The assembled palace of Samosata: object vibrancy in 1st C. BCE Commagene

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Chapter 10. Case study 3: The glocal genealogy of the symmetrical suite.

10.1 Introduction

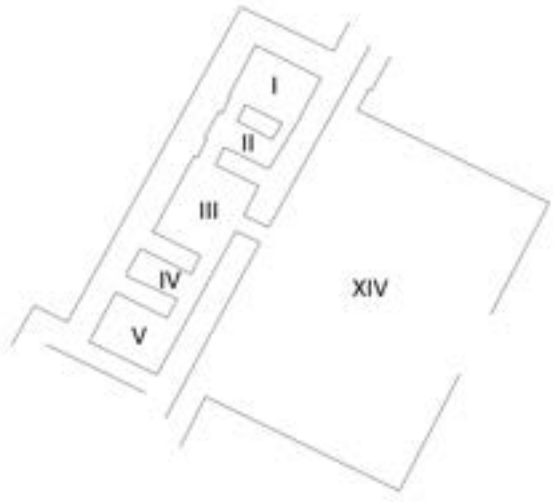

Fig. 10.1 Schematic reconstruction of the symmetrical suite in the palace of Samosata. Source: by the author.

This case study investigates the glocal genealogy of a specific architectural lay-out found in rooms I-V and XIV of the palace: a symmetrical suite (see fig. 10.1). In palatial architecture, such suites often consist of a string of interconnected and symmetrically positioned rooms of which the central room provides access to a larger rectangular space that itself can grant access to a court. This chapter starts out with a brief description of the symmetrical suite in the palace (paragraph 10.2), summarizing some of the evidence and arguments put forward already in the discussions on the palace's architecture in chapter 4. Like in the other two case studies, this chapter then proceeds with a critical discussion of existing interpretations of the palace's symmetrical suite, pointing out and deconstructing the cultural reductions at play in such scholarly work (section 10.3). In the next paragraph, I subsequently apply the same glocal genealogy approach to the symmetrical suites as developed in the other case studies, looking at the development of the object type through time and space (paragraph 10.4). This genealogical approach is again meant to open up a new perspective on an otherwise culturally reduced element of the palace, shedding light on its relational capacities, its emergence and its vibrancy. To take full advantage of this genealogy, the case study in its last paragraph again moves from interpretation to critical exploration, looking how the relational capacities of the symmetrical suite genealogy potentially played out in the context of Samosata (paragraph 10.5).

10.2 Description of symmetrical suite(s) in Samosata

Rooms I-V together with room XIV make up the symmetrical suite that is the focus of this chapter. In chapter 4, I have provided an in-depth description and analysis of the archaeological and architectural evidence for this particular configuration, of which I will summarize the most relevant aspects here. The western wing of the palatial complex of Samosata consists of five spatial units, that are all located in the same elevation zone 3, with floors at 446,48 m. (see paragraph 4.3.2). Three of these spaces (I, III and V) seem to be actual rooms, while the other two (II and IV) are more likely corridors.[1275] The arrangement of the wing of rooms is perfectly symmetrical, with a central room (III) of 6,80 x 4,50 m, two side corridors (II and IV) of 1,90-2,00 x 4,50 m and two outer rooms of 3,50-60 x 4,50 m (I and V). These five rooms make up the entire western border of room XIV (14,0 x 20,0 m.), which thus has the same total length as rooms I-V and the same orientation. In chapter 4, I have explained that the exact character of room XIV remains debatable: either this large space contained a peristyle court or it was roofed and perhaps contained one or more pilasters in the centre of the room to carry the roof (see paragraph 4.3.4). Although both reconstructions remain possible, I have expressed a slight preference for a roofed space, particularly because of the concentric border mosaic, the wall painting and the available parallels in the roofed 'Mosaic Rooms' of Arsameia on the Nymphaios. The analysis that follows in this chapter will therefore reason from the hypothesis of a large, roofed hall.

In chapter 4, I have discussed in detail the evidence for entrances in this section of the palace (see 4.3.1). I have proposed that room I was entered from room II through two entrances in W2. It is possible that, at least in the first construction phase of the palace (objectscape 2), room II was accessible from room XIV through W15 (which, however, was barely preserved). There is not enough archaeological evidence to prove the existence of an entrance between rooms II and room III (W3 was barely preserved), and unfortunately the same is true for the entrances between room III and room XIV as well as room IV (both W4 and W16 were barely preserved). I have suggested that room IV contained two entrances to room V in W5 (similar to the situation in W2). Room V probably originally contained an entrance to room XIV in W18. During the second construction phase (objectscape 3), however, mudbrick walls closed off this entrance as well as one of the entrances in W5 to room IV. After these entrances were closed off, the symmetrical lay-out of rooms I-V likely functioned even more as a suite than before. In the schematic reconstruction of fig. 10.1, I have suggested the most secluded, non-accessible hypothesis possible, allowing only an entrance into the symmetrical suite from the central room III. The analysis that follows in this chapter will reason from this reconstruction but would be valid for less secluded reconstructions of the suite as well.

[1275] Zoroğlu 2012, 139.

Looking at the available evidence for decoration and installations, it is clear that the rooms making up the suite were relatively luxurious spaces in the palace (see 4.3.1). There is evidence for Masonry Style wall painting in rooms I, II, III, and IV and the preserved tessellated mosaics of rooms I and II were likely also available in the other three rooms. In paragraphs 4.31, 6.2 and 7.4, I have dealt with the character of room V, which contains an elevated platform (I8) in its southern corner, which likely functioned as a statue base, perhaps connected to portraits ID215 (the 'Zeus-like' head in limestone) and ID216 (the portrait of Antiochos I; for both see chapter 6). The less elevated platform (I9) directly north from the presumed statue base might have functioned as some kind of altar, which would suggest a cultic function for room V, perhaps for a dynastic ancestral cult, but this remains highly uncertain (see especially paragraph 6.2).

Importantly, Bingöl has suggested that a second symmetrical suite existed south of rooms I-V, namely in rooms VI-IX, for which room VII might have had the same central function as room III.[1276] In this wing, however, entrance was not granted through this central room VIII but rather through a narrow corridor north of it (room VII). Maria Kopsacheili observed the same repetition of a lay out with symmetrical suites south of the cluster containing rooms I-V and XIV: '*Together with rooms I and IIa–c* [rooms II-V] *it* [room XIV] *would have formed a group that presented the same layout as the group of spaces VI, II– V* [rooms VI-IX and XV].'[1277] It is indeed tempting to suggest that the palace contained at least two symmetrical suites next to each other, an observation that suggests this architectural configuration was an important structuring principle of the palace.

10.3 Scholarly debate on the cultural designation of the symmetrical suite in Samosata

This section provides a critical discussion of existing interpretations of the palace's overall architectural plan, specifically focusing on its symmetrical suite. It will point out two distinct and oppositional interpretations that however both are concerned with its cultural designation: while a first group of scholars considers the symmetrical suite a typically 'Greek' feature, others describe it as a feature typical for 'Oriental' architecture. In the following, I will critically discuss both interpretations and, following my central critique on cultural reductions of material culture developed in chapters 2 and 3, argue why these interpretations are too reductive and reason from overtly essentialist conceptions of cultural classifications, ignoring crucial capacities of this

[1276] Bingöl 2013, 84.
[1277] Kopsacheili 2012, 229. Her numbering of the rooms is different from the numbering used here, which I have added in brackets within the text.

architectural configuration. The discussion and deconstruction of this paragraph forms the starting point for the alternative, genealogical approach in sections 10.2 and 10.3.

10.3.1 A 'Greek' reduction

Let us first consider interpretations that designate the symmetrical suite of the palace as 'Greek', some of which have been discussed in more general terms already in sections 2.2 and 2.3. In his 2000 chapter on the palace of Samsoata, Levent Zoroğlu suggests that the overall architectural plan of the palace is comparable to Hellenistic peristyle houses, yet - and this is remarkable -, without containing an actual peristylium: '*Auf den ersten Blick kann der Plan mit hellenistischen Peristylhäusern verglichen werden, jedoch fehlt im Palast von Samosata die dort übliche Säulenreihe*'.[1278] Andreas Kropp, in a similar vein, assigns the palace to a preconceived category of Hellenistic palaces, mentioning explicitly the Macedonian palace of Vergina, and on the basis of this association adds a myriad of non-attested architectural elements to his reconstruction: *'one could expect the structure to have had further typical features of Hellenistic palaces, such as a peristyle courtyard, triclinia, and a sumptuous façade. (…) a dynasty keen to stress its Greek credentials (…)*'.[1279] Later, Kropp writes: '*The design and décor of the palace of Antiochos I at Samosata incorporates the traditional elements of Hellenistic palaces in order to accommodate court life à la Grecque.*'[1280] Matthew Canepa furthermore interprets the architectural style of the palace as a true shift in relation to what came before in Samosata itself (e.g. the 'torus-base structure', see chapter 7) suggesting that it links more to 'the Graeco-Roman world' than local or regional traditions: '(…) *the later Hellenistic palace of the Orontids of Commagene imposed a rather abrupt shift in architectural style emblematic of the later dynasty's greater involvement with the wider Greco-Roman world and tenuous yet symbolically important connection with the Orontid line*.'[1281]

What seems problematic about especially the interpretations of Zoroğlu and Kropp is their insistence on a well-defined category of Hellenistic peristyled architecture that the palace of Samosata should adhere to even when there is no archaeological evidence (for instance a peristylium or a façade) supporting it. However, none of these authors deal explicitly with the symmetrical suite; rather, they focus on the overall cultural designation of the lay-out and its presumed peristyle. It is probable that the authors imply a relation between the symmetrical suite in Samosata and the so-called *Flügeldreiraumgruppe,* defined by Vera Heermann as an

[1278] Zoroğlu 2000, 54.
[1279] Kropp 2013, 109 and n. 85, which solely states: '*Cf. eg. Vergina*'.
[1280] *Idem*, 363.
[1281] Canepa 2018, 110.

arrangement of three large rooms of which only the middle room opens up to the peristyle with a broad entrance (in some cases with two columns *in antis*), while the two flanking rooms, mostly of equal size, are only accessed through the central room, often in non-axial entrances.[1282] The *Flügeldreiraumgruppe* has been associated specifically with the 'Hellenistic' palaces and houses that contain peristylia, for instance at Vergina, Pella, Demetrias and Pergamon.[1283] Several scholars have subsequently argued that such *(Flügel)Dreiraumgruppen* or, more neutrally, 'tripartite suites' (allowing also entrances to the peristyle court from the adjacent rooms), were adopted in architecture throughout the Hellenistic world, with comparanda found in the palaces and houses of Pergamon, the 'Palazzo delle Colonne' in Ptolemais, Jebel Khalid's 'Governor Palace', Herod's second palace in Jericho, and the *Dreiraumgruppen* in Sicily and south Italy.[1284] The tripartite suite indeed seems to have become a universalized and semi-standardized lay-out that, if we consider its appearance in places like Jebel Khalid, could well have been available in Samosata as well.

[1282] Heermann 1986.

[1283] Take for instance the suite of large banquet rooms in the palace of Vergina where Heermann assigned three such *Flügeldreiraumgruppen*, cf. Heermann 1986, 259-266, 355-357. For the other contexts, see e.g. Kutbay 1998, 26; Brands and Hoepfner 1996, 62; and Hesberg 1996, 182-189. Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt further developed Heermann's ideas and argued that this 'typically Macedonian' lay out was subsequently adopted in architecture that was not Macedonian, specifically in the palaces and private houses of Pergamon, for which she developed the term *Dreiraumgruppe*, cf. WEulf-Rheidt 1999. She defines this as a series of three rooms that are interconnected and located in one flank of the peristyle. Wulf-Rheidt's *Dreiraumgruppe* however differed from Heermann's *Flügeldreiraumgruppe* in that all three of the rooms may be open to the peristyle and the central room does not function as an anteroom nor must it have a broad entrance with columns in antis.

[1284] For 'tripartite suites', see Kottaridi 2011, 326 n. 107: ': '*Especially imposing and representative, the great Type B tripartite complexes are yet another invention of the architect of Aegae. It seems that the type responded to essential functional needs because it found imitators immediately in the period of the successors and became fashionable not only in the palaces and houses of neighbouring Pella, but in the whole of the Hellenised world*.' See also Isler 2010, 316f, pointing at examples in *i.a.* Macedon, Sicily, Epirus (Antigoneia) and Apulia (Monte Sannace). For Herod's second palace in Jericho, see Netzer 2006, 251 n. 20; Kropp 2013, 130: '*To the north of the peristyle, aligned on the same central axis, lay an exedra with two columns in antis with one small room accessible on each side in the manner of a Greek prostas. However, the strictly symmetrical arrangement with one room branching off on either side is very similar to the typical 'Flügeldreiraumgruppe' of Macedonian palaces as well as Hellenistic houses, for instance, the peristyle houses and palaces of Pergamon. The 'reception' room would hence serve as a vestibule to the two lateral rooms, which were used as androne*s *for symposia*'; and Lichtenberger 1999, 61. For the Sicilian appropriation of the 'Macedonian lay out', see Dalcher 1994, 156; Isler 1996, 252ff; Wolf 2003, 85f.; Isler 2010 and Russenberger 2014. The latter however warns for overtly confident interpretations: '*Aus verschiedenen Gründen, insbesondere jedoch weil die syrakusanische Privatarchitektur des 4. und 3. Jhs. v. Chr. nahezu unbekannt ist, haben entsprechende Szenarien m. E. vorderhand stark hypothetischen Charakter.*' (Russenberger 2014, 79 n. 90). Other critical voices have also been raised, which, for instance, downplay Heermann's assertion of the Macedonian palaces as starting point for the *Flügeldreiraumgruppe*. Hoepfner, for instance, suggests that the *Flügeldreiraumgruppe* has precursors in the houses from Pella, thus suggesting that the palatial architecture derived from pre-existing domestic architectural traditions, cf. Hoepfner 1996, 13-15. Whereas Hoepfner still points to a Macedonian origin of the architectural configuration, Inge Nielsen questions this connection more fundamentally. In her 1994 monograph on Hellenistic palaces, she is critical of Heermann's identification of the *Flügeldreiraumgruppen* in Vergina itself, suggesting that the archaeological evidence does not in fact support many of her examples. According to her, especially the archaeological situation of rooms M1-3 and N1-3 allows for a reconstruction without a tripartite suite too, cf. Nielsen 1999, 87-88. These considerations further undermine the usefullness for this term in Samosata.

Assuming that, by pointing to the broad category of Hellenistic peristyle architecture, Kropp and Zoroğlu indeed implicitly suggest that the symmetrical suite of Samosata was such a *(Flügel)Dreiraumgruppe* or tripartite suite, we can briefly explore such a claim can be substantiated. It seems, however, that several of the key aspects of such suites can in fact not be observed in Samosata. A crucial element of these is the presence of a peristyle court, which, as I discussed above, remains a very problematic part of the reconstruction of the palace in Samosata (see paragraph 4.3.4). The *(Flügel)Dreiraumgruppe*, as the name suggests, consists of three spatial units, and not of five as is the case in Samosata. Even more importantly, the rooms in these tripartite suites are all very large, often semi-square rooms, used for banqueting (indicated by wide peripheral bands used for *klinai*). The small, sometimes even corridor-like rooms in Samosata look very dissimilar, and their use as banquet halls cannot be supported with any evidence; in fact, it seems more likely that the larger rooms XIV and XV were used for banqueting instead. The elevated platforms of room V furthermore point rather to a cultic use of that room than a banqueting function. The *(Flügel)Dreiraumgruppen,* lastly, function without exception in very open architectural configurations with only one layer of rooms around a large central courtyard. The palace of Samosata, on the other hand, is characterized by a much more secluded architectural lay-out, with narrow corridors, perhaps two layers of rooms around a court, and a peripheral corridor behind the string of rooms (corridor B; see map D5 in appendix D). These deviations from both the category of 'Greek' or 'Hellenistic peristyle architecture' as well as the more universalized tripartite suites, makes the suggested cultural designations by Zoroğlu, Kropp and Canepa problematic and rather reductive. An analysis that does not simply reconstruct the palace of Samosata on the basis of the rather essentialist category of Greek or Hellenistic peristyle architecture but rather explores the palace's relation to more fitting comparanda (with suites of smaller rooms that were not necessarily used for banqueting, and not necessarily found in connection to a peristyle), is therefore desirable.

10.3.2 An 'Oriental' reduction

It is illustrative for the broader argument I make in this chapter (and in this dissertation more generally) that the same architectural lay-out that was designated 'Greek' by scholars in the previous paragraph is considered typically 'Oriental' by other scholars. Maria Kopsacheili, for instance, places the architectural setting in relation to Persian or 'oriental models': '*The palaces in Ai Khanoum and Samosata present stronger Persian influence'*[1285] and *'similarly to Ai Khanoum, the plan of the excavated part of the palace in Samosata resembles oriental models instead of early*

[1285] Kopsacheili 2011, 22.

Hellenistic Macedonian; corridors appear to play an important role as passageways between the different rooms, while a broader corridor runs along the external wall of the western side of the building and must have extended to the north surrounding the whole palace.'[1286] Orhan Bingöl likewise categorizes the entire architectural plan in Samosata as 'Eastern', suggesting that the palace bears no connection whatsoever to Macedonian palaces: '*Pellai Aigai ve Pergamon örnekleri incelendiğinde bu özellikler ve ayrıca mekanların birbirleriyle neredeyse hiç bağlantılarının olmadığı açıkça görülmektedir*'.[1287] Instead, he designates the palace of Samosata to a broad category of 'Eastern palaces', which he characterizes as having suites of rooms and long corridors, a second row of rooms behind the row of rooms that surrounds the courtyard, one or more courtyards without a peristyle, and entrances with distyles *in antis*.[1288] For Bingöl, this category of palatial architecture remains a stable type that can be recognized in Bronze Age and Iron Age comparanda (he refers to the palaces of Eridu, Mari and Dur Surrukin[1289]), and continues with little alteration into the Hellenistic period (mentioning the palatial structures of Petra ez-Zantur IV and the Western palace of Masada[1290]). More recently, Werner Oenbrink also emphasized the 'eastern' character of the palace's lay out, which he discusses in tandem with the 'palatial structure' of Arsameia on the Nymphaios: '*Darüber hinaus folgt die Gestaltung beider Grundrisse (…) eindeutig östlichem Raumverständnis. (…) Aufgrund ihrer topographischen Lage leitet die Kommagene eher zum syrisch-palästinischen und mesopotamischen Raum und ist dementsprechend stärker „orientalistisch" geprägt.*'[1291]

[1286] *Idem*, 24. In her 2012 dissertation, she suggests that the specific symmetrical suite should be interpreted as a bath suite, and finds a parallel in the bath section of the palace of Ai Khanoum, which she also labels as 'Eastern': '(…) *When all these rooms are examined as a group, they resemble architecturally the part of Section g in the Palace of Ai Khanoum identified as a bath (rooms 72–73, 63, 69–70).' In addition, room I (15.75 m2) was paved with a mosaic floor that depicted marine animals around a Rhodian amphora, while the number and dimensions of the rooms of each group correspond to the four room-scheme of the bath sections in Ai Khanoum: kitchen, changing-room, and two ablution rooms. The form of the palace is associated rather with oriental models than early Hellenistic Macedonian ones with corridors playing an important role as passageways between the different rooms, in a fashion familiar from the palace of Ai Khanoum.'* (Kopsacheili 2012, 229-230). This interpretation of the suite as a bath suite is not very convincing as there has been no evidence for bathing installations in Samosata. The marine iconography of the mosaic in room I is ubiquitous in mosaic imagery and never found in strict connection to bathing practices, cf. Haug 2021.

[1287] Bingöl 2013, 85-86.

[1288] *Idem*, 86-87: '*1) Birbirlerine bağlı mekanlar, uzun koridorlar, ya da sadece onları birbirlerine bağlayabilmek için oluşturulmuş, başka ne gibi amaçla kullanılmış olabilecekleri konusunda bir yorum yapılamayacak ara mekanlar. 2) avluyu çeviren mekan dizisinin arkasında ikinci bir mekan sırası, ya da mekan grupları. 3) ortada sütunlarla çevrili olmayan bir ya da birden fazla avlu. Bu özelliklerle batı örneklerinde hiç karşılaşılmaması, iki coğrafi tip arasındaki kesin ayrımı göstermektedir*.'

[1289] *Idem*, figs. 134a-c.

[1290] *Idem*, 87-88, figs. 135-139; he compares the symmetrical suite of Samosata's rooms I-V to the north-eastern wing of Petra ez-Zantur IV and the north-western wing of the western palace of Masada. The suggested suite of rooms VI-IX in Samosata is supposed to look like the northern wing of Masada and the southern wing of Petra ez-Zantur (rooms 6, 7 and 17 in Bingöl's fig. 136). Bingöl 2013, 87: '*Nitekim doğunun karakteristik uygulaması sadece erken dönemlerle sınırlı olmayıp Hellenistik Dönem'de de kendini göstermektedir*.'

[1291] Oenbrink 2017, 177.

Like in the previous section, the authors that point to 'Oriental models' do not actually investigate the adherence or deviation of the palace of Samosata to this architectural type and its associated comparanda, but rather use this type as a very essentialized model with which to reconstruct it, for instance by providing the reconstruction with a distyle *in antis*.[1292] Underlying this methodological issue runs a more serious problem with the use of the term 'Oriental', and its (neo-)colonial suggestion of an exotic, unchanging and traditional 'East'.[1293] Although this notion should in fact already be enough reason to not rely on notions as 'Oriental' or 'Near Eastern models', let us briefly ask whether the claim of Kopsacheili, Bingöl and Oenbrink that the palace's symmetrical suite should be understood against the background of such 'models' can be substantiated by the evidence.

Although the authors do not mention the suites explicitly, it is likely that a similarity is implied between the suite in Samosata and an architectural configuration known as the 'Near Eastern reception suite'. Irene Winter sees the earliest presence of such reception suites in the middle Bronze Age palace of Mari (ca. 18th-17th c. BCE), one of the parallels suggested also for Samosata by Bingöl.[1294] At Mari, the reception suite is located in the centre of the palace and consists of a large rectangular room located in the south flank of a square court and a second room south of it that itself gives access to an asymmetric string of very small rooms behind it. Generally, these large rectangular rooms are interpreted as a public throne room and a more formal throne room, with evidence for thrones placed on podiums.[1295] Another palace with a 'reception suite', mentioned again as a comparandum for Samosata by Bingöl, is the Late Assyrian palace of Sargon II at Dur-Surrukin (8th c. BCE).[1296] Here, the reception suite is equally located in the centre of the palace and consist of an elongated rectangular room that runs parallel to the western flank of a court, containing evidence for a throne in the centre. Behind this room, an asymmetrical string of smaller rooms was located that itself gave access to another square court behind it. David Kertai discusses such Late-Assyrian reception suites in relation to its presumed Bronze Age precursors

[1292] As done in the reconstruction by Bingöl 2013, 91, fig. 140. There is no supporting evidence fort his reconstruction.
[1293] For a thorough critique, see Ristvet 2014a and, still, Said 1978.
[1294] Winter 2010, 341. For the palace of Mari, see Margueron 1982, 209-380, 1995; Heinrich 1984, 68-81. For the initial excavation reports, see Parrot 1958. Important studies of the archaeology of Near Eastern palaces are Margueron 1982 and Heinrich 1984; Roaf 1973/2013; and, most recently, Kertai 2015.
[1295] Winter 2010, 341: '*There is evidence of a podium on the south wall opposite that central door. The podium was plastered and whitewashed, giving it special prominence, and could have been used either as a base for a statue, or, more likely, as a platform for the throne of the ruler himself, for those occasions that called for him to be in view, and, reciprocally, with a full view of the courtyard. The inner room included a second podium on the short, west wall, which then faced down the length of the room toward an elevated niche that, it has been suggested, may have contained an image of the local goddess, Ishtar.'*
[1296] Kertai 2015.

and argues that, contrary to what is often suggested[1297], such reception suites were in fact very different as they increased in terms of the number of rooms as well as in terms of their size.[1298] Kertai furthermore explains that typical characteristics of such Late Assyrian reception rooms are installations such as 'tram rails' ('*large, often grooved stone plates placed in the middle of the room, intended for the placement of a portable brazier'*[1299] used for heating), 'libation slabs' ('*large stone plates placed on the floor against their outer wall'*[1300] and, in case the largest room was a throne room and not merely a reception room, also a stone dais that served as a throne and was placed at the short end of the room. His conclusions underline that an insistence on 'Near Eastern' or 'Oriental' palatial architecture as a static, monolithic tradition from the Bronze Age to the Late Assyrian period (let alone to the Hellenistic period) simply does not match with our knowledge of developments and temporal and geographical differentiation of such architecture.

For the purposes of this chapter, it suffices to conclude that the architectural lay-out of the symmetrical suite in the palace of Samosata has very little to do with the reception suites of Mari and Dur-Surrukin. Apart from the fact that Samosata yielded no 'tram rails', 'libation slabs' or evidence for thrones, nor was found in the centre of the palace (Samosata's symmetrical suite must have been located at the western edge of the palace), some quintessential aspects of the suite in Samosata (for instance its symmetrical lay-out) can, vice versa, not be found in these much older palaces. By merely referring to the palaces of Mari and Dur Surrukin and not actually providing a comparison, Bingöl perpetuates the idea of 'Near Eastern palaces' as a static, monolithic category. As such, he petrifies the cultural affiliation of the reception suite to an all-encompassing 'Orient', within which all variety, contextual idiosyncrasy and diachronic transformation have been annulled. If we want to understand to which type of architectural lay-out the symmetrical suite actually adhered and how it deviated from it, it is therefore more promising and desirable to take more recent (i.e. chronologically less far removed from the 1st c. BCE) comparanda as a starting point of a genealogy of such suites.

[1297] E.g. Winter 2010, 341: '*Identical suites, with the innermost room being the formal throne room and a throne base preserved along a short wall, are also to be found in Assyrian palaces of the first millennium (see below)'.*
[1298] Kertai 2015, 242.
[1299] *Idem*, 44.
[1300] *Ibidem*.

10.4. The glocal genealogy of symmetrical suites

In the previous section I have argued that existing scholarly interpretations of Samosata's symmetrical suite as either following a 'Greek' or an 'Oriental' model have been overtly reductive, reasoning from static and monolithic architectural traditions and categories. The comparanda that are suggested by previous scholars either demand actual comparison and analysis or should be simply discarded due to their dissimilarity or chronological distance. The symmetrical suite in the palace of Samosata was not simply 'Greek' or 'Oriental'; to understand its relational capacities, it is important to explore its genealogy by looking at more promising (and more recent) comparanda. Such a genealogical exploration should help to illuminate the dynamic, vibrant relation between the particularized suite in Samosata on the one hand, and a possible wider, universalized suite type that it adhered to on the other. To do this, I will focus here on the genealogy of symmetrical suites in palatial architecture of the 3rd and 2nd c. BCE. I present a range of structures that have not been seriously considered yet in relation to the palace of Samosata and its symmetrical suite. I will discuss the rearticulations of symmetrical suites in a chronological order, using the estimated date of construction. For each case, I will describe the suite, its integration (location in the palace, association with other elements such as a peristyle court) and its related features (wall painting, floors, installations). I compare each rearticulation in relation to the palace of Samosata, considering to what extent the symmetrical suite in Samosata adhered to or deviated from an emerging 'object type'. From these critical comparisons subsequently follows an analysis that focuses on what these comparisons tell us about the relationality of the suite in the context of Samosata itself.

Fig. 10.2. The 'Governor's Palace' at Jebel Khalid. Source: Clarke, 2002, 26, fig.1.

Royal Seleucid palatial architecture of the 3rd and early 2nd centuries BCE is not very well known, but some related or at least contemporary palatial structures provide interesting examples of symmetrical suites in new constellations.[1301] The so-called 'Governor's palace' of Jebel Khalid, dating to the 3rd c. BCE, was located inside the city's acropolis fortification (fig. 10.2).[1302] It is generally considered to be the seat of a local Seleucid governor.[1303] The building (ca. 3200 m^{2}) most probably contained two floors and was constructed around a square, Doric peristyle court (26; see fig. 10.2 for the room numbers).[1304] The structure was entered from the eastern wing, leading through a small, one-row symmetrical tripartite suite (15-17) which itself gave way to the court. North and south of the court, two large symmetrical suites were located consisting of

[1301] For Seleucid palaces, see Nielsen 1999, Brands and Hoepfner 1996; Kutbay 1998; Nielsen 2001; Held 2002; and Strootman 2007, 54-91. The most important newly constructed Seleucid residences were located in Antioch on the Orontes (Joseph. *AJ* 13.36), Seleucia in Pieria, Daphne, Apamea, Sardis, Tarsos, Mopsuestia, Tambrax in Hyrkania and Seleucia on the Tigris; none of these were preserved. The palaces of Jebel Khalid, Dura Europos and Ai Khanoum are considered as potential Seleucid governor's palaces, but the degree to which they represent the major royal palaces can be disputed.

[1302] Clarke 2001; 2002; 2016; Jackson 2016. The structure was first recorded in 1984 and excavated by the Australian National University during campaigns in 1992, 1997 and 1999.

[1303] Clarke 2002, vii-xi. Room 22 yielded two official Seleucid seals, suggesting that this area was used for official administrative business or as a treasury, see Clarke 2002, 43-45.

[1304] Clarke 2002, 25, 40-42. Clarke suggest that room 18 might have contained a staircase to an upper floor but there is no strong evidence to support this.

multiple rows of rooms (19-21/23 and 1/3/4-12). Both the southern and northern suite were entered through lengthy vestibule corridors (1 and 23), which ran parallel to the northern and southern flanks of the court. The southern suite, was entered through a bent entrance in the west, and contained a second row of three rooms (19-21) with a symmetrical lay-out, that was solely entered through a wide entrance with a distyle *in antis* toward the central, largest room, interpreted by the excavators as a large reception hall. The northern suite contained a vestibule hall (1) that, in the far west corner, led to an outdoor 'cult space' (3) containing a drum altar.[1305] Behind the vestibule hall, which was entered through a narrow entrance in the west, two more rows of rooms were located that were centred around a large reception hall (7,39 m. x 11,34 m.)(12). This hall was also entered through a distyle *in antis*, and itself gave access to a symmetrical string of rooms around it (4-11). The high amount of eating and drinking vessels found in the 'reception halls' suggests that they were used for banqueting practices.[1306] The smaller rooms (ca. 5,0 x 5,0 m. each) adjoining the central reception halls are interpreted as storerooms, food preparation rooms and two kitchens.[1307] The excavators interpreted the ground plan as showing '*some affinity to preceding Achaemenid palaces'*[1308]*,* just as the presence of a latrine (13) and bathing complex and a courtyard garden are considered to have *'eastern influences'.*[1309] The peristyle, the banquet practices and the traces for cultic animal sacrifices on the other hand, are considered *'Greek', just as the* Masonry Style plasterwork and painting that was found in both 'reception halls'. Heather Jackson states that '*(t)he hybridity would appear to be deliberate'*.[1310]

The lay-out of the 'Governor's Palace' of Jebel Khalid contains multiple symmetrical suites, widely varying in size, amount of rooms, integration, and function. Both the northern and southern suite are characterized by the use of multiple rows of rooms, a feature which I have also cautiously proposed for the palace of Samosata (paragraph 4.3.4). The room size and tripartite structure of the southern suite does not compare well to the much smaller, almost corridor-like rooms in the

[1305] Clarke 2002, 33. See also Jackson 2016, 335, who writes that there was '*ample evidence of burnt animal sacrifices in the Greek manner'.*
[1306] Clarke 2002, 25; 32-33; 42-43.
[1307] *Idem*, 37-40. In room 8, two very large *pithoi* were found in situ as well as a high amount of basalt grinders and 34 clay loom weights stored together in a vessel, together suggesting that it was used as a magazine room (Clarke 2002, 36). In room 9, a large amount of table ware ceramics was found (Clarke 2002, 36). Room 11 contained a rectangular hearth against its south wall suggesting it was a cooking area (Clarke 2002, 37).
[1308] Jackson 2016, 335. See also Mottram 2013, 45: '*the city temple and the governor's palace on the Acropolis exhibit features which are unusual or inconsistent with Greek architectural forms and clearly derive from local Near Eastern and Achaemenid traditions'.*
[1309] Jackson 2016, 335.
[1310] *Ibidem*. Note that Maria Kopsacheili also describes the 'Governor's palace' as a hybrid structure but instead describes the suites as typically Greek elements, something contrasting to the typically Egyptian, Assyrian and Persian garden in the peristyle: '*the formation of the long spaces 23 and 2 between the peristyle and the rooms to the north and south belongs to the group of Western elements. They recall the pastas in Greek houses and the same element is also found in the House of Dionysus in Pella (space 20) Rooms 19-21 are reminiscent of the units of two androns of the same size flanking one vestibule.' (*Kopsacheili 2011, 21-22).

suite in Samosata. The northern suite, and especially its string of small rooms in the far north seems more promising as a comparandum for Samosata, especially considering the use of Masonry Style wall painting in the central 'reception hall' (12) and the string of small rooms running around it. The latter, however, are merely similar in terms of their similar size, and the fact that they are interconnected rooms laid out in a symmetrical manner; their use as storerooms, food preparation rooms or kitchens makes them however very different from the elaborately decorated, representative rooms in the suite of Samosata. A last element of the northern suite, its integration of a 'cult space' with a drum altar (3), forms an interesting parallel to room V in the palace of Samosata, for which a similarly cultic function has been proposed (6.2). An important difference, however, is that the former context was located in an open, unroofed area, while the latter was part of the roofed string of rooms.

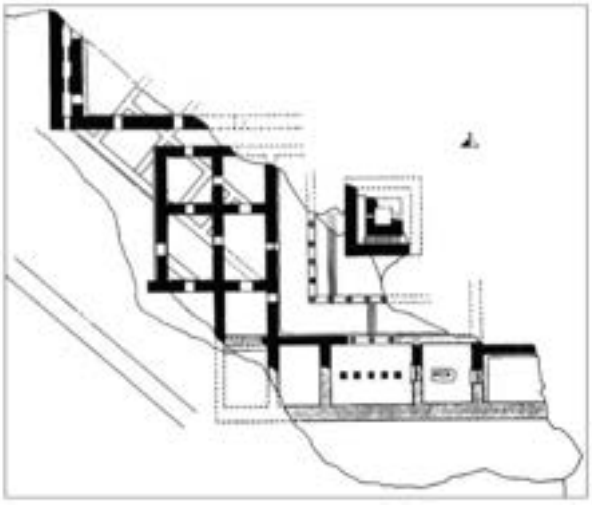

Fig. 10.3. Plan and partial reconstruction of the 'Citadel palace' of Dura Europos by Pillet. Source: Downey 1986, fig.1.

The second symmetrical suite of this genealogy is the 'Citadel palace' of Dura Europos, which was located on the flattened citadel of the city (fig. 10.3).[1311] The structure dates to the mid-3rd c. BCE and is generally connected to the period of Seleucid rule.[1312] The structure was only partially preserved at its south-western side and reconstructions of its overall lay out remain problematic;

[1311] In general, see Downey 1986, 1988, 343-347, 1992 (Frank Brown's notes of the excavation). I largely follow Downey's conclusions concerning the lay-out in this description.
[1312] The dating is based on the use of a 0.35 foot for the ashlars, which in Dura characterizes the Hellenistic buildings. The structure was probably preceded by an earlier building, perhaps also a palace, but its traces are not sufficient to analyse.

at this point we unfortunately still have to rely mainly on Pillet's reconstructions of the structure.[1313] The excavated part is divided by a northern and a southern section, which is separated by a long, narrow east-west running corridor. The southern section was constructed around a Doric peristyle court, underneath which was located a cistern. In the reconstruction by Pillet, the preserved western and southern wing surrounding the court consist of respectively two and one row of rooms. The southern wing likely functioned as a symmetrical suite of rooms, which was solely accessed through the central, largest room (9,48 x ca. 7,50 m.). The entrance to this central room, which lay on the axis of the court, was through a portico of three columns. In the centre of the room, five pillars supported the roof. The excavators suggested that the room provided access to at least two adjoining rooms on its east and western side (ca. 5,00 x 7,50 m.) ; Pillet's reconstruction also allows for a five room suite, with two rooms on either side of the central room with pillars. It is probable that none of these smaller rooms opened up to the court and their internal entrances are likely to have been located in the same central east-west axis. In the western wing of the court, two rows of rooms were present, containing five, maybe six rooms of approximately equal size and equal access with one another. North of the rooms and the peristyle court runs the long east-west dividing corridor (2,12 m. wide) that seems to have had multiple smaller accesses towards the north, into a large rectangular open court without a peristyle. Along the west end of the court ran another, perhaps peripheral corridor. Downey suggested that the northern open section served official purposes, while the southern section was used for residential purposes. Kospacheili suggested that the southern part of the structure, including its symmetrical suite, was '*Greek-Macedonian*', while its northern side, including the large open court and narrow corridors was '*of Persian type'*.[1314] Downey suggests that the southern section '*resembles the peristyle houses of Hellenistic Greek architecture and the palaces of Pergamon*' but remarks that the indirect access to the peristyle, i.e. the symmetrical suite, *'is unusual'*.[1315] Downey calls the northern side of the palace '*different*' and points to Ai Khanoum and Babylonian temples as potential parallels.[1316]

If Pillet's reconstructions are correct, the symmetrical suite in the south of the Citadel Palace of Dura Europos shows a considerable amount of similarities with the suite of Samosata. It would

[1313] Downey 1986, 28 refutes the reconstruction by Brown, who suggested the presence three 'iwans' at the northern side of the palace, cf. Downey 1992. For the original excavation reports, see Rostovtzeff et al. 1944. The northern and eastern part of the palace fell into the Euphrates valley. This might perhaps be connected to an earthquake of 160, by which time the structure would have already fallen out of use.

[1314] Kopsacheili 2011, 22: '*The hybridised character of this structure is evident in its architectural plan: the southern section of the building contains a peristyle courtyard and reception rooms with flanking spaces to the western and southern wings, elements stemming from the Greek-Macedonian tradition. On the contrary, eastern features are present at the northern part. This is defined by narrow corridors beside large open spaces and even though a very small part of it survives, it is possible that it was formed as a large forecourt of Persian type, similar to Ai Khanoum'.*

[1315] Downey 1986, 30.

[1316] *Idem*, 33.

have a similarly five-partite and symmetrical lay-out, with rooms of similar size and with limited access possibilities from the smaller adjoining rooms. Its location at the edge of the palace (not in the centre, like the reception suites discussed in 10.3.2) and its integration in an architecture characterized by long, narrow corridors furthermore is not unlike the situation in Samosata. Especially the long, potentially peripheral corridor of the northern sector of the palace is reminiscent of the equally long peripheral corridor B in Samosata. The use of pilasters in the centre of the central room in the suite of Dura Europos is comparable to the 'Mosaic Rooms' in Arsameia on the Nymphaios, a space that I have suggested as a parallel for room XIV, where a central pilaster might also be envisioned (see paragraph 4.3.4). However, the Citadel Palace of Dura Europos merely consists of one row of rooms, and provides a direct access to the peristyle court; it lacks a space that would function as the equivalent of room XIV in Samosata.

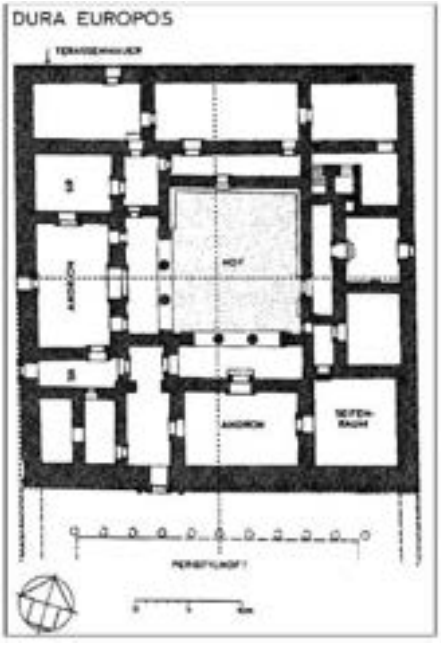

Fig. 10.4. Plan of the 'Redoubt Palace'/'Strategeion' at Dura Europos, early-2nd c. BCE. Source: Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994, fig. 216.

A next particularization of symmetrical suites is the early-2nd c. BCE 'Redoubt Palace' or 'Strategeion' of Dura Europos (fig. 10.4), located in block C9 on the edge of the site's southern plateau.[1317] It is likely that this palace took over the role of the previously discussed, earlier

[1317] Bernard 1973, 114, n. 7; Baird 2018. Note that, although the name *Strategeion* suggests a link to the office of *strategos*, no evidence supports this particular connection. See Baird 2018, 92 *contra* Hopkins 1979,

'Citadel Palace' during the Parthian period of the city.[1318] The palace had a defensive character, with large walls made of limestone ashlars. The internal lay-out is centered on a square court, with two rows of rooms surrounding it. Towards the west and south, the court opens up to suites through wide entrances with distyles *in antis*, providing access to rectangular rooms (ca. 11,0 x 4,0 m.) that run parallel to the flanks of the court. These ante-chambers subsequently provide access to strings of rooms that are primarily accessed through their central, largest room (ca. 12,0 x 7,0 m.), called *andron* by the excavators (see fig. 10.4). The smaller rooms flanking these central rooms greatly differ in size (ca. 6,0 x 7,0 m. on average) all contain further entrances to the rest of the building, creating a relatively accessible space. The designation of these spaces as *androne*s cannot be supported by any concrete evidence and probably betrays an overtly 'Greek bias' of the excavators. Indeed, Downey suggests that the Redoubt palace *'belongs to the Hellenistic Greek peristyle type'*[1319]*,* an assertion that is reminiscent of some of the scholarly interpretations of the palace in Samosata (see paragraph 10.3.1).

The two-rowed construction surrounding the court and the combination of an oblong ante-chamber with a string of rooms behind it resembles the lay-out of Samosata's symmetrical suite, but only to a limited degree. The ante-chambers are much smaller than the large hall of room XIV and the string of rooms is not symmetrical. Almost all of the rooms adjoining the so-called androne*s* (some of them of similar size as the rooms in Samosata) furthermore contain multiple entrances, which definitely makes them different from the much more confined string of rooms I-V in Samosata.

252-253 and Leriche 2003, 176. A good overview of the Hellenistic structures of Dura-Europos is provided by Leriche 1994. For the dating of the structure, see Leriche 1994, 403 and Leriche 2003, 176: '*Au palais du Stratège, une fouille exécutée à l'arrière de la façade à bossages a montré que celle-ci devait être datée de la première moitié du IIe s. av. n. è. et que le bâtiment avait connu un état antérieur qui pourrait remonter au IIIe s. av. n. è'.* Note that Kopsacheili 2012, 175 fig.1 still dates the structure to the mid-3rd c. BCE but provides no arguments.

[1318] Baird 2018, 92.

[1319] Downey 1986, 33.

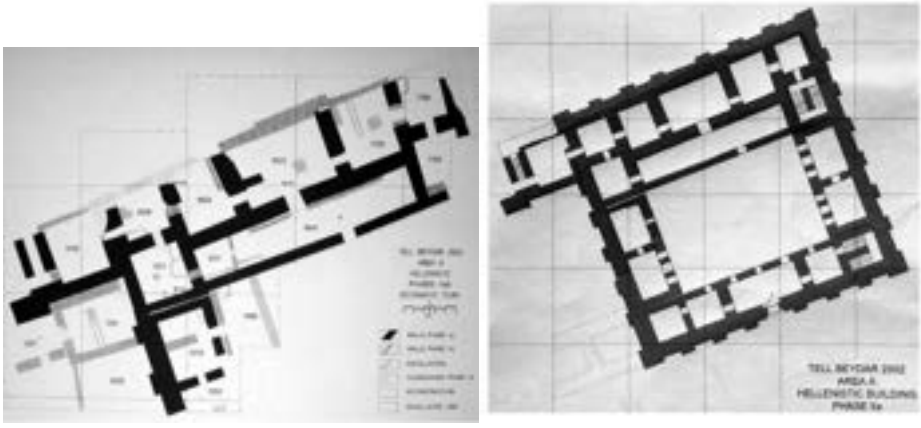

Fig. 10.5a-b. Map of the excavated structures (a) and a reconsructed plan of the 'Hellenistic palace' of Tell Beydar. Source: Galán 2005, fig. 198.

Following the genealogy of symmetrical suites, we encounter another particularization of this phenomenon in the so-called 'Hellenistic palace' of Tell Beydar (fig. 10.5a-b) in north-eastern Syria, which was only recently excavated by a Spanish team led by R. Martin Galán.[1320] It was located at the northern end of the tell (in field A of the excavations), overlooking the northern Khabur region and the Wadi Awaij. The first construction phase of the palace belongs to Hellenistic phase IIa, and was dated to the mid-2nd c. BCE, based on numismatic finds and pottery from secure stratigraphic contexts.[1321] The mudbrick structure was not entirely excavated but measures approximately 700 m^2 so far (fig. 10.5a). The excavators suggest that the palace was destroyed during the second half of the 2nd c. BCE and reconstructed during the early 1st c. BCE (Hellenistic phase IIb); the current lay-out specifically reflects this phase. By the mid-1st c. BCE, this second phase was also destroyed.[1322] It is unclear whether the structure was indeed used as a palace and whether it housed a representative of a larger (Seleucid or Parthian) power or a local elite. Based on the reconstruction offered in the excavators' plan (fig. 10.5b), the internal lay-out of the palace seems to be concentrated around an almost square court, with strings of largely symmetrically placed rooms distributed around it in a NW-SE orientation. The north-western side contains more than one row of rooms; entering from the court, a large rectangular hall (ca. 20,0 x 5,0 m.) was accessed through a non-axial entrance. This large hall makes up the entire north-western flank of the central court and provides further access to a symmetrical string of five rooms that is entered through a relatively wide doorway providing entrance to its central, largest room

[1320] Galán 2005, 40-42. The descriptions and interpretations offered here are entirely based on this publication and the reconstruction it offers by the excavators.
[1321] *Idem*, 40.
[1322] This dating is based on lamps '*characterised by a moulded fabric with a radial decoration*' (Galán 2005, 41) found on top of the latest floors.

(ca. 6,0 x 8,0 m.). The smaller, adjacent rooms (measuring ca. 4,50 x 5,50 m. each) are almost solely accessible from the central room although the small room in the far west provides access further west as well. No information is provided by the excavators concerning internal decoration or flooring. The architectural lay-out of the building is described as '*purely Mesopotamian'* by its excavators.[1323]

In some aspects, the northern suite of Tell Beydar's Hellenistic palace is similar to the symmetrical suite of Samosata. It contains more than one row of rooms and has a strictly symmetrical lay-out. Its relatively large ante-chamber furthermore is approximately as long as room XIV in Samosata (ca. 20 m.), while the smaller rooms in the symmetrical suite are of similar size too. What lacks in Tell Beydar in comparison to Samosata however are indications for a similarly elaborate decoration. Overall, the plan is not characterized by long, narrow corridors such as those witnessed in Samosata and the Citadel Palace of Dura Europos.

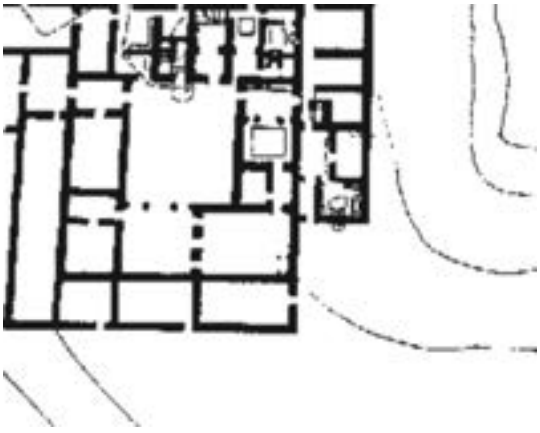

Fig. 10.6. The Western Palace of Masada. Source: detail of a map from Netzer 1991, fig. 1.

A last possible particularization in the genealogy of symmetrical suites, dated only slightly later than the symmetrical suite of Samosata, is the south-eastern suite of the Western Palace of Masada (fig. 10.6). This fortified, two-storeyed palace was probably one of the earliest of Herod's many palatial constructions, built in 37 BCE.[1324] One would enter the palace through a small bent entrance from the north, leading to a court without peristyle in the centre (12.5 x 10, 5 m.).[1325]

[1323] Galán 2005, 40 adding that it is '*reminding us of a 2nd millennium BC palace'*. One of the main arguments for this cultural designation is in fact the symmetrical string of rooms, see Galán 205, 40: '*The mentioned main room can be found in the centre of a series of five aligned rooms which are distributed along a NE/SW axis. This row of aligned rooms can be found regularly among many palaces of the ancient Mesopotamian architectural tradition'.*

[1324] Foerster 1995; Netzer 1991, 235-263, Nielsen 1999, 184-189; Roller 1998, 189; Netzer 2008, 21-27, Kropp 2013, 12—122.

[1325] Roller 1998, 189 suggested a peristyle but there is no evidence for this at all.

The court was surrounded on all sides with one row of wings, many of which opened up to the court. A very confined suite of rooms is located in the south-east corner of the palace, which, although it is not at all symmetrical, forms an important last comparandum for this genealogical analysis. The suite contains a large, central room (8,7 x 6,0 m.), located in the far southeast corner of the palace. This central room could be approached from the central court in two ways: a small entrance at the north-east of the court, providing room to an anteroom, followed by an entrance through an Ionic distyle *in antis* that led to a small room with a mosaic in concentric border decoration[1326], followed by a small corridor that ultimately led to the central room. A much grander and slightly more direct entrance was provided at the southside of the court, where a large distyle *in antis* provided access to an anteroom that itself led to the central room. The suite contains elaborate wall decoration in Masonry Style wall painting.[1327] Yadin interpreted the central room as a throne room, based on the presence of four symmetrical depressions in the corner of the room.[1328] Foerster, however, suggested that these depressions indicated the location of a table on which one would, for instance, display fine silver ware.[1329] Kropp connected the suite to the Greek prostas-houses of Olynthus, Abdera, and Priene as well as the *(Flügel)Dreiraumgruppen* of Pergamon and Macedonia, stating that this is '*simply a more elaborate version of the same principle'*.[1330] Netzer, in contrast, describes the palace as containing '*oriental elements in* [its] *plan*', although he remains unclear about the specific elements he refers to.[1331]

This suite deviates most from the presented genealogy of symmetrical suites, be it for the obvious reason that it is not symmetrical. It does however provide an interesting example of a spatial configuration in palatial architecture more or less contemporary to that of Samosata, where a set of smaller but clearly representative rooms form a highly confined and inaccessible lay-out. The adoption of a mosaic with elaborate concentric decoration in such a suite is very reminiscent of the use of such mosaics in room I of the palace in Samosata, something furthermore matched with the similar use of Masonry Style wall painting.

[1326] Containing 13 bands with geometric motifs (meanders, wave crest patterns, braids and stepped pyramids) placed around a central roundel with schematic floral decoration, itself placed in a square panel. Cf. Foerster 1995, 150-151; Talgam and Peleg 2006, 379.
[1327] Avigad 1984, 95-120.
[1328] Yadin 1965, 118, followed by Netzer 1994, 75-76.
[1329] Foerster 1995, 164-168; Hoepfner 1996, 14 n.56; Kropp 2013, 121.
[1330] Kropp 2013, 122.
[1331] Netzer 2009, 172: '*the Western Palace at Masada (and its three satellites, Buildings Nos. 11, 12, 13), which resemble the Hasmonaean Twin Palaces at Jericho (Netzer 1991, 599–604). All of them have oriental elements in their plan.'*

Analysis of the genealogy

The suites discussed in this glocal genealogy are very different in terms of size, shape and function and cannot be described as adhering to a clearly defined and standardized object type. This somewhat negative conclusion most probably reflects the limited state of our knowledge concerning palatial architecture of the 3rd-1st c. BCE, with simply not enough relevant comparanda having been excavated yet. As such, this glocal genealogy cannot analyse the adherence or deviation from a universalized and standardized object type as done in chapters 8 and 9 for the mask mosaic and the crenellation motif. This being said, there are some cautious, more general remarks and observations possible regarding this assemblage of loosely related palatial suites which help to define the relation of the suite in Samosata to this broader 'inter-artefactual domain' (see paragraph 3.3.4).

1) First of all, there are multiple examples of suites that consist of two-rowed lay-outs, with an oblong antechamber that is accessed from a court, and containing a string of rooms with limited access behind this antechamber (e.g. the suites in Jebel Khalid, Tell Beydar and the Redoubt Palace of Dura Europos). If the reconstruction of room XIV as a roofed hall in Samosata is right, it fits well to this type of suites, with the caveat that none of the discussed antechambers is as big and elaborately decorated as room XIV which seems more like a banquet hall than an antechamber.
2) Several of the discussed suites are furthermore perfectly symmetrical (e.g the suites in the Citadel Palace of Dura Europos, Jebel Khalid and Tell Beydar) while others are definitely not (e.g. the suites in the Redoubt Palace of Dura Europos and the Western Palace in Masada). The perfectly symmetrical lay-out of rooms I-V in Samosata makes it belong to the first group.
3) What all suites seem to share is their location at the relative edges of the overall palace, a feature that stands in stark contrast to the central reception rooms in many of the Bronze Age and Iron Age palaces briefly discussed in section 10.3. This is definitely also the case in Samosata, which is located at the western edge of the palace. None of the other examples however have a peripheral corridor that runs along the very edge of the palace; for now, this remains a unique feature of the palace of Samosata.
4) Some, but not all of the discussed suites contain painted and stucco wall decoration in Masonry Style (e.g. the suites in Jebel Khalid, Western Palace of Masada) as well as mosaics in concentric border decoration (e.g. the suites in the Western Palace of Masada), suggestive of a somewhat representative function of these rooms. Such very elaborate decoration is equally encountered in Samosata, where the central room contains the most

elaborate wall painting, perhaps reminiscent of the central room in the Western Palace of Masada.

5) Only one of the discussed suites contains evidence for cultic use, in the palace of Jebel Khalid. If the interpretation of an ancestral gallery connected to an ancestral cult in room V of the palace of Samosata is right (see paragraphs 4.3.1 and 6.2) , these contexts have a commonality, albeit that the cult room in Jebel Khalid was most likely unroofed and showed no evidence for an ancestral gallery.
6) The discussed symmetrical suites are definitely not restricted to lay-outs with a peristyle courtyard (e.g. the suites in Jebel Khalid, Citadel palace of Dura Europos) as there also examples without this feature (e.g. the suites in the Western Palace of Masada, Tell Beydar and the Redoubt Palace of Dura Europos).
7) The discussed symmetrical suites are neither restricted to lay-outs with very long narrow corridors and small rooms (e.g. the suites in the Citadel Palace of Dura Europos) as they can also occur in much more open architectural lay-outs with large courts and rooms (e.g. Jebel Khalid).

These last two observations are of interest on a more interpretative level as well, and I believe here the presented genealogy really proves its worth for our understanding of the suite of Samosata. In almost all of the presented contexts, we have seen that scholars have assigned either 'Greek' or 'Oriental' cultural labels to these architectural lay-outs, sometimes referred to in contrast to a type of decoration or to indicate differences within the lay-out itself. For the 3rd c. BCE palace of Jebel Khalid, we have seen that Jackson considers the lay-out of the suites 'Persian' and opposes it to the 'Greek' peristyle, Masonry Style wall decorations and ritual activities, creating, what Jackson calls, a '*deliberate hybridity*'.[1332] For the equally 3rd c. BCE Citadel Palace of Dura Europos, Downey describes the peristyle court as 'Greek', the large open court as '*different*' and the symmetrical suite as '*unusual*', again creating a cultural, categorical divide within the building that is presented as one of its main characteristics. In the early 2nd c. BCE 'Redoubt Palace', the suites are called *androne*s and clearly designated properly 'Greek', which leads Downey to designate the structure as a 'Hellenistic Greek peristyle type' without any evidence for the existence of a peristyle. Galán calls the symmetrical string of rooms in the mid-2nd c. BCE 'Hellenistic Palace' of Tell Beydar '*purely Mesopotamian'* and makes no reference to any 'Greek' elements; the close similarity of this structure to the 'Redoubt Palace', considered 'Greek' by Downey, is hard to reconcile. Disagreement concerning the cultural designation of the suites continues all up to the later 1st c. BCE Western Palace of Masada, which Kropp describes as an

[1332] Jackson 2016, 335.

elaborate version of Greek/Macedonian types (such as the *(Flügel)dreiraumgruppe,* while Netzer designates it as '*Oriental*'.

This brief genealogical overview of (often opposing) cultural designations in scholarship on these palatial lay-outs in the first place attests of a scholarly tendency towards cultural reductionism (see also chapter 3) similar to the interpretations encountered for the palace of Samosata. However, it also tells us something about the nature of these palatial lay-outs themselves; the fact that seemingly 'hybrid' combinations of 'Greek' and 'Oriental' elements are encountered centuries before the construction of the palace of Samosata makes upholding this categorical divide for Samosata problematic. Indeed, we have seen that, already from at least the 3rd c. BCE onwards, symmetrical suites occur in combination with elements that are either designated 'Greek' or 'Oriental', and that several of these examples (e.g. Jebel Khalid, Dura Europos) were located in the wider region of Syria. These 3rd and 2nd c. BCE palatial lay-outs should be taken much more seriously as active alterations of such dichotomous categorizations; their seemingly 'hybrid' character actively undermined these categorical distinctions and 'de-territorialized' (see chapter 3) many of its presumed elements (among which the suites). Simply said: the modern categories 'Greek' and 'Oriental' thus simply will not do as valid interpretative concepts in 1st c. BCE Samosata because we see them combined in too many instances in the period beforehand. It is very likely that, while their capacity to represent cultural labels like 'Greek' or 'Oriental' watered down, instead, new, different relational capacities emerged for these symmetrical suites. Exploring these potential capacities is the main objective of the final paragraph of this chapter.

10.5. Exploring the capacities of the symmetrical suite in Samosata

In the previous paragraph, I have concluded that the symmetrical suite of Samosata should be understood in relation to a relatively loose, non-standardized group of palatial suites of the 3rd-1st c. BCE. Crucially, what followed from this genealogy of palatial suites is the undesirability of an interpretative framework for such suites that relies solely on the dichotomous cultural reductions 'Greek' and 'Oriental' – especially when it concerns the 1st c. BCE palatial suite in Samosata. However, if such lay-outs indeed were more than merely representing cultural concepts, what else could they do? As I explained in chapter 3, this methodology should be read as a move from interpretation to exploration, suggesting some alternative ways to think about the palatial suites under discussion. This paragraph explores the relational capacities of the symmetrical suite of Samosata in the light of what we know about banqueting practices connected to the ruler cult of Commagene.

In Commagenean scholarship, it has often been suggested that, as the kingdom's capital, Samosata must have contained sanctuaries (*temene*) related to the Commagenean ruler cult.[1333] However, apart from the *dexiosis* reliefs found in and around Samosata (discussed in paragraph 6.5), no other evidence for the presence of the ruler cult has previously been considered. Following from the cautious new interpretation of the architectural lay-out presented in chapter 4 and a comparison with the 'Mosaic Rooms' of Arsameia on the Nymphaios (already discussed in paragraphs 4,3,4/4.3.7/4.3.6/9.3.1 and further developed here), it is however possible to explore here the idea that the symmetrical suite of Samosata was used as a banqueting space that played a role in the Commagenean ruler cult. To do this, we will first consider the available evidence for cultic banqueting in the *hierothesion* of Arsameia on the Nymphaios.

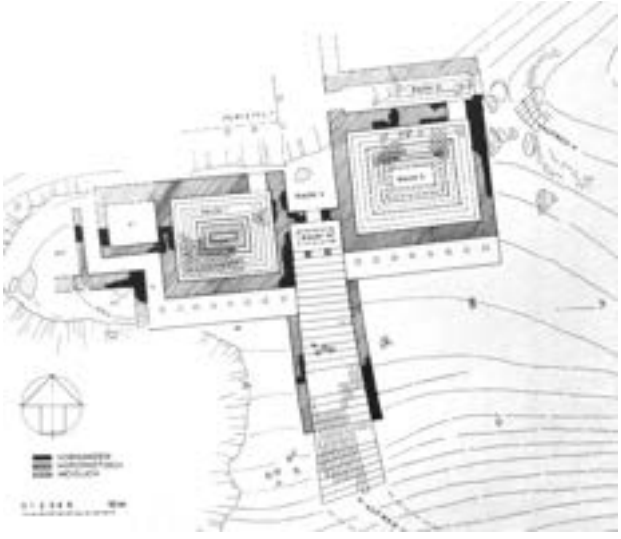

Fig. 10.7. The large mansion with 'Mosaic Rooms' (I and II) in Arsameia on the Nymphaios. Source: Hoepfner 1983, 9, fig. 4.

The site of Arsameia on the Nymphaios (near Eski Kâhta) is located in the north of Commagene, approximately 15 kilometres southwest of Nemrut Dağı, on a flattened hilltop that overlooks the valley of the Nymphaeum, a small tributary river of the Euphrates (see fig. 1.2).[1334] The site

[1333]E.g. Brijder 2014, 132, Jacobs 2014, 43: ‚*Es bestätigt sich die Vermutung, daß den Heiligtümern von Arsameia a. N. und vom Nemrut Dagı eines in Samosata vorausging*.'

[1334] First discovered by Dörner in 1951 and excavated by and Goell in 1953, 1954 and 1956, cf. Dörner and Goell 1963. Hoepfner continued excavations between 1963 and 1967, cf. Hoepfner 1983. See also Waldmann 1973, 82-97; Dörner 1978; Hoepfner 2000; Cohen 2006, 152-153; Blömer and Winter 2011, 76-87; Brijder 2014, 238-297 and Versluys 2017a, 69-79. In several places throughout this dissertation I have referred to this site in relation to the palace of Samosata already. See paragraph 4.3.4 for the use of roofs; paragraph 4.3.6 for a connection to the rulers of Samosata; paragraph 4.3.7 for its chronology; and paragraph 9.3.1 for a comparison with the mosaics. In this discussion, I will refer back to many of the descriptions and interpretations I have proposed in these earlier paragraphs.

contains a large rock inscription in Greek known as the Great Cult Inscription, which tells us it belonged to the *hierothesion* of king Mithridates I Kallinkos, under whose reign the sanctuary probably first took shape.[1335] It provides us with cult regulations that contain precise proscriptions, rewards and punishments related to the royal ruler cult. Important other finds concern several *dexiosis* stelai featuring king Antiochos I and the usual Commagenean deities and fragments of colossal statuary, indicating the presence of a similar colossal statue group as witnessed on Nemrut Dağı. Concerning the topography of the overall site we are largely reliant on the excavations by Hoepfner, but the reliability of his reconstructions is debated.[1336] Hoepfner suggested that, in order to reach what he considered the centre of the sanctuary, at the eastern end of the flattened hilltop, one would have to follow a 'processional way' that be passed along three '*Sockelanlagen*' marked by *dexiosis* reliefs, and set along entrances to a '*Felsenhalle*' and a 158,1 m. deep *'Felstunnel'*.[1337]

According to the reconstructions by Hoepfner, the processional way led through a large mansion with 'Mosaic Rooms' I (in the West) and II (in the East) (fig. 10.7), which allowed entrance of the eastern (central) part of the plateau, where the colossal statue group would be located. Due to later pillaging practices and erosion at the northern side of the plateau, our knowledge of this mansion with its 'Mosaic Rooms' remains very limited and Hoepfner's reconstructions cannot be easily verified nowadays.[1338] A large, 7,5-6,5 m. wide staircase constructed in light sand-limestone blocks provided entrance to the structure in the centre. Hoepfner reconstructs the staircase with circa 26 steps, two intermediate landings and side walls constructed with rectangular ashlars.[1339] An entrance with a distyle *in antis* led into a small 'passage room' or 'Propylaia' of 5,54 m. wide that was located between 'Mosaic Rooms' I and II and which would have originally contained a mosaic. A wide doorway (2,90 m.) gave entrance to a next room, which is also believed to have contained a mosaic floor and continued into a narrow corridor towards the east, leading out of the structure towards the eastern part of the plateau. 'Mosaic Room I' (10,76 m. x 9,22 m.) was probably entered from the north, and contained Masonry Style wall painting as well as a mosaic in concentric border style surrounding a central rectangular *emblema* which depicted an amphora with two dolphin-like sea creatures symmetrically placed on either side of it.[1340] 'Mosaic Room II' (14,90 m. x 13,85 m.), entered from the north, is slightly bigger than room I and located 0,60 m.

[1335] As discussed in paragraph 4.3.7 of this dissertation.
[1336] Versluys 2017a, 75: '*in general his interpretations and reconstructions should be handled with care'*. A criticism also dealt with extensively by Brijder 2014.
[1337] See Allgöwer 1993, 270-272 for an overview of existing interpretations.
[1338] As such, the description that follows is largely reliant on Hoepfner 1983 with the critical remarks of Brijder 2014. A thorough cleaning campaign with targeted excavation of this part of the sanctuary would be highly desirable.
[1339] Only the lower part of the stairs was preserved, but the 30% gradient makes a continuation of the stairs further north necessary.
[1340] There is ample evidence that both these rooms were roofed. See paragraph 4.3.4 for a discussion.

higher. It contained a similar mosaic in concentric border style as well as traces of red painted decoration on the lowest sections of the eastern wall. Hoepfner initially suggested a peristyle court north of 'Mosaic Room I' but in more recent publications it has become clear that this cannot be substantiated.[1341] Notably, the structure yielded a large amount of column fragments in the Doric order as well as multiple fragments of medium-sized and small-sized columns in the Corinthian order. The Doric columns were almost all found on the slope south of the structure and near or on the staircase. In the same location, ca. 20 fragments of life-size statues in sand-limestone were found that are interpreted as belonging to a statue group, most probably forming an ancestral gallery.[1342]

Hoepfner proposed that the function of 'Mosaic Rooms' stood in close relation to the cult activities in the *hierothesion* as described in the Great Cult Inscription, suggesting that they were used as banqueting halls for cult meals, specifically for elite and prominent guests.[1343] His reconstruction of the processional way running through the Mosaic Room structure formed another argument for this proposed integration. Brijder followed Hoepfner's ideas and calculated the capacity of the 'Mosaic Rooms', claiming that it had room for a banquet of approximately 30 people,[1344] which indeed would suggest a relatively exclusive group.[1345] Brijder points to a section in the Great Cult

[1341] Brijder 2014, 280, who also notes that in the map of Hoepfner (Hoepfner 2012, 119 fig. 95), a question mark is added after '*peristylium*'.

[1342] These included 1) a limestone head turning to its left, most probably depicting king Antiochos I wearing the 'Armenian tiara' and 2) a limestone female head turning to her right, wearing a diadem (found south of room I), perhaps representing queen Loadice or queen Isias; 3) eight fragments of one (or more) male statue(s), which might represent Mithridates I, and 4) several fragments of statues representing lions, eagles and bulls. The fact that the well preserved heads (1 and 2) could turn towards each other has led to the interpretation that *'they could be very well related to each other as a couple (…) It is possible that the heads either (1) are belonging to a pair of statues, representing Antiochus I and his wife, Isias, or (2) the female head is representing Laodice, Antiochus' mother and Mithradates I' wife, and is belonging to a pair of statues with Mithradates I (head not preserved), or, in that case, (3) the head of Antiochus I is belonging to a pair of statues with Isias, of which the head has not been preserved'* (Brijder 2014, 275). Whatever the specific constellation and identification of the statue fragments, it seems likely that we are dealing with a statue group representing members of the royal family. See Brijder 2014, 276. The location of this statue group has been a matter of discussion, related to the nature of the front side of the structure. Dörner initially reconstructed two deep terraces of 3,50 m. in front of Mosaic Rooms I and II, with a colonnade of 4-meter-high Doric columns to support the extended roofs of rooms I and II. Hoepfner's 1983 reconstruction, however, suggested that the statues were located on top of these 4-meter-high columns, in a similar way to the tomb monuments of Karakuş and Sesönk. He reconstructed a row of 8 columns west of the staircase and another row of 8 columns east from the staircase. Brijder and others have rightly argued that this reconstruction cannot be supported by archaeological evidence, if only because the amount of statue fragments is simply too little to fill 16 columns. As such, it seems most likely that the columns were indeed used to create a colonnade on both terraces, carrying the roofs of Mosaic rooms I and II, an interpretation that Hoepfner probably also ascribed to in a later publication, cf. Hoepfner 2012. If this is right, the statue group might have been located in the colonnade in front of the structure or, as Brijder states, '*in those rooms of the complex that were not banqueting* rooms' (Brijder 2014, 280).

[1343] Hoepfner 2000, 61; Hoepfner 2012, 119.

[1344] Brijder 2014, 280-297. He suggests that room I allowed for four *klinai* and room II for six *klinai*, with three men per *kline*.

[1345] He states: '*The banquets for this relatively small group of privileged men (30) must have had a more or less private character'* (Brijder 2014, 280).

Inscription where, he suggests, such social differentiation during the cult festivities is in fact hinted at: *'On the birthdays of my father and myself – which I have decreed to be celebrated monthly throughout the year and forever – the priest shall […] provide for a feast for the whole garrisons and all citizens; on this feast the priest shall richly supply the royal tables with appropriate food and fill up the kraters with pure wine from the winepress and water so that it can be mixed. Together with the garrison commander he shall welcome the detachment on guard of the region as well as the whole multitude of native population and provide for the common enjoyment of the feast'*.[1346] Brijder suggests a distinction between 1) the garrison commander and representatives of the garrison and the detachment on guard of the region and possibly other selected elite men who would have banquets round the 'royal tables' inside the banqueting halls, and 2) the 'citizens' and the 'whole multitude of native population', who would wine and dine in the open-air area in the eastern section of the plateau. The latter, according to Brijder, would not dine from the 'royal tables' but rather from 'sacred tabled', which are mentioned in the Great Cult inscription of Nemrut Dağı.[1347]

The specific character of such social differentiation remains rather speculative and cannot be based solely on the cultic proscriptions of one inscription. However, the importance of cultic banqueting and the integrated role of the 'Mosaic Rooms' in the *hierothesion* seem probable enough, and might provide us with a model to explore the kinds of activities that were afforded also by the symmetrical suite in Samosata. As discussed already throughout this dissertation, there are several strong similarities between the 'Mosaic Rooms' of Arsameia on the Nymphaios and the rooms of the symmetrical suite in Samosata, in terms of room size and roof construction (paragraph 4.3.4), the use of Masonry Style Wall painting (paragraph 7.3.4), the use of architectural decoration in the Commagenean Corinthian Capital orders I and II (paragraphs 5.2.1 and 5.2.2), the identical mosaic decoration (paragraph 9.3.1), and evidence for ancestral galleries (paragraph 6.2). It is moreover likely, as discussed in paragraph 6.5, that a sanctuary belonging to the ruler cult (*temenos*) was present on top of the *höyük*, evidenced specifically by inscription stelai Sa (ID688) and Sy (ID689). These strong similarities probably granted the symmetrical suite in Samosata with the capacity to function as a banqueting space in the context of the ruler cult, with the royal palace integrated into the *temenos* in a similar way as suggested for the 'Mosaic Rooms' in Arsameia on the Nymphaios. Following Brijder's calculations for Arsameia, the palace of Samosata could have provided room for at least 48 people.[1348] It is likely that, if indeed these rooms were used for such cultic banqueting, the social groups who participated were limited to members of the court, local elites, high profile guests, and perhaps, as suggested for Arsameia, the

[1346] A11–31.
[1347] N42-45: '*The whole multitude that happened to be present, both the native and the foreigners who stream hither [are invited to the] sacred tables richly-laden with appropriate foods'.*
[1348] Based on Brijder's model, room XIV allows for ca. 10 *klinai* (30 people) and room XV another 6 *klinai* (18 people). Note that Kropp 2013, 170 estimates room for approximately 20 guests in room XV.

garrison commander and representatives of the garrison and the detachment on guard of the region. More than any of the suites discussed in the genealogy of this chapter, such large scale, cultic banqueting seems reminiscent of, for instance, the Square Building of Nisa, where Invernizzi has reconstructed an enormous 2nd c. BCE structure solely intended for royal banquets connected to the Parthian monarchy.[1349] Equally comparable is the pavilion of Ptolemy II, known through Athenaeus' citation of the description of Kallixenos of Rhodes, who mentions similarly huge banquets, with space for 130 *klinai*.[1350] The limited preservation of the palace of Samosata as well as the Mosaic Room structure in Arsameia on the Nymphaios in the end make it impossible to compare these royal banquets in terms of actual scale however.

10.6. Conclusions

This case study has demonstrated that the scholarly treatment of the symmetrical suite in Samosata has been subject to cultural reductionism, designating either a 'Greek' or an 'oriental' label to the particular lay-out. I have argued that it is not very insightful to ask whether the form originally goes back to either the *(Flügel)Dreiraumgruppe* or the 'Near Eastern reception suites'. Rather, I have demonstrated that there are multiple more recent, 3rd-1st c. BCE parallels for (symmetrical) suites in palatial architecture, which are much more telling if we want to know what such suites *had become* or *were becoming* by the 1st c. BCE. Although the proposed suite genealogy contains wildly varying examples and cannot be considered a clearly universalized and standardized type, nonetheless it was possible to observe several traits that were alternatingly shared by different examples from the group. Importantly, the genealogy showed that palatial architectural lay-outs with seemingly contradictive elements in terms of cultural adherence already occurred in the 3rd c. BCE, a notion that undermines the dichotomous hybridity models previously used in scholarship dealing with the architectural lay-out of Samosata. In the last paragraph, I have tentatively explored potential capacities of the symmetrical suite in terms of its use, pointing to the close resemblance between the suite of Samosata and the 'Mosaic Rooms' in Arsameia on the Nymphaios. On the basis of this comparison, I have suggested that the symmetrical suite allowed for banquets in the context of the Commagenean ruler cult and an integration of these in a possible *temenos* on top of the capital's *höyük*.

[1349] Invernizzi 2000, 40-50.
[1350] Ath. 5.196-97. See Murray 1996, 21-22.