

TRANSFORMATION OF HOUSE-TYOLOGY IN THE ANCIENT PRIENE CITY

Neslihan Kulözü*, Melda Açmaz*

**Faculty of Architecture, Middle East Technical University, Turkey
nkulozu@arch.metu.edu.tr, meldaacmaz@arch.metu.edu.tr*

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influences of social and cultural diversities in the Hellenic, Roman and Byzantium eras on the designs of urban planning and house architecture in Priene. Geographical and economical conditions, social classes, gender and power-relations, religious groups, customs, technology and culture are the chief elements in shaping Priene, which was established as a city of democracy, based on the equality principle together with the help of the grid-iron system, in the south of Mykale Mountain in 350 BC. Besides, gender and power-relations like male and female or master and slave shaped the designs of houses and administrative buildings in Priene. House planning with prostas that was derived from megaron, which played a great role in developing house architecture, was the basic element in constructing house planning in Priene and with the alternation of this house planning due to the Hellenistic influence, house planning with peristyle appeared. This shift from megaron to peristyle is best observed in Priene out of the Hellenic cities in the West Anatolia. The grid-iron system in Priene that was once designed to consist of one type of house with equal sizes for all citizens in the 4th century BC is investigated with the help of data from the relevant literature. Secondly, the most recent urban plan of Priene is compared with the grid-iron plan of Priene, which was developed with computer software. Consequently, this study uncovers the alternations in the urban and house planning in Priene due to social changes in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantium eras. The effects of the house of Priene can be observed also on the Ottoman era architecture.

Keywords: Ancient Priene City, Grid-iron System, House Architecture, Prostas, Peristyle

INTRODUCTION

Priene, which is the early settlement of the Ionian Union was founded with the help of Athena and with the idea, which all people are equal in the community,

was re-founded in the south side of the Mykale (Samsun) Mountain at the end of the 4th BC. Priene, which was the one of the most brilliant art and cultural center at that time, was one of the noblest examples of the Hippodamus grid-iron system in history of the art (Akurgal, 1998, 341-342). In the city of Priene, which still shows the characteristics of the grid-iron system in the Hellenistic cities, the right of equal life to all citizens was provided. Firstly, it was thought that all citizens should have a house, which is built in the equal block of house (Hoepfner, 1996, 158). Limiting law were made by the community council about buy and sell for providing security. Also against the increasing population, by encouraging to emigration, building new houses was prevented (Abbasoğlu, 1996, 396). In the west Anatolian cities the relation between public space-buildings and houses districts were constructed with a dispersed system. With the democratic period in the Priene city, which was established with grid-iron system, public space-buildings showed balanced development in the center of city and with the whole city.

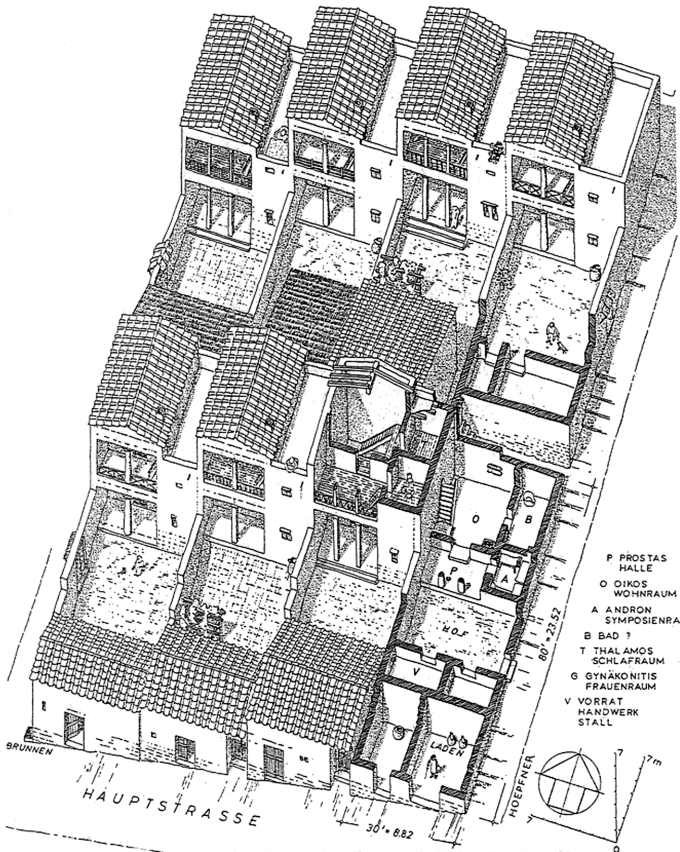


Figure 1. Concept of The Eight Houses in A Building Lot

In Priene, the houses had a beauty plan styles, which has suitable characteristics to social structure of the Hellenistic era. In Priene city, which was integrated with lines and proportions building lots and houses were designed equal size and eight houses were designed in each building lots by encouraging equality idea called as *isonomia* (Figure 1) (Hoepfner, 1996, 159).

In the city building lots which had eight houses were organized into 48.8 meter - 36.5 meter. With constructed grid-iron system the principle of equality in social structure was emphasized. The grid-iron system provided the fairest system which responded the needs of the period in the plans of Hellenistic city. One of the most important characteristic of Priene, which can be seen in today, is that it was designed by using the enterprise of mass housing and cooperative during the construction period of the houses building lots.

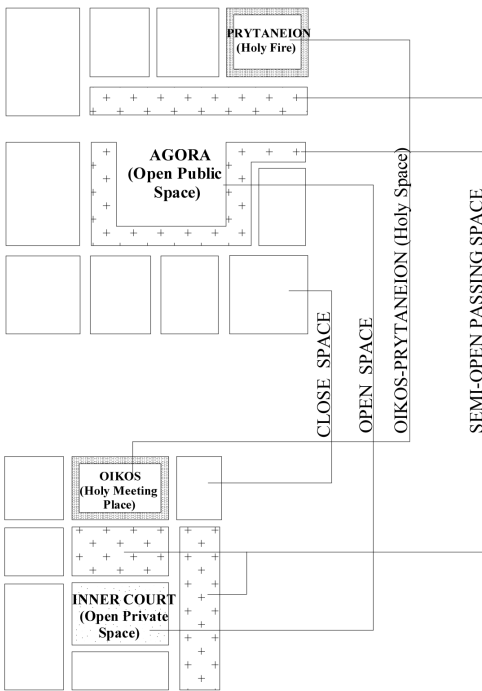


Figure 2. Comparison of The Urban Areas and House According to Concept of Open, Semi-open and Close Space (Bozkurt, 2002)

The most important characteristic of the Ancient city was the inner court of the city, which was defined as *Agora*. *Agora* was the open space of economic structure and social relation areas of the citizens. According to open-close space rela-

tion of the house of Priene; open spaces were as inner courts, semi-open spaces were as entrance hall, prostas, peristyle and close spaces were as rooms. The relations between open-close space relations in house can be transferred to the relations within the whole city. According to this definition agora and streets can be seemed as open space, stoas can be seemed as semi-open space and the building lots of the grid-iron system can be seemed as close area (Figure 2) (Bozkurt, 2002, 85-89).

Prostas type house plan, which became widespread in Ionian region of the Anatolia after the 7th century BC, was used in Priene. The prostas house, a long tradition, finds its origin in the megaron model with its front gallery and hearth, which was perpetuated from Geometric to the Mycenaean period. Megaron was seen the second stage of Troia in Anatolia in Bronze Age. Although in the Hellenistic age the house plan of Priene looked like Megaron, through the long period, the dominant house plan of Priene can be defined as prostas type house plan (Figure 3) (Abbasoğlu, 1996, 396-397).

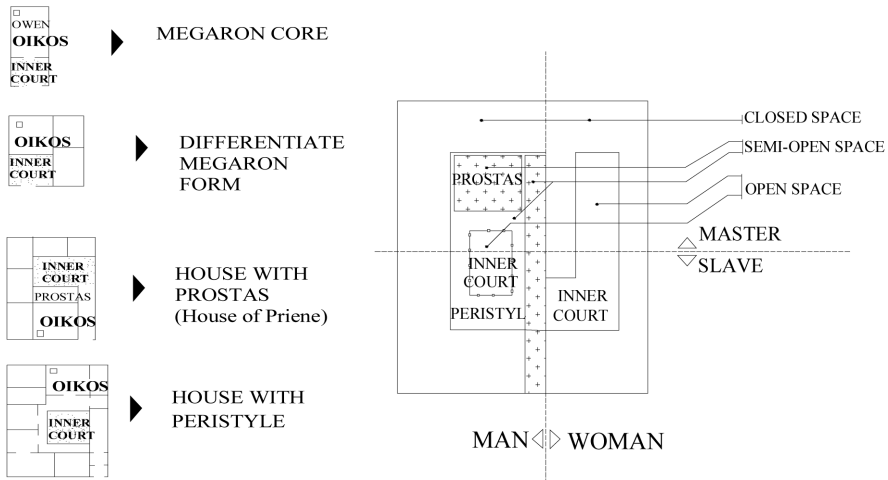


Figure 3. Transformation of The Megaron Core with Time (Bozkurt, 2002)

Figure 4. Social Classifications and Concept of Open-Close Space Motif of House 33 in Priene

An integral part of the Mediterranean house, the open courtyard usually served to unite the different parts of the house and also used its entrance. In the ground floor of the Priene houses were Prostas, Oikos, which were connected with prostas, and the rooms, which opened to prostas and oikos. Oikos, as a term formed from core and family words, is defined as main space and it is the sym-

bol of the patriarchal. It was also identified to the family member and their properties. In the house of Priene beside the oikos, where daily house-works took place as masterroom, there was an andron, which was usually a small room. It was first appeared in the 7th century BC, especially in the house of wealthy, and became widespread during the 5th century BC (Hoepfner, 1996, 158). Androns, which were the third focus of the Hellen culture after theater and gymnasium, was the attraction of the life style of Hellen, following changes in the family structure, which had started with the more pompous world of men. According to the socio-economic conditions in 4th century BC and especially because andron became as a part of the whole house in the city, there were changes in family structure, who gathered around the sacred fire of oikos, and house plans. Oikos was designated to the more modest women folk who could thus spend the day away from the more pompous world of men. This room was called the gynaikonitis (Abbasoğlu, 1996, 398). The strangers could not enter the gynaikonitis and oikos so luxury festivals and big parties could not be organized there (Hoepfner, 1996, 156).

Windows in the Priene house were another evidence of the effects of gender and power-relations like male and female or master and slave on the concepts of Priene house and urban spaces. Priene house either did not have windows or had windows on first floor or in very high level of wall. Light and fresh air needed by rooms came from the inner court (open at the top). There was a necessity for windows in house, opened at the top and showing that rooms needed to be hided from streets. This kind of approach was also seen in the house as women and men had separate room. Women, who did not have freedom as men, had roles in society, training children and serving to householders. Inner court, which was a social relation space as Agora, was the separation and association space for gender and power-relations like male and female or master and slave. Inner court and south rooms of the house, which was owned by the landlords and the servants, were separated from north rooms of the house, which was owned by the landlords. Whereas this situation seemed to be a twin house, like second phase of the house 33, by forming different inner courts for women and men, in two-storied house, separation took place in the floors like top floor for women, and house was separated on east-west direction (Figure 4).

In the Hellenistic period public space structures were more emphasized than private ones according to the autonomy consciousness and desire to the representation of citizens. But this hierarchical system could not continue in the Rome Empire period (Kolb, 1996, 150-151). People in that period had to manage big empire so they gave an importance to management more than scientific activities. Thus, ancient cities could not develop in the Roman period as much as the Hellenistic period. With this chancing period some house in Priene re-designed as house with peristyle. Since only the rich could afford to live in them, the peristyle

houses show us that the principle of equal sharing of the Classical period houses had gone awry. Only wealthy citizens could lived in house with peristyle, which were identified with the Hellenistic period, and the size of the peristyle would be proportional to the magnificence of the building. As for the many little houses without peristyle of the Hellenistic period, which have survived to this day, they must have been inhabited by members of the poorer classes which emerged as the principles of equality degenerated. Principles of integrity and equity of area, which worked due to restrictive rules in classical period, lost their vigor with time (Abbasoğlu, 1996, 399-402).

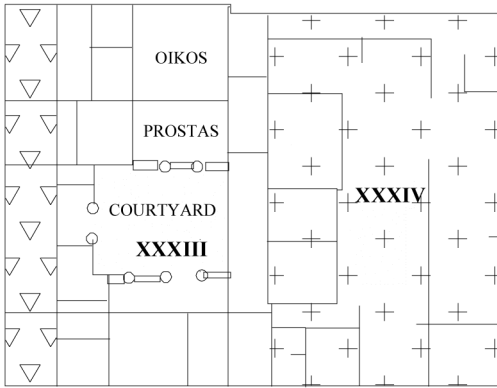


Figure 5. The Plan of House 33 in The Second Phase as A Peristyle House

Development of house from megaron to prostas and then from prostas to peristyle, unique to Anatolia can be observed best in Priene (Abbasoğlu, 1996, 395). The most clear example of this development was the house 33, in which the northern megaron/oikos is linked to the prostas through an open courtyard and the main entrance of the house also faces the courtyard, in the Theater Street, where the richest citizens of Priene lived. The street, which was hatched with triangle style, which was 3.50 meters in size and was at the left side of the house, was added to house 33 and house 34, which was hatched with plus style, which was at the right side of the house 33, was also added to house 33 in the early Roma period. Firstly, the house 33 was designed as a prostas, to be later turned into a peristyle type of building, its open courtyard surrounded on four sides by colonnaded galleries, and the whole complex surrounding two courtyards one with and the other without a peristyle. The addition of street and house 34, house 33 became the biggest house in the city (Figure 5). House 33 and the same houses in the city were owned by the richest citizens and they reflected their owners' honor and respectfulness. In the other houses in the Theater Street small businessmen, shop owners, merchants and civil servant lived.

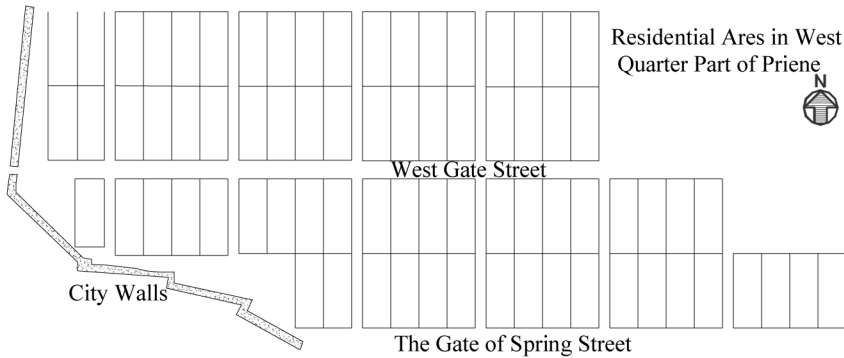


Figure 6. Grid-iron System Before The Transformation of Houses

Although when the city was established with the principles of democracy and social justice, and houses were built in the same size in each building lot, with the effect of the changing in social structure, the number of houses in building lots somewhere increased and somewhere decreased. Equality praised very often as *isonomia* did not have the tenor of justice or of making the poor wealthy, but had the only aim of strengthening the polis-community everywhere. So with the changing of socioeconomic structure rich citizens' houses were widened through the region near the city wall, where poor citizens lived, so the houses in west part of the Priene, where poor citizens lived, became smaller and the small houses became nearer to the city wall. The houses near the city center and the number of houses in building lot decreased so the size of the houses became larger (Figure 7) (Aktüre, 2003, 223).

There were eight houses in the block, as the other building lots, labeled as part 1 in Figure 7, which is the north of the Theater Street, after the transformations the

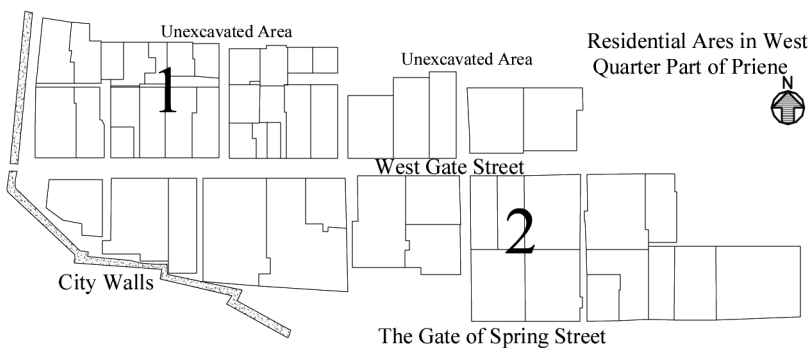


Figure 7. Grid-iron System After Deformation of Houses

number of the houses in the same block increased to ten (Figure 8). In figure 8 the lines showed the house boundary and dead-end street after transformations. Transformation of the houses as they became smaller and bigger according to the location of the city showed that while firstly the city was organized, the houses in the same size did not distribute the really democratic way. It is seen that the houses near the city center were distributed to the citizens whose social status higher than the others and the houses near the city wall distributed to the citizens whose social status lower. In time with the lower status Priene citizens became poorer, so they had to rent sometimes one or two rooms and sometimes whole ground floor of their houses completely. As some houses got smaller, as some houses got wider, this situation affected the size and form of the houses and also the street system therefore somewhere in the city dead-end streets were observed (Figure 7).

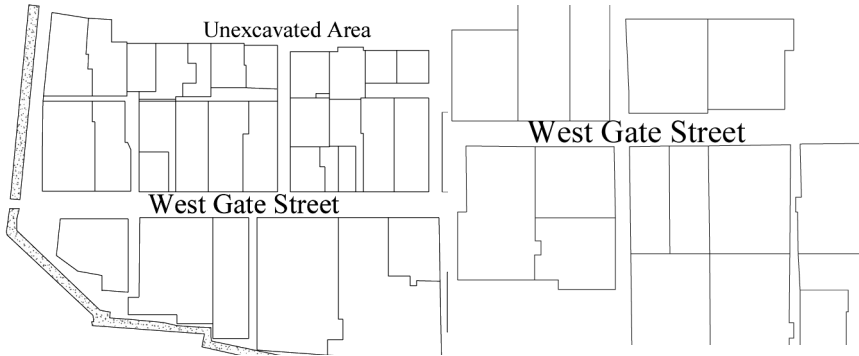


Figure 8. The Transformation of Houses in The North of The West Gate Street, which is Showed in Figure 7 as “1”

Figure 9. The transformation of houses which is showed in Figure 7 as “2”.

There were eight houses in equal building lots, as the other building lots, labeled as part 2 in Figure 6, which is the north of the Theater Street, after the transformations, the number of the houses in the same block decreased to 5 (Figure 9). In Figure 9, the lines showed the house boundary and dead-end street after transformations.

With the peristyle court became common in the east regions of Anatolia in the 2nd century AD and it became to be seen as a sign of richness in 4th century and 5th century AD, the column lines as the main structure of the Hellenistic Architecture participated in house architecture (Mitchell, 1996, 201). Whereas public architecture retrogressed and transformed in Priene, 4th century and 5th century AD with the richest citizens investments to their houses, showy houses became the wide-

spread component of West Anatolia. Pressure of necessities of the city live, deep economic differences between the poor-rich citizens and social-political competition were main characteristic powers of the transformation of houses. House was no more a necessity as functional; it became a tool which reflected their pleasure and respectfulness for rich minority of the population. The big private houses showed that in late Roma period rich citizens had spend their money to their houses instead of public building and changed roles of superior citizens (Mitchell, 1996, 198-205).

After the Roma era Byzantines also lived in the houses built in the Ancient era (Tanyeli, 1996, 411). Although after the Byzantium era Priene was not used as a settlement area, the effects of the houses in Priene, which was shaped with the effects of social structure, geographical and climatic conditions, can be seen by comparing with the houses of Seljuk and Ottoman periods (Bozkurt, 2002, 91). As a result of Turkmen societies settled to Anatolia in 11th century and 12th century AD, cellular settlement structure, where religious structures were developed in center and neighborhoods were developed around them organically, appeared in Seljuk period. Cellular design, which established the origin of Turkish house structure of Anatolia in the Ottoman period, continued and in time it became more complex than the early time. But the characteristics of society like being extrovert, women-men differentiation, patriarchy and privacy of family had an effect to shape open-close space relations in the Hellenistic and Roma periods. These characteristics of society also continued throughout the Seljuk and Ottoman periods (Bozkurt, 2002, 95).

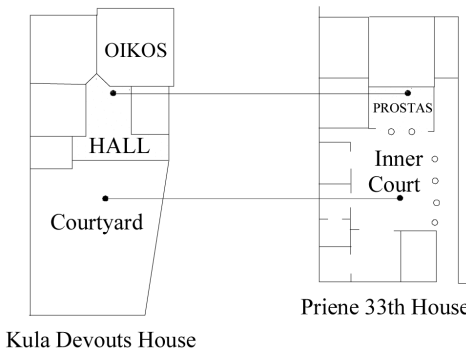


Figure 10. Comparison of Priene and Ottoman Houses (Bozkurt, 2002)

Although different house typologies that occurred in the Ottoman house architecture depend on nature, culture and climate, there were characteristic plan types. The most important part of these plans was hall, which showed the functional

similarities with inner court of Priene houses (Bozkurt, 2002, 95). When plans of Priene-Ottoman houses and inner court-hall were investigated, some similarities can be seen in regards to the open- close spaces relations (Figure 9). These similarities are:

- Similar to inner court, all rooms were opened to hall,
- Inner court in Priene houses and hall in Ottoman houses were hidden from streets,
- In Priene houses' entries with a transition hall could be passed to inner court and distribution to rooms happened from there. Ottoman houses inner court, which was also used for transition, could be looked like as Priene houses' transition hall (Bozkurt, 2002, 97).

In conclusion, house planning with *prostas* that was derived from *megaron*, which played a great role in developing house architecture, was the basic element in constructing house planning in Priene and with the alteration of this house planning due to the Hellenistic influence, house planning with *peristyle*, which was identified to the Hellenistic period, appeared. This shift from *megaron* to *peristyle* is best observed in Priene out of the Hellen cities in the West Anatolia. Although Priene was abandoned in Byzantium period, the effects of the Priene, which was the one of the most successful examples of grid-iron system, can be observed on the Ottoman architecture (Akurgal, 1996, 136; Akurgal, 1998, 139). Open spaces of Priene houses were developed as inner court, half-open transition halls and half-open *prostas* court with columns and they were named in Ottoman architecture court, courtyard, *eyvan* and hall. The similarities between Priene houses and Ottoman houses in Aegean Region aspect of space relations depends on not only having lived in the same region, under the same climate conditions and the same topography but also similarities can be observed in their social reasons like being extrovert, women-men differentiation, patriarchy and privacy of family and economic reasons which came from production activities (Bozkurt, 2002, 98-103). Plans of Priene houses and *peristyle*, which identify the city of Priene, was observed as small and big mansions, which was the most respected and preferred house type, in the Republic period in Turkey.

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