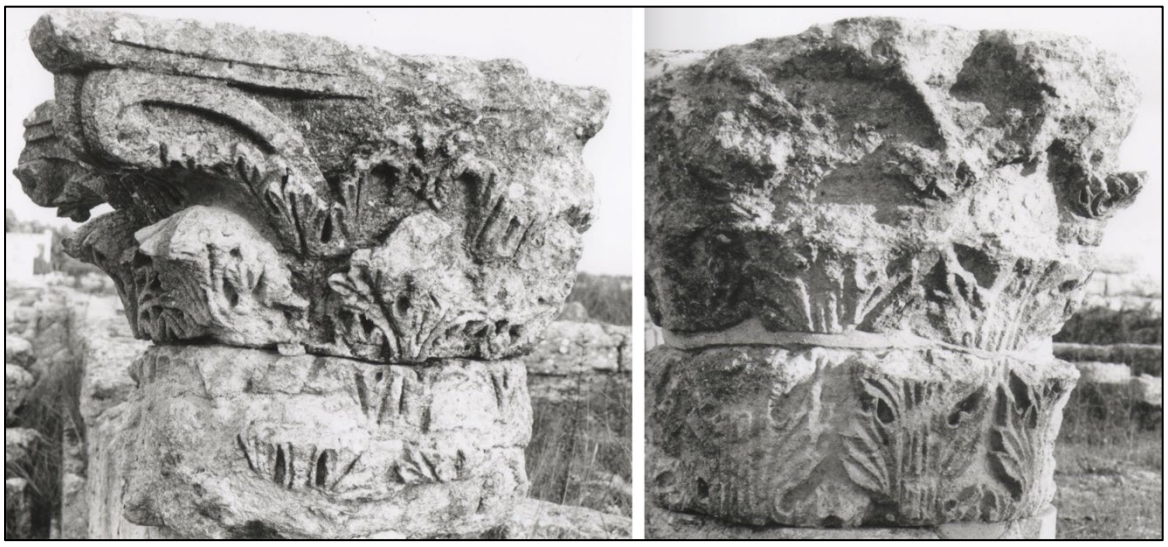

Fig. 12. Cyrene, Corinthian capitals from public buildings: left – Temple of the Muses; right – front porch of Prytaneum (P. Pensabene Archive, photo by P. Pensabene, elaborated by E. Gasparini).

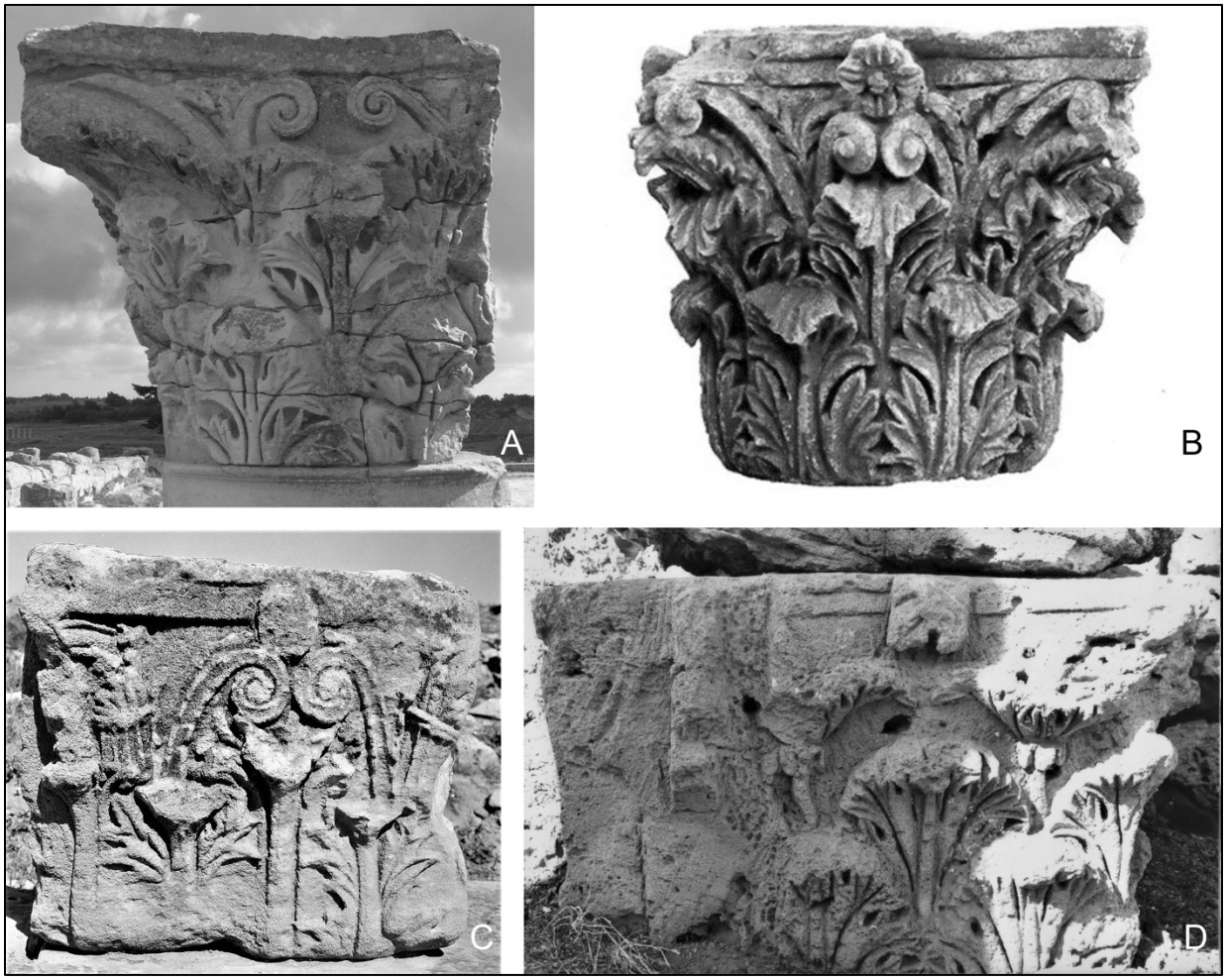

Fig. 13. Cyrenaica, Corinthian capitals from private buildings: A – Cyrene, House of Jason Magnus; B – Ptolemais, House of Leukaktios; C – Teuchira, House of the Rhodian Peristyle; D – Apollonia, House by the Public Baths (retrieved from https://www.archaeopress.com/Archaeopress/download/9781803275512, accessed 10/06/2024, compiled by E. Gasparini. A: photo by E. Gasparini; B: Rekowska 2012: 174, pl. 8.3; C, D: photo by P. Pensabene).

Fig. 14. Nea Paphos, Corinthian capitals from the area of the Agora (P. Pensabene Archive, photo by P. Pensabene, elaborated by E. Gasparini).

Fig. 15. House of Orpheus, Corinthian capitals from the southern sector (3D scanning and processing by M. Gładki https://houseoforpheusproject.wnks.uw.edu.pl/images/d60/ https://houseoforpheusproject.wnks.uw.edu.pl/images/d58/ accessed 16/02/2025, compiled by E. Gasparini).

Conclusion

In the domestic architecture of Roman Cyrenaica and Cyprus, Corinthian capitals seem to hold a symbolic meaning. Whereas some ambiguity and uncertainty always remain when trying to infer the concept of identity, the discussed elements represent a testimony of the mentality and values of those who lived in these provinces and in the cited buildings. In both contexts, a dual and compelling dynamic emerges, combining tradition and innovation. These forces are materially integrated into new elaborations that can be considered as examples of glocalization. Yet, this has to be understood as a tendency, and not as a uniform outcome, as different working processes, forms and styles demonstrate.

In this context, the House of Orpheus offers a particularly eloquent case study of how local traditions and Imperial culture coalesced into a distinctive architectural expression. While the general layout of the residence follows well-established Mediterranean domestic patterns, its adaptation to the urban fabric of Nea Paphos and the incorporation of Roman-style bathing facilities reveal a deliberate engagement with broader cultural models. Yet this was far from mere imitation. The use of locally sourced limestone, the retention of certain Hellenistic spatial conventions, and the careful modulation of representational and private zones attest to a conscious negotiation between imported ideals and local building practices. Such architectural choices, likely influenced by the owner's education, aspirations, and socio-political position within the Paphian elite, exemplify how global

forms were reinterpreted through local sensibilities to produce a uniquely Cypriot expression of Roman domesticity. The House of Orpheus thus stands as a microcosm of glocal negotiation, where global symbols of Roman identity were reinterpreted within a regional architectural language to express a cosmopolitan yet place-bound elite identity.

M.R., D.M., P.P., E.G.

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