ANCIENT DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE: THE PAST TO EXPLAIN THE PRESENT

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Introduction

Our built environment is being proliferated with structures that reflect diverse architectural idioms,¹ including those of contextualism, fictivism, and rationalism.² The idiomatic diversity that these structures reflect is partly attributable to the post-World War II architects who criticize the idiom of Modern architecture.³ As this diversity continues to persist toward the end of the twentieth century, the following questions may be raised about how this phenomenon relates to the larger context of architectural history.

- Is the post-World War II idiomatic diversity part of the period of Modern architecture?
- Does the diversity suggest that we are approaching the end of the period of Modern architecture and that we should anticipate the beginning of a new period? and,
- Does the diversity indicate that the new period will be characteristically diverse?

In responding to these questions, this paper applies a paradigm⁴ to describe the current proliferation of diverse idioms in relation to the larger context of architectural history. The paradigm is correlated with changes in dwelling form in Ancient Anatolia as well as with instances of idiomatic diversity from other times in architectural history. One of the objectives is to show that, following Tafuri,⁵ an active application of precedents can be used to explain current architectural phenomena.
The thirteen levels at Tarsus were sorted by the archaeologist into two groups, each a cultural or stylistic period. The groups are known archaeologically as Early Bronze II (or EB II; from ca. 2800 to ca. 2500 B.C.)\textsuperscript{10} and EB III (to ca. 2050 B.C.). In the following discussion, each of these periods at Tarsus is an idiomatic cycle with two sequential parts, the first with uniformity and the second with diversity in the architectural idioms that occurred at the site.

Micro cycle I: The two parts of Early Bronze II at Tarsus

The architectural idiom of EB II appears fully established already at the beginning of the period in level IIa. The idiom is a two-room rowhouse with a deep rectangular front room and a shallow back room that occasionally was subdivided. The entry from the street into each building is in the front wall, through a doorway that flanks one of the side walls.

![Diagram of Tarsus EB IIa, IIb, IIc, IId](image)

Tarsus EB IIa\textsuperscript{11} IIb IIc IId

The idiom of a two-room rowhouse with flanking entry was passed by the occupants of level IIa to those of levels IIb, c, and d. It remained intact, despite increased stress on the occupants when level IIb was destroyed by a fire and level IIc was fortified, in anticipation of an invasion. In time, the dwellings and their rooms became smaller, but the idiom of a two-room rowhouse with flanking entry remained essentially the same in level IId as it was in level IIa. Persistence of the idiom indicates that the occupants maintained nearly constant attitudes toward their dwelling form and perceived no need to change the idiom as they progressed from one level to the next. As the cultural factors and corresponding dwelling forms are essentially unchanged throughout this part of EB II, it is correlated with the uniform phase of the cycle paradigm at the micro scale.

After a fire terminated level IId, the occupants rebuilt Tarsus but, this time, with less commitment to their architectural tradition. The established idiom of a two-room rowhouse with flanking entry shows signs of disintegrating as it evolved through levels Ile and f. It seems that alongside the two-room combination emerged a one-room, hall-like idiom.
While the Tarsus occupants progressed through levels IIa, b, c, and d, the established two-room idiom was able to accommodate their constantly evolving cultural patterns. By level IIe, however, the accumulated cultural change was extensive, and the two-room form was no longer a totally viable idiom. As alternative interpretations occurred alongside the established but disintegrating idiom during levels IIe and f, this part of EB II is correlated with the diverse phase of the cycle paradigm at the micro scale.

Micro cycle 2: The two parts of Early Bronze III at Tarsus

Level IIIf was destroyed by fire, initiating radical departures in cultural attitudes which can be seen in the pottery and architectural idioms of level IIIa at Tarsus. This abrupt change marked the beginning of a new stylistic period and the next cycle of sequential uniformity and diversity.

Life during the EB III period was socially peaceful but punctuated with frequent earthquakes. Several architectural idioms occurred during this period. The primary idiom is an axial hall rowhouse with an entrance centered on the short end, facing a public space.

The axial hall idiom was not intact throughout the period. It originated as a hall and shallow porch in level IIIa. In levels IIIb and c, the porch was made deeper and enclosed, and a doorway was made at the rear of the axial hall to connect it with supplemental structures. In levels IIIc and d,
side chambers were added. Enclosing the porches and adding supplemental structures and side chambers contributed to the disintegration of the axial hall idiom; it is hardly distinguishable in level IIId and disappears in IIIe. At the same time that the axial hall idiom was being expanded and elaborated, a square one-room idiom (possibly from northern Syria) began to occur alongside. The multiple idioms occur first in level IIIb and continue through level IIIe.

Tarsus EB IIIe  IIIf  MB I

Levels IIIc through IIIf reflect dramatic shifts in cultural material. The disintegration and disappearance of one architectural idiom and the introduction of another suggests that the second part of EB III at Tarsus was a time of diversity. In level IIIf, there are only sketchy remains of structures of which none could yield a decipherable plan. After this level, a new cycle commenced, associated with the stylistic period known archaeologically as Middle Bronze Age I (or MB I). A new house form appeared during the MB I cycle with features that were popular in the EB III levels.

Conclusion

The idiomatic cycle paradigm was applied at the micro scale to illustrate how the EB II and EB III stylistic periods at Tarsus each comprise a two-phase idiomatic cycle. The earlier levels of EB II and EB III were part of a uniform phase, and the later levels of these periods were part of a diverse phase.

Further comparison of the evidence at Tarsus can be made by applying the paradigm at the mini scale. The two-room rowhouse persisted as the established idiom through both parts of the EB II period. The alternate interpretations which occurred alongside the established idiom in the later levels of EB II paved the way for a testing of multiple idioms in EB III. Thus, EB II is correlated with the uniform phase and EB III is correlated with the diverse phase of the cycle paradigm at the mini scale. The testing of multiple idioms in EB III led to the discovery of a new architectural form. Discovery of this new form marked the close of one idiomatic cycle and the inception of another.
Mini scale: The Renaissance and Mannerist periods

The idiomatic cycle paradigm is now applied at the mini scale to illustrate how two stylistic periods, namely the Renaissance and Mannerist periods in Italy, can be regarded together as the uniform and diverse phases of a single cycle.

Alberti\(^\text{12}\)  Rossellino

The Renaissance period extended from the mid-fourteenth century to the early sixteenth century. The established architectural idiom, made popular by Alberti and continued by Rossellino, was based on classical ideals from the Greek and Roman periods of the Classical epoch. The idiom includes the use of the classical orders in pilasters and cornices to carefully proportion the height and width of a building and the inter-relationship of its individual parts. The idiom also includes the hierarchical use of the orders and surface textures from the ground floor to the top floor. As this idiom dominated design throughout the first one hundred and fifty years of the Renaissance, these years comprise the uniform part of the period.

Bramante\(^\text{13}\)  Raphael  Peruzzi

Early in the sixteenth century, architects such as Bramante, Raphael, and Peruzzi began to interpret the classical rules in alternate ways. They continued to use the orders, but were more creative in their designs. For instance, they no longer used the hierarchical treatment of the facades, thus providing for greater variety. They used the orders as a decorative medium as well as an ordering medium. By projecting the columns from the walls and using sculptural decoration, they created greater depth in their facades. These alternate interpretations characterize the second part of the Renaissance period as one of diversity. Despite the variations, the classical idiom persisted throughout the Renaissance period which, consequently, is correlated with the uniform phase of the cycle paradigm at the mini scale.
By the middle of the sixteenth century, however, architects like Michelangelo and Romano began to search for a new idiom which would be more in accord with the attitudes of society. This search signalled the end of the Renaissance period and the beginning of the Mannerist period. Overall, the Mannerist period is characterized by diversity, fueled by a searching for and testing of multiple idioms. Characteristics of these idioms included the use of the classical orders in unconventional ways, such as over-sized columns and broken pediments. Other characteristics included the use of a column which was not one of the classical orders.

The paradigm was applied at the mini scale to illustrate how the Renaissance and Mannerist stylistic periods together comprise a two-phase idiomatic cycle. As the classical idiom persisted throughout the Renaissance period, this time is correlated with the uniform phase of the cycle. As multiple idioms occurred during the Mannerist period, it is correlated with the diverse phase at the mini scale.

Application of the paradigm

Architectural history was interpreted above as a succession of cycles in the use of architectural idioms. The interpretation was made at two scales of time: mini and micro. At the micro scale, EB II at Tarsus and the Renaissance in Italy were each described as characteristically uniform periods of the Ancient and Renaissance epochs, respectively. Similarly, the EB III period and the Mannerist period were regarded as essentially diverse. Comprising each of these stylistic periods, in turn, were described two sequential parts, one that was uniform and one that was diverse. The current condition of architecture is examined now in a similar manner.

The idiom of Modern architecture has persisted throughout most of the twentieth century. It was conceived just prior to World War I and was accepted and venerated during the time between the two world wars, when it clearly supported the aspirations of our evolving society. Since World War II, we have criticized the Modern idiom, questioning its viability in
light of our current attitudes and circumstances. Criticism and questions stimulate our production of diverse architectural idioms which are alternate interpretations of the Modern idiom.

Finally, the paradigm is applied to describe the current condition of architecture and address the questions that were posed at the outset.

- The acceptance and veneration of the idiom of Modern architecture during the time between the two world wars is correlated with the first phase of the cycle paradigm at the mini scale. The diversity of architectural idioms since World War II is correlated with the second phase. The two phases, known as Modern and Postmodern, are the two sequential parts of the twentieth century, a single stylistic period. The post-World War II idiomatic diversity, therefore, is an integral part of the period of Modern architecture.

- Our criticism and questioning of the Modern idiom stimulate our production of alternate interpretations of the idiom. These interpretations contribute to the disintegration and eventual disappearance of Modern as a viable architectural idiom. The criticism and questioning of an established idiom and the production of alternate interpretations characterize the diverse, second phase of a cycle at the micro scale and, thus, the end of the stylistic period. These characteristics indicate that we are approaching the end of the period of Modern architecture and that we should anticipate the beginning of a new stylistic period.

- The persistence of the Modern idiom gives the twentieth century the qualities of a uniform stylistic period. According to the cycle paradigm at the mini scale, the alternate interpretations of the established idiom which occur in the second part of a uniform stylistic period give way to a new period characterized by a searching for and testing of multiple idioms. The occurrence of multiple idioms will give the forthcoming stylistic period qualities that are characteristically diverse.

The twenty-first century is likely to host a new stylistic period, with qualities that appeared in previous times of diversity in history, such as the EB III period at Tarsus and the Mannerist period in Italy. The new period probably will commence with a constructive, positive searching for and testing of multiple idioms in order to identify one that will be in accord with our attitudes and circumstances. Once accepted, this idiom is certain to have a lasting influence on the design of our future architecture.
Notes

1. Architecture is a "vehicle of meaning" (Klotz 1988, p. 2). Architectural idioms are communicating expressions (through plans, facades, etc.) that are peculiar to, or characteristic of, a particular people, place, and time.

2. Tendencies which contribute to producing the current idioms are noted in Klotz (1988), Sanderson (1981 pp. 12-27), and Jencks (1977 pp. 80-126).

3. For a critique of the Modern idiom and the attitudes which fostered it see Broin (1976) and Portoghesi (1982).

4. This paper freely interprets the Kuhn (1962, p. viii) definition of the term paradigm as one of several "scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners."

5. Tafuri (1968, p. 236) argues for the use of precedents to explain and contest the current condition of architecture; Harlan (1989) calls for the application of historical studies to provide new insight into the present.

6. The notion of using a pair of polar opposites to chronologically differentiate art historical events was inspired by Wölfflin (1932).

7. The analysis was reported in Decker and Schaar (1983).

8. The excavation report was published by Goldman (1956).

9. Tarsus was settled with hardly no interruption from the fifth through the second millennium. Evidence of EB I, ca. 3200 - 2800 B.C., is well represented but separate buildings from this period cannot be discerned.

10. This chronological dating was published by Yakar (1979).


12. Alberti: Palazzo Rucellai (Florence, begun 1446); Rossellino: Palazzo Piccolomini (Pienza, begun 1462); illustrations after Murray (1971, pp. 54, 70).


References


