

Architecture and Design of Private Space in Classical Sikyon

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The presentation held on May 19 aimed at summarizing the outline and highlight the main aspects of an ongoing dissertation with the topic “Architecture and Design of Private Space in Classical Sikyon”, housed at the University of Crete and supervised primarily by Prof Pavlina Karanastasi from the same institution. The committee consists also of Prof Torsten Mattern from the University of Trier, and Prof Chrysanthos Kanellopoulos from the University of Athens. The proposal was submitted in June 2016 and the thesis is being funded by the Carlsberg Foundation.

The study focuses on the evaluation and interpretation of the recently excavated architectural remains on the plain of the modern city Kiato in northern Peloponnese, which were uncovered during the new highway project “Olympia Odos” (2008-2017), indicating the existence of the Classical city of Sikyon.

Substantial structures of the Classical settlement have been uncovered, more specifically parts of private houses with courtyards, and incorporated domestic workshops, as well as public areas, like cisterns, and, moreover, periboloi and areas connected to the cult. The remains belong to at least two different construction phases, the first one dating back to the 5th c. B.C. and the second one to the Late Classical period. For their comprehensive study many different and significant aspects must be taken into consideration.

From an architectural point of view, the typology and characteristics of the unearthed structures require the detailed description, and interpretation of the architectural finds, in order to understand the size and character of the city. More specifically, the analysis of the rooms and their functions, the relationship between the rooms, the categorization of houses according to types, and consequently, the application of several types or of just one pattern with small variations must be defined. Through their study it will be possible to draw conclusions about the function of the domestic space in Sikyon, the eventual existence of an upper storey and the shape/form of each house during the different construction phases. These conclusions will be assisted significantly by the study of the artefacts recovered from the interior of the rooms, offering us a unique insight into the kinds of activities having taken place in the rooms and into the different ways the household space was organized. By evaluating not only the architecture, but also the pottery and small finds, we will be able to identify patterns in the way that the household space was actually used.

From an infrastructural perspective, the relation between the houses and the city needs to be examined and it is essential to define the connection between this part of the city (the “neighbourhood”) and other neighbourhoods, infrastructural elements of the city as well as the harbour, the acropolis and the contemporary cemeteries. Moreover, it would be important to understand the relationship between the Classical and the Hellenistic city, and, more precisely, to find out what has actually happened to the Classical structures after the translocation of the city on the plateau in the year 303 B.C. Additionally, a significant aim would be to examine the contribution of Sikyon to the Classical domestic architecture and the possibility of influences through the comparison to other well-known contemporary examples, such as Olynthus, Eretria, Athens, Piraeus, as well as to other lesser known houses from the Peloponnese, e.g. from Corinth, Argos or Halieis. The findings of the aforementioned study will allow us in some respect to evaluate the alleged role of Sikyon as a pioneer in art and culture.

Finally, a socio-historical analysis will be greatly beneficial to the cohesiveness of the study; the social status of the house owners, the distribution of space, the gender relations and the eventual seclusion of the women are questions of significant importance that will have to be analysed as well.

Fig. 1: Plan of the houses in Syriona

