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Prothyron from the Villa of Theseus in Nea Paphos, Cyprus

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to present a reconstruction of a monumental gate leading to the Villa of Theseus, a Roman palace in Nea Paphos on Cyprus. During the excavations carried out near the main entrance to the residence, a set of several fragments of architectural decoration was discovered, including pieces of columns and cornices. The analysis of the architectural decoration, relics of the entrance to the palace in situ and analogies from the Roman residences made it possible to propose a reconstruction of the monumental gate leading to the compound entrance complex of the palace. It was probably designed in the form of a wide door preceded by a two-column porch crowned with a triangular pediment with a tympanum: a form that Vitruvius called a *prothyron*.

Key words: Nea Paphos, Villa of Theseus, entrance, *prothyron*

Introduction

I met Professor Jacek Kościuk during my studies at the Faculty of Architecture at Wrocław University of Science and Technology, when he introduced students to the intricacies of computer-aided design programs. We began to work together more closely during my doctoral studies when Professor Kościuk, serving as my supervisor, provided support and guidance. Thanks to his assistance, many hours of joint work, and discussions, I gained valuable experience and skills.

Professor Kościuk not only shared his knowledge in the fields of architecture and modern technologies but also inspiringly guided my research. I am grateful for the support that Professor Kościuk provided me with during my academic journey. His commitment, patience, and professionalism were crucial to my academic development, and his unique sense of humour made our collaboration not only exceptionally instructive but also enjoyable. It is an honour for me to have been able to work with such an outstanding scholar.

Each house needs a gate connecting it with the outside world. In case of an ancient Greco-Roman residence, which not only served as a family home but also performed a public function, the entrance gained an additional meaning serving as a kind of the owner's "show-off" announcing the social and political position of the family.

The excavations conducted in 2008 [1, pp. 286–287, Fig. 3] by the Polish Archaeological Mission of Warsaw University in Nea Paphos on Cyprus¹ in the Late Roman Street between the Villa of Theseus and the House of Aion revealed among others a set of several fragments belong-

¹ From 2008 to 2019 Doctor Henryk Meyza directed the Polish excavations in Maloutena. Presently the Mission is supervised by Professor Ewdoksia Papuci-Władyka. The author is grateful to the Mission's directors for their assistance in conducting architectural research in Maloutena. Since the beginning of the excavations the reports presenting the results have been regularly published among others in Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique (BCH, <https://www.persee.fr/collection/bch> [accessed 15.05.2023]), Annual Reports of the Department of Antiquities (ARDAC, http://www.mcw.gov.cy/mcw/da/da.nsf/DMLanreport_en/DMLanreport_en?OpenDocument [accessed 15.05.2023]) and Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean (<https://pcma.uw.edu.pl/category/publikacje/pam-journal/> [accessed: 15.05.2023]).

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Fig. 1. Map of Nea Paphos (drawing by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka on the basis of [2, p. 162, Fig. 16], [7, p. 37, Fig. 1]; retrieved from Google Earth on 5.10.2014)

II. 1. Mapa Nea Pafos (rys. A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka na podstawie [2, s. 162, Fig. 16], [7, s. 37, Fig. 1]; podkład z Google Earth, 5.10.2014)

ing most probably to a richly designed entrance (Fig. 1). The proximity of the discovery place to the gate of the Villa of Theseus indicates a potential affiliation of these elements to the main entrance to this building.

The paper presents a reconstruction based on the fragments in question of a porch which could have constituted the outer part of the main entrance of the Villa.

The context of the place: the Villa of Theseus and Nea Paphos

Nea Paphos, for many centuries the capital of Hellenistic and Roman Cyprus, was founded in the end of the 4th century BC on the south-western coast of Cyprus (Fig. 1). The city was designed in a very modern way with a Hippodamian orthogonal grid of streets creating *insulae*. Cyprus lost its independence in the beginning of the 3rd century BC, when it was incorporated into the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt with Nea Paphos becoming a capital of the island. The next change occurred in 58 BC, when it became a part of the Roman Empire. This political and historical transition did not undermine the position of Nea Paphos which managed to maintain its status as a capital with the seat of the Island's administrator at least until the middle of the 4th century AD.

The Villa of Theseus, as many other rich Paphian houses, was built in a residential part of Nea Paphos called Maloutena located in the southern part of the city [2, pp. 184–193], [3, pp. 5–23]. This residence however, definitely stood out from the others: it was the biggest building from the Roman times built not only in Nea Paphos, but on the entire island. The size of the Villa as well as its complex layout, rich architectural decoration and

remarkable mosaic floors indicate a unique function of the residence – it was inhabited by an influential member of the provincial elite [4]. According to the older studies it may even served as a seat the Roman governor of Cyprus [5], [6, p. 53], [7, pp. 5, 17, 24, 30], [8, p. 25], while other researchers perceive Villa as a *praetorium* [9].

The Villa was erected in accordance with the cardinal directions regarding the general layout of the city, but its builders ignored the prior Hellenistic street network and *insulae*: the residence was erected above the intersections of several streets. Such a location of the house was possible because in the 2nd century AD this part of the city was destroyed by an earthquake and its reconstruction did not have to follow the original plan as the majority of Paphian buildings had fallen into ruins. As a consequence, the Villa was constructed literally on the remnants of older houses, among others the so-called Hellenistic House built in the *insula* between streets A, A', 9 and 10, which is the best examined house among the buildings on which the Villa was built [10]–[12].

The Villa of Theseus was erected in several phases [7], [8]² (Fig. 2). The first started in the beginning of the 3rd century AD: at that time an oblong palace was designed above the crossroads of streets A and 9 with

² The new chronology of the building phases of the Villa of Theseus was discussed in a paper entitled *Late Roman structures of Nea Paphos (Maloutena) during 3rd and 4th centuries AD, public and private spaces* prepared by H. Meyza, M. Dzwoniarek-Konieczna, B. Lichocka, D. Bagińska, A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka, J. Mikoćka, D. Mroczek, M. Romaniuk and M. Miziołek, and presented by Doctor Henryk Meyza during the conference "Poles in the Near East 2021" in June 2021 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CCUbRcbs_1&t=73s [accessed: 15.05.2023]).

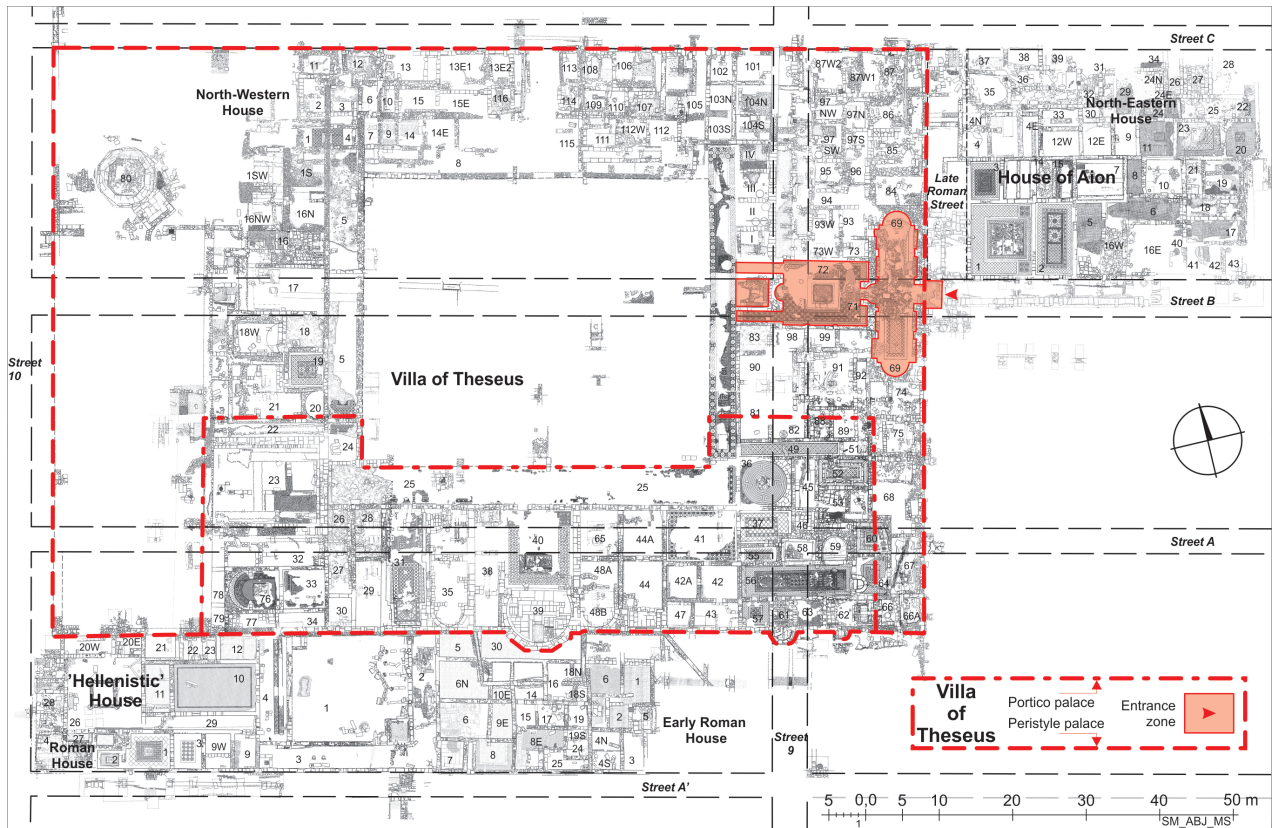


Fig. 2. Plan of the Villa of Theseus with a marked entrance zone (source: PCMA archives)

II. 2. Plan Willi Tezeusza z zaznaczoną strefą wejściową (źródło: archiwa PCMA)

its monumental façade with a great portico facing north. The second phase of the Villa construction took place in the 4th century when the rectangle portico-palace was transformed into the southern wing of the great peristyle-palace with three new wings erected on the west, north and east sides of an enormous courtyard. This new enlarged Villa bears traces of all the typical attributes of a public residence of a Roman Emperor's official representative or a member of a local elite and therefore is identified as a *villa publica* or a *palatium* [5], [6, p. 53], [7, pp. 5, 17, 24, 30], [8, p. 25].

The eastern wing of the enlarged Villa of Theseus closed street B since the residence covered the intersection of streets 9 and B (Figs. 1, 2). The latter was one of the most important in that part of the city as it connected the residential Maloutena region in the west with the Paphian harbour on the east. The Villa's eastern wing created most probably a monumental closing of street B with the main gate of the palace being a spatial dominant. It seems reasonable to assume that this entrance should have been equipped with some architectural decoration, since it served as one of the most important public zones of the residence where, as mentioned above, the owner of the Villa, most probably a Paphian elite representative of a high-rank, could have demonstrated his social and political status via architectural means [13, pp. 47, 57].

Entrance zone of the Villa of Theseus

The main gate of the Villa of Theseus was planned on the axis of street B in the central part of the palace's eastern wing. The entrance zone was designed across the whole width of the wing, behind which a great peristyle stretched. As mentioned above, the entry sector served as a public space, where the numerous clientele of the Villa's owner waited for permission to step into the palace [14, pp. 90–92].

The residence's entrance zone was designed as a set of compartments playing different roles and placed one after another en suite with an east–west axis (Figs. 3, 4). From the side of the street, the entrance was highlighted most probably by a porch, which is the main topic of this paper, discussed in detail below. After crossing the gate, the visitor entered the *vestibule* (no. 69), which was designed as an elongated room with shorter sides terminated by two apses. The axis of the *vestibule* runs north–south, i.e., crosswise to the extended axis of street B coinciding with the main axis of the whole entrance zone. The presence of benches proves that the room served as a waiting area for the guests before they were admitted to the following parts of the entrance. The *vestibule* was connected with three further rooms. The main one (Nos. 71, 72) placed on the east–west axis of the entrance zone constituted a crucial element of every Roman residence: an *atrium* with four columns supporting a roof with a *compluvium* from which

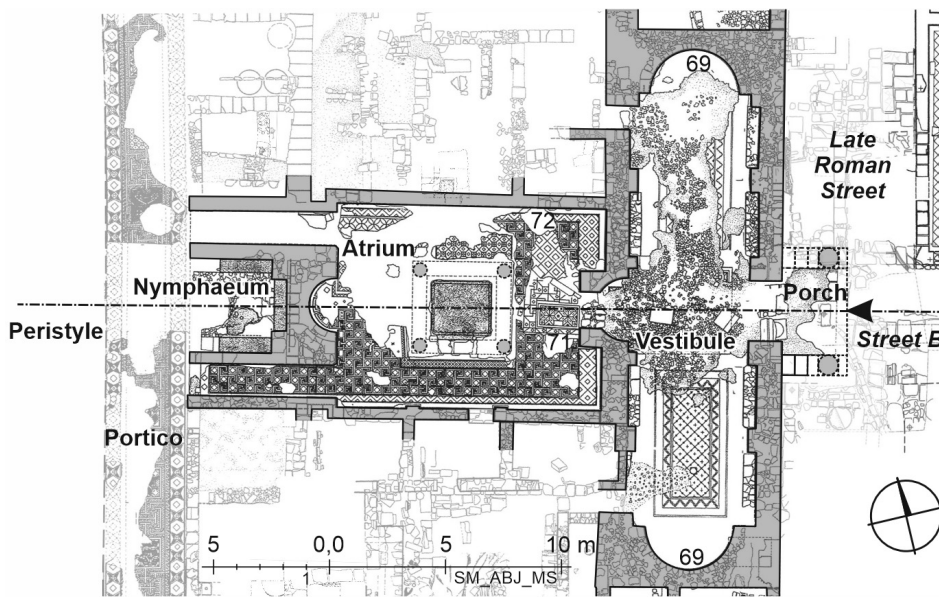


Fig. 3. Entrance zone of the Villa of Theseus (drawing by S. Medeksza, source: PCMA archives) with reconstructed *prothyron* (drawing by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka)

II. 3. Strefa wejściowa Willi Tezeusza (rysunek S. Medeksza, źródło: archiwa PCMA) z zrekonstruowanym *prothyronem* (rys. A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka)



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

II. 4. Strefa wejściowa Willi Tezeusza (fot. M. Jawornicki)

water was led to an *impluvium* [13, pp. 18–19]. The other two rooms (Nos. 91 and 93) connected with the *vestibule* were designed on both sides of the *atrium*. Most probably they served the Villa's guards who checked the incomers. The complex entrance zone was completed with a kind of a *nymphaeum* placed on the opposite side of the *atrium* to the *vestibule*, behind which the already mentioned grand peristyle was located [7, pp. 37, 41, 42, 44, 62, 63], [8, pp. 35, 36]. Clients proceeded further through the eastern and then southern porticos to rooms 39–40, which constituted the main reception hall on an axis perpendicular to the entrance.

Similarly to the whole Villa of Theseus, its entrance zone was preserved only to the level of the lower layers of blocks in the walls including splendid mosaic floors which became a kind of hallmark of the Paphian residences. The columns from the *atrium* lost the upper parts of their shafts together with the capitals. Some traces of nu-

merous small apses and niches in the walls, where most probably statues originally stood, suggest that the Villa's entrance zone was richly equipped with sculptures³.

Such a state of preservation hinders creating a complete reconstruction of the Villa's entrance. However, the thickness of the walls up to 1 m, much greater than the walls of the rooms surrounding the entry sector, indicates that it was elevated in relation to the adjacent parts of the palace. Presumably it was to create a significant landmark closing the view of street B and highlighting the façade of the official palace of the local elite representative. The main gate of the Villa of Theseus constituted the central point of that elevation and unquestionably required an appropriate architectural frame.

³ Selected literature concerning Paphian sculptures is provided in the bibliography published in [15, pp. 131–138].

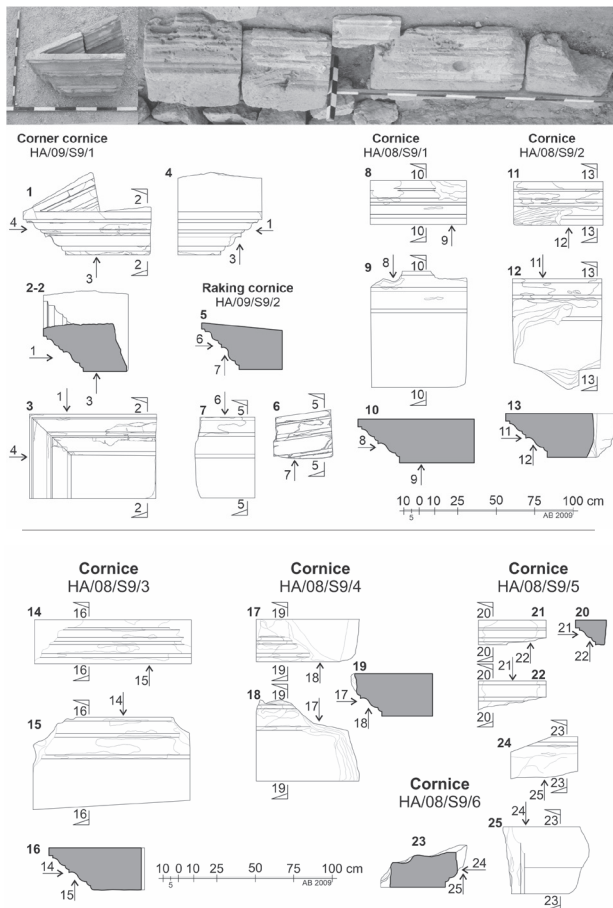


Fig. 5, 6. Fragments of the triangle pediment from the Villa of Theseus (drawing by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka, source: PCMA archives)

Il. 5, 6. Fragmenty trójkątnego naczółka z Willi Tezeusza (rys. A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka, źródło: archiwa PCMA)

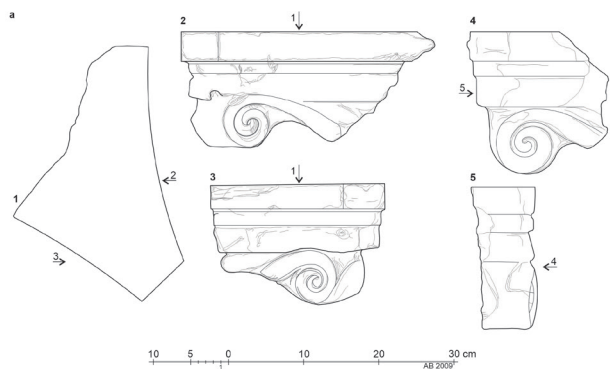


Fig. 7. Pieces of architectural decoration from the Villa of Theseus: a) Fragments of Corinthian capitals; b) Shaft of columns (6, 7) and a corner cornice (8) (drawing and photo by author, source: PCMA archives)

Il. 7. Detal architektoniczny z Willi Tezeusza: a) Fragmenty głowic korynckich; b) Trzony kolumn (6, 7) i narożnikowy gzyms (8) (rys. i fot. A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka, źródło: archiwa PCMA)

Remnants of the main gate of the Villa of Theseus

The position of the main gate leading to the Villa of Theseus in its final phase, i.e., the peristyle-palace, leaves no doubt: it was designed exactly at the axis of street B running from the harbour of Nea Paphos to Maloutena (Figs. 3, 4). The gate was placed in the middle of the eastern elevation, obviously in the area of the entrance zone elevated in relation to the surrounding parts of the Villa. The opening of the gate was 2.65 m wide; its height remains unknown due to the poor condition of the existing walls. There are neither preserved traces of any architectural features of that gate, e.g., a portal, nor any remnants of a door which most probably was wooden and therefore had little chance of being preserved.

The entrance from the street side was preceded by a rectangular podium presently preserved only fragmentarily in the lower layers. Its width, 3.8 m, seems correct and complete, as there are two side edges preserved, but its depth, 2.1 m, remains indeterminate as its outer part is completely destroyed, similarly to its upper surface. The southern edge was limited by a row of flat plain stone slabs 71 cm wide. Only two western slabs placed directly next to the outer eastern wall of the Villa have been preserved (Figs. 3, 4). As the northern side of the platform has retained a straight edge, similarly to the southern one, it can be assumed that there was also a row of now unpreserved stone slabs.

During the excavations in the Late Roman Street, which runs from north to south between the outer eastern wall of the Villa of Theseus and the House of Aion (Figs. 3, 4), a set of fragments of architectural decoration was found in the vicinity of the palace main gate [1, pp. 286, 287, Fig. 3] (Figs. 5, 7). It consisted of eight fragments of a stone triangular pediment. Five elements belonged originally to the highest level of the entablature: the cornice which was 28 cm high, 55 cm deep and protruded 26 cm in front of the face of the entablature lower part. The mouldings of the cornice consisted of (from the top): a *corona*, a bevelled *ovolo*, a *cyma recta*, an *ovolo*, a bevelled *ovolo*, a *cyma recta*, an *ovolo* and another *corona*. There was also a complex block from a triangular pediment combining a corner between two perpendicular horizontal cornices similar to those discussed above and a fragment of a raking cornice whose sloping mouldings matched the profiles of the horizontal cornices. One piece constitutes a fragment of the raking cornice with an oblique profile similar to the one from the raking cornice described above.

The condition of the cornice blocks varies depending on the element, i.e. the corner cornice is in an excellent state including preserved outer layer of whitewash; the raking cornice and the horizontal cornices are damaged to varying degrees: some are only slightly eroded on the surface, others have lost significant parts of their original volume, including major fragments of their mouldings.

A few fragments of columns excavated earlier in the area in question matched the pieces of the pediment and the entablature described above: two small fragments of the corner volutes originally belonging to Corinthian capitals and two parts of plain column shafts (1. diameter: 53 cm, height: 119 cm; 2. diameter: 60 cm, height: 129 cm) (Fig. 7).

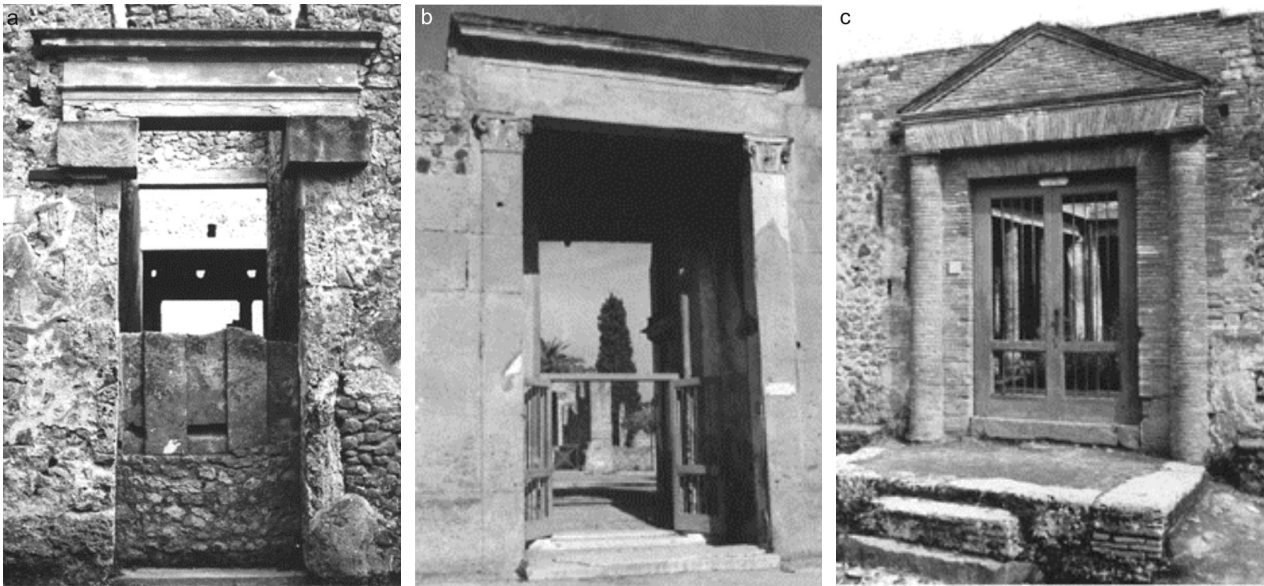


Fig. 8. Pompeian gates: a) a gate from the 2nd century BC; b) a gate from the House of the Faun from the 2nd century BC; c) a gate from the House of Julia Felix from the second half of the 1st century BC (source: [16, p. 294, Figs. 670–672])

Il. 8. Bramy pompejańskie: a) brama z II w. p.n.e.; b) brama z Domu Fauna z II w. p.n.e.; c) brama z Domu Julii Felix z drugiej połowy I w. p.n.e. (źródło: [16, s. 294, il. 670–672])

All these elements were made of a local stone calcarenite and covered with a thin layer of whitewash with no signs of polychrome.

Gates of Roman residences

The most common form of a gate leading to a Roman house was a simple opening with a single-leaf door in the case of a more slender outline or a double-leaf door for wider openings. The exact proportions varied considerably, which can be observed in Pompeian examples (Fig. 8). The architectural embellishment of such gates was also very diverse: from simple lintels, through surface decoration composed of pilasters or half-columns topped with entablatures or pediments to extensive portals [16, pp. 294–296, Figs. 670–678].

Another form of a gate known from the Roman architecture was a *prothyron* mentioned in the Vitruvian treatise [17, VI.7.5] and described in detail by Peter Grossmann:

“A *prothyron* is an open porch supported by two columns in front of the outer doors of a church or other building. It is thus a diminutive propylaeum or a portico reduced to a single bay (...). The roof, which is fixed to the building wall, maybe a small dome or a saddleback, and the columns are connected to each other and the wall by architraves or arches. The *prothyron* is generally raised at least one step from the ground” [18].

The preserved examples of *prothyra* from private houses are rare, but there are some traces of one, e.g., in Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria, where many houses from the Roman times were found [19, p. 33]. Such a form was more

commonly used in the late antique, Byzantine and Medieval times, predominantly often in churches [18].

There were certainly much more imposing forms of residence’s entrances. Gates leading to Balkan palaces such as Porta Aurea in the palace of Diocletian in Split [20, pp. 166–167], [21, pp. 41–42], [22, p. 167], [23] (Fig. 9a) or the West Gate of the Felix Romuliana Palace in Gamzigrad [24, pp. 143–146], [25, p. 78, Fig. 60], [26, pp. 70, 85, Fig. 11], [21, p. 42] (Fig. 9b) constitute excellent examples of richly decorated and imposingly designed entries placed in the centre of the whole façade. The centre of their composition was a monumental door framed with ornamented jambs and a lintel above which, on the upper floor, a multi-span arcade was designed. The arcades most probably covered niches where some kind of sculptural decoration was placed presumably revealing the residence owner’s social status.

The remains of architectural decoration from such a façade were found in the House of Aion also built in Maloutena, east of the Villa of Theseus [27], [3, pp. 127–129, Figs 6, 7], [28, pp. 691–692], [29, pp. 172–173, Fig.10]. Their presence in one of the smallest Paphian houses proves that such imposing gate embellishment was applied not only in great imperial palaces, but also in a rather modest, in terms of its size, building whose function is still discussed: whether it was a private residence of a provincial family aspiring to the Roman upper-class or a public building which served as a seat of some kind of religious society⁴.

⁴ Selected literature concerning the ongoing discussion about the nature of the House of Aion: [30]–[32], [6, pp. 13–77], [33]–[42].

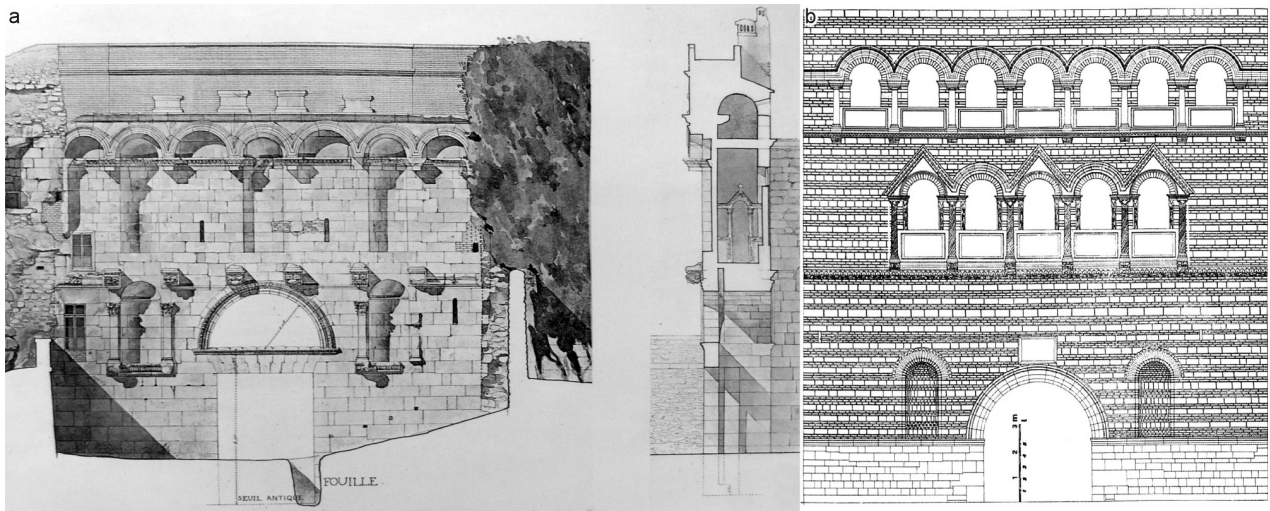


Fig. 9. a) Porta Aurea at the palace of Diocletian in Split (source: [47]);
b) West Gate of the Felix Romuliana Palace in Gamzigrad (source: [23, p. 197, Fig. 8])

Il. 9. a) Porta Aurea z Pałacu Dioklecjana w Splicie (źródło: [47]);
b) Zachodnia Brama z Pałacu *Felix Romuliana* Pałacu w Gamzigradzie (źródło: [23, s. 197, il. 8])

Reconstruction of the main gate of the Villa of Theseus

As described above, the form of a gate of a Roman residence might have been very diverse: from quite simple designs, like a door framed with a plain portal, to very richly decorated and complex spatial arrangements like great gates of the imperial palaces.

The number of elements that formed the basis for the reconstruction of the Villa of Theseus main gate is limited which precludes establishing unambiguously all its architectural features. The only definite assumptions that can be made on the basis of preserved remains are:

1. The door was preceded by a rectangular platform elevated by a few to several centimetres in relation to the level of street B and limited on the sides by the rows of stone slabs, presumably stylobates supporting the porch.
2. This platform constituted a podium inside a kind of a porch.
3. The porch was flanked by Corinthian columns.
4. The supports were topped with a triangle pediment.

Basing on the above data and assumptions, different reconstructions can be proposed. However, it seems reasonable to assume that the simplest and most obvious design is at the same time the most probable one: the platform in front of the gate could have been a podium inside a two-column porch protruding from the face of the Villa's outer wall and crowned with a triangle pediment. If we compare such a form with the types of Roman gates listed above, the description of a *prothyron* matches perfectly the form that could have formed the main gate of the Villa of Theseus. All the features of a *prothyron* spec-

ified by Grossmann can be traced in the preserved remnants described above and moreover this definition gives us a hint regarding the missing parts of the porch and its construction, e.g., its roof or the connection between the porch and the Villa's wall.

As mentioned above, the upper surface and the full outline of the podium are unknown, but it seems reasonable to assume that it could have been paved with, e.g., stone slabs and extended further than the preserved fragments of underlay.

The size of the Villa's *prothyron* can be established on the basis of the analysis of the columns fragments. The corner volutes originally belonging to Corinthian capitals and the two parts of the plain column shafts revealed the order and the scale of the missing supports: Corinthian columns measuring around 5.8 m if we assume that they were designed according to a classical canon known among others from the Vitruvian treatise [17, p. 4.1.1].

The intercolumniation is obviously unknown, as there are no traces of the columns' position due to the destruction of the podium. The span of porch can only be reconstructed theoretically and in great approximation on the basis of one aesthetic assumption and two construction premises.

The visual aspect requires leaving some free space between the door opening and the *prothyron*, i.e., the latter should not have obscured the door, but it should have enclosed it creating a proper architectural frame.

The first technical issue concerns the foundations of the *prothyron*. There are no signs of columns' bases on the podium which also appears too delicate to support a massive *prothyron*. It seems much more probable that it was placed outside the podium and stood at the stone stylobates, of which the southern one is partially preserved.

The second technical issue is related to the dependence between the type of the structural element that was resting on the columns, its span (i.e., the inter-

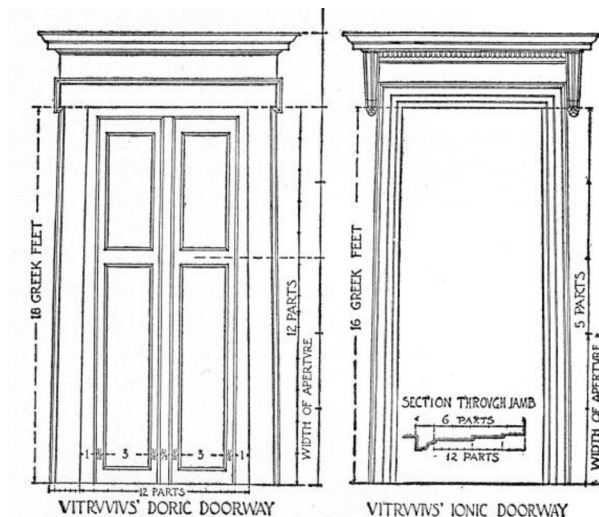


Fig. 10. Door composed according to the Vitruvian principles (source: [17])

Il. 10. Drzwi zgodne z zasadami Witruwiańskimi (źródło: [17])

columniation), and the material from which it was made. According to the quoted definition of a *prothyron*, the columns were usually “connected to each other and the wall by architraves or arches” [18]. No fragments of any stone architrave, voussoirs or an arch as well as wooden beams that could be associated with the reconstructed porch were found. The studies of other Paphian residences indicate that the use of wooden architraves was natural and logical in the area rich in good quality construction timber, and therefore it seems common [43, pp. 64–69], [10, pp. 104–108, Figs. 6, 7], [11]. The assumption that the architraves in the porch were made of wood seems convincing and it also explains the lack of preserved elements. Firstly, ancient wood in the Cypriot climate would not have lasted till present times (with very rare exceptions). Secondly, it was a very valuable material that was immediately retrieved from rubble of the buildings destroyed, e.g., by an earthquake. So, after the destruction or gradual decline of the Villa of Theseus, which occurred after its final expansion, all the valuable and obtainable elements were removed from the debris and probably re-used in subsequent edifices [44, p. 24].

If we assume that the columns of the *prothyron* were covered with architraves made of wooden beams, their size and length depended on two factors: firstly the spacing of the columns and secondly the weight resting on them. These two factors are also interdependent: the longer the intercolumniation, the greater the burden of the pediment and roof lying on the architraves.

As mentioned above, the size of the podium is unknown (except for the preserved fragment 3.8 m × 2.1 m), but we do know the width of the opening of the gate: 2.65 m. Based on this, the approximate height of the door can be estimated on the basis of, e.g., the Vitruvian treatise or existing analogies.

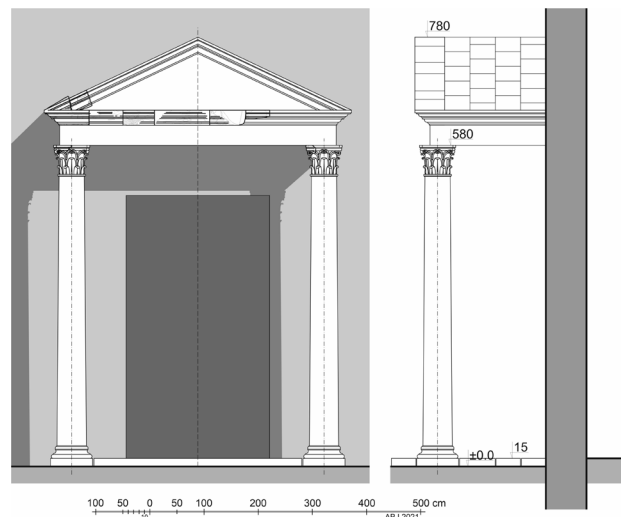


Fig. 11. Reconstruction of the *prothyron* from the main gate of the Villa of Theseus (drawing by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka)

Il. 11. Rekonstrukcja *prothyronu* głównej bramy Willi Tezeusza (rys. A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka)

Vitruvius indicated two principles concerning the proportion of the door. Firstly, the height of the door depended on the height of the room to which the door led. Unfortunately, due to the poor state of preservation, the height of the vestibule is unknown and therefore cannot serve as a reference point for the door height. Secondly, regardless of the preferred order, Doric or Ionic, if the door is designed in accordance with another Vitruvian principle, the opening would have been of slender proportions: 1 to 2.23 for the Doric order or 1 to 2.58 for the Ionic one [17, pp. IV.6.3–6, VI.3.6] (Fig. 10). If we apply those proportions to the main gate of the Villa of Theseus, we receive an opening 5.9 m or 6.83 m high for the Doric or the Ionic order respectively – both values much bigger than the height of the Corinthian columns from the *prothyron*. Such a composition seems highly unlikely and indirectly proves that the architectural rules from the Vitruvian treatise do not apply to all cases. They may reflect an ideal design of buildings of various types, but in reality not every aspect of existing architecture followed those rules. This phenomenon is confirmed by the previously mentioned examples of doors from the houses in Pompeii. In the author’s opinion, the selective application of classical principles is particularly visible in the provinces located on the fringes of the Roman Empire, where, e.g., columns were designed in accordance with classical canon, but the whole structure they were part of did not follow those rules. Examples of such an approach are present even among the Paphian residence – for instance the porticoes of the already mentioned Hellenistic House [10, p. 100, Fig. 5], [11].

In the case of the reconstruction of the Villa main door, one Pompeian example seems to provide a good analogy despite some major differences. The door framed with half-columns topped with a triangle pediment from the House of Julia Felix [16, p. 294, Fig. 672] (Fig. 8c) forms a design similar to the general idea of a *prothyron*. It is

worth emphasizing that in that case it is not a spatial structure, but rather a surface decoration. The material constitutes a significant difference between the Pompeian and Paphian gates: the first one is made of brick; the second one was carved out of stone. Applying a flat brick arch instead of an architrave constitutes another difference.

The proportions of the gate opening from the House of Julia Felix do not seem to fit to those from the Villa of Theseus gate: the Pompeian opening is too wide. However, the concept of half-columns crowned with a pediment framing the door may give us a general hint about this architectural composition: the frame should encircle the opening with a certain distance to ensure an appropriate aesthetic effect. With this approach the combination of one known and one estimated value, the width of the opening and the height of the columns, may lead to a theoretical reconstruction of the gate's form and proportions. In order to ensure the appropriate distance between the columns and the gate opening, their intercolumniation measures 4.65 m leaving around 70 cm between the supports and the edge of the door. Such a span of the reconstructed *prothyron* matches perfectly the position of the preserved fragment of the stylobate on the south side of the podium, where the columns could have stood.

The bottom surface of the architrave constitutes the upper edge of the frame enclosing the door. The epistyle rests on the columns, so its position above the podium equals the columns height: 5.8 m. To ensure the appropriate distance between the architrave and the top edge of the gate opening, the latter is 4.85 m above the podium floor. There are no traces of any jamb, so it is not presented in the reconstruction, but it seems highly probable that the gate was equipped with some kind of architectural decoration, like, e.g., profiled jambs and a lintel. The distance between the gate and the *prothyron* provides enough space for such an embellishment. No remnants of the door have survived, so its form, material and type are unknown. Judging by the size of the gate opening, a double-leaf door seems more probable.

Having established the estimated size and proportions of the door, let us return to the reconstruction of the *prothyron*. The length of the wooden architrave resting on the supports is approximately determined at 5.10 m. Its cross-section depended on the weight of the triangle pediment and roof which rested on the beam. The classical entablature was composed of three elements: an architrave, a frieze and a cornice. However, there are many known examples of ancient buildings, most often secular in nature, in which the superstructure had no frieze [45, pp. 12, 13], [46, p. 25, Pl. VIII A]. As no fragments that could be associated with the frieze of the *prothyron* were found, we assumed that the triangle pediment was intentionally designed in a simplified manner without this central section. Resignation from the frieze gives a significant reduction of the weight resting on the architrave and translates into its smaller cross-section. It means the possibility of using smaller beams which can be considered an advantageous solution in terms of an easier acquisition of the necessary wood (a log with a smaller diameter means a smaller tree)

and reduction in the cost. So, the architrave would have been loaded only with the pediment and the roof covering the *prothyron*, if it was present.

The fragments of the horizontal and raking cornices permit recreating the form of the triangle pediment. The raking cornice turned out to be crucial for the reconstruction of the pediment as it allowed us to establish the angle between the ranking cornice and the entablature at 25°. Knowing the intercolumniation and the angle of the raking cornice, we could recreate the entire pediment: it was almost 5.7 m wide and 1.65 m high (Fig. 11).

A triangle surface of the wall called a *tympanum* was placed in the centre of the pediment between its cornices. Usually *tympana* were decorated with sculptural embellishment. Unfortunately, in the case of the Villa's *prothyron*, no pieces that could be unambiguously identified as fragments of a *tympanum* were found. It could have also been plain, without any decoration, although it seems likely that the main entrance to the biggest Roman residence on Cyprus should have been emphasised not only by architectural means, e.g., a *prothyron*, but also by appropriate sculptural decoration, the more so that the dimensions of the *tympanum* in question were imposing: it was almost 5 m wide and nearly 1.2 m high.

The only missing information of the *prothyron* reconstruction is its depth. It could have been designed as an almost surface decoration with columns standing very close to the wall. This type of practically surface embellishment, although not exactly a *prothyron*, can be observed in the case of, e.g., the gate leading to the Temple of Romulus in Rome, presently the basilica of Santi Cosma e Damiano, where free standing columns topped with an entablature stand very close to the temple walls. The *prothyron* of the Villa of Theseus could have also protruded in front of the face of the wall, creating a covered porch protecting the guests waiting to enter the palace against sun and rain. The porch from the Modena Cathedral constitutes a good example of such a design, typical for the later *prothyra* from the medieval churches.

The second variant of the *prothyron* depth seems much more likely as the preserved fragments of the podium in front of the Villa of Theseus are 2.1 m deep. It forms sufficient space to create a classic *prothyron* with a roof sheltering from rain and sun. As written above, the poor state of the preserved remnants of the podium prevents establishing the position of the columns, so the reconstructed distance between them and the wall, which defines the porch depth, is purely hypothetical. Since no information is available that could be helpful in estimating this value, 2 m distance was arbitrarily taken.

As Peter Grossmann wrote, the *prothyra* could have been roofed or covered with a small dome [18]. Since some pieces of a raking cornice were found, the first variant with a gable roof of a shape corresponding to the form of the triangle pediment seems convincing. The roof could have been made of wooden roof trusses covered with plain stone slabs or ceramic roof tiles. Lack of their remains is not surprising as the wooden beams, like in the case of architraves and slabs or tiles were often re-used in the subsequent buildings.

The architraves linking the columns and walls were anchored in the latter stiffening the entire *prothyron*. The blocks of cornice rested on the epistyles. The horizontal cornices placed on the architraves fixed to the walls most probably served as the basis for the triangle roof trusses covered with stone slabs, shown in the hypothetical reconstruction (Fig. 11), or tiles.

After establishing all the obtainable information about the *prothyron* form and size, the cross-section of its architrave could be calculated on the basis of the weight of the triangle pediment, horizontal transverse cornices and roof. Mr Mieczysław Michiewicz, a civil engineer who calculated all these factors, checked several types of loadings (transverse, axial, torsional) and stress (compressive stress, shear stress, bending) and established the optimal cross-section of a beam made of cedar wood, as such trees were common on Cyprus in antiquity. The calculations proved that a cedar beam of a minimal cross-section of 28 × 37 cm could have borne the weight of the stone entablature and triangle pediment as well as a wooden roof and its covering.

The cross-section of the architrave was the last missing piece of information needed for the theoretical reconstruction of the porch sheltering the main gate of the Villa of Theseus. If the assumptions presented above are correct, it would have taken the form of a *prothyron* equipped with a Corinthian columns crowned with wooden architraves supporting a triangle pediment and wooden roof covered with stone slabs (Fig. 11) or ceramic tiles.

Summary and conclusions

In every Roman house serving not only as a private home for a family, but also as a public residence, the official areas designed for performing the formal duties and activities of the owner required appropriate architectural layout and decoration underlining the political and social position of the master of the house. Beside the main courtyard and the audience hall, the entry sector was one of the most important spaces [14], [13, pp. 1–6, 18, 19, 28, 29, 36–39, 58–60, 77]. The entrance zone served not only as a point of entry, where the guards decided whether to let potential visitors in or to keep them outside, but it was also a kind

of the owner's "show-off" on the threshold of the house manifesting the position or the aspirations of the owner and his family via architectural and sometimes also sculptural means. The location of the residence main gate was also crucial in terms of at least two aspects: its functionality and prestige. Both required placing the entrance in the most significant possible position in the context of the residence's surroundings: e.g., next to the main street or a public square [12, pp. 44, 45]. Firstly such a location facilitated access to a residence serving as a seat of the official, and secondly it accentuated the importance and status of its owner who could have afforded to build his residence in the most prestigious and therefore expensive area of the city.

All the listed features of the entrance zone and the main gate of a Roman residence were present in the Villa of Theseus, a residence in a type of a *villa publica* or a *palatium* [5], [6, pp. 53], [7, pp. 5, 17, 24, 30], [8, p. 25]. Its complex entry sector was composed of several rooms including a *vestibule* and an *atrium* leading to a grand peristyle. Such a monumental design constitutes a classical arrangement evidently imitating the architecture of the Roman imperial palaces. The expanded Villa closed one of the Nea Paphos main roads, street B, which connected the residential area Maloutena with the Paphian harbour. Designing Villa on the axis of the street accentuated both, the street and the palace: the first one by its closure with one of the most significant city buildings, and the second one by placing it at the end of one of the main city roads. Such a position of the Villa was strengthened by its main gate situated along the axis of the street [7, pp. 5, 6, 24–26, 34, 41], [8, p. 35]. The monumental entrance, higher than the adjacent parts of the palace, constituted a strong architectural accent dominating both the palace of a rather horizontal arrangement, and the street surrounded by lower buildings. The main gate formed the central point of the composition and required an appropriate architectural frame. The remains of the gate discovered *in situ* as well as the fragments found in the vicinity of the entrance zone suggest that the gate could have been originally preceded by a monumental porch in the form of a Corinthian *prothyron*.

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Streszczenie

Prothyron z Willi Tezeusza w Nea Paphos na Cyprze

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie rekonstrukcji monumentalnej bramy prowadzącej do Willi Tezeusza, rzymskiego pałacu znajdującego się w Nea Pafos na Cyprze. Podczas wykopalisk prowadzonych w pobliżu głównego wejścia do rezydencji odkryto zestaw fragmentów detalu architektonicznego, m.in. kolumn oraz gzymsu. Analiza dekoracji architektonicznej, relikwów wejścia do pałacu in situ oraz analogicznych rozwiązań stosowanych w rezydencjach rzymskich pozwoliła zaproponować rekonstrukcję monumentalnej bramy prowadzącej do złożonego kompleksu wejściowego pałacu. Prawdopodobnie zaprojektowano ją w postaci szerokich drzwi poprzedzonych dwukolumnowym portykiem zwieńczonym trójkątnym naczółkiem z tympanonem. Jest to forma, którą Witruwiusz nazwał *prothyron*.

Słowa kluczowe: Nea Pafos, Willa Tezeusza, wejście, *prothyron*