
The Culture of the Villa between Economy and Ideology

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Résumé

The idea of the panel is to consider the villa, this special form of dwelling, in its historical development, trying to understand the use of its spaces over time through the thoughts and culture of the owners and their social and economic histories between the eighth century B.C. and the seventh century A.D. The topic was chosen for the characteristic flexibility of these buildings which changes appearance and function (sometimes even radically) transforming themselves into something different compared to the beginning.

The Mediterranean man has always been attracted to the land, as well as considering it a significant source of income. But its charm also lies in the possibility that it offers of a more intimate existence which over time makes the villa and its living space almost a place where public and private life come together: the villa is conceived as an open space to be experienced and rejoiced in, appearing as the apodictic image of the absence of social conflicts linked to the city in a condition of psychophysical well-being and aesthetic enjoyment. Therefore, it occupies a central position between fructus and otium which progressively tend to prevail over each other reciprocally. And this continuous and progressive action produces the forms that the villa takes in its history. From an economic point of view, the villa can change in size, purchasing the adjacent land or losing it to other nearby owners, until it progressively changes until it becomes the focus of the Curtense economy. From an ideological point of view, the villa inevitably transforms over time due to historical-social and economic-cultural contingencies, modifying the use of its spaces or multiplying them or eliminating them because they are now useless, or perhaps just updating the decoration to adapt to fashions weather. And so it provides us with a wide range of solutions and variations, all with both an aesthetic-ideological and a purely economic meaning. Furthermore, it has already been understood that sometimes the villa retains its more or less original layout or varies to respond to the geological or economic changes of the surrounding area, but also that, for example, in late antiquity it also became very sumptuous and then real fortified production centers. Therefore, each example is a story to tell which always involves the building, its spaces, occupants and territory in a mutually corresponding relationship.

From this perspective, we question the archeology of the spaces experienced through the villa and its characteristics and what can still be reconstructed regarding its meanings and functions. The purpose of this panel is to give the possibility of an update and a dynamic discussion on the key factors of this topic such as the messages of its decorations and furnishings, the changes in function and use that have occurred or even their simple alterations, the action of natural and climatic phenomena, as well as any different opinions on the living in a villa in Antiquity.

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Mots-Clés: villa, forms of dwelling, culture of the owners, economy, long, term archaeology (eighth century B.C. to seventh century A.D)