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Cultural Diffusion in the Architecture of the Ancient World (on the Example of the Cult of Isis in the 3rd Century BC – 2nd Century AD)

Abstract. The practice of borrowing and mixing architectural forms and meanings from different cultural environments dates back to the architecture of the ancient world and is still relevant today. Therefore, discovering its origins, mechanisms and causes of development is an important subject in the theory and history of architecture. The purpose of the study is to introduce the concept of cultural diffusion, as a methodological technique for mixing architectural forms from different artistic environments, which contributes to the development of qualitatively new solutions that form new architectural styles and synthesise new meanings. It is also vital to substantiate the phenomena of cultural diffusion as the first and necessary stage of subsequent processes of development of architectural meaning and shape – the stage of conscious and reasonable choice of an architectural prototype for a new design. The main material for the study is objects related to the cult of Isis – one of the most common religious cults in the architecture of the ancient world, which belonged to the Greco-Roman civilisation. In terms of methodology, the study is based on the analysis and systematisation of papers on architectural objects associated with the cult of Isis, and the results of visual observations (description and comparative analysis). Using the example of architectural objects associated with the cult of Isis, the study demonstrates that in the architecture of the ancient world, various methodological approaches were developed in architectural form-making: both autonomous processes in different cultures and mixed, which involved the capabilities and means of various cultural environments, opening unlimited prospects for the development of architectural form and meaning. Scientific originality is the interpretation of the process of cultural diffusion as an important methodological prerequisite for a new architectural form and meaning development. This determines the practical importance of the study, since the phenomenon of cultural diffusion, as a methodological technique for the architect's work, is still relevant today

Keywords: Ancient Egypt, Hellenistic Greece, imperial Rome, architectural form making, interaction of cultures, temples of Isis

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important problems in architectural theory is the emergence and development of an architectural form. How does a new form arise, and why are such forms of buildings appear during a certain period of development, which later will be called the embodiment of certain architectural styles? What is the driving force of form-making and what are its methods? This problem may remain rhetorical in the theory of architecture but attempts to answer these questions will always be relevant for researchers.

This study notes that in the architecture of the ancient world, mechanisms for generating a new architectural form were laid, one of the prerequisites for a new form establishment was the phenomenon of cultural diffusion – the blurring of clear boundaries between different cultural environments, their interpenetration, and enrichment. The combination of elements from the different environments in one artwork was an important methodological technique in design and opened new opportunities for form-making.

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The scientific originality in this study is not the object under consideration – the use of Greek motifs in Egyptian Architecture or Egyptian motifs in Greco-Roman art in the example of the cult of Isis, but the interpretation of this process as the first and necessary stage for the establishment of such a phenomenon as historicism in architecture, where borrowing and conscious mixing and combination of elements from previous cultures is the methodological basis for the architect's creativity. This determines the practical importance of this study, since the phenomenon of cultural diffusion, as a methodological technique for the architect's work, is still relevant today.

The study is based on papers covering the architecture of Hellenistic Egypt and imperial Rome, in which the leading subject is the idea of mutual influence and mixing of different cultural traditions. The general theoretical basis was the work of R. Hausser, G.F. Chiana & K. Lembke [1] "Interpretatio Romana/Graeca/indigena. Religiöse Kommunikation zwischen Globalisierung und Partikularisierung". The study substantiates the phenomenon of "interpretatio Graeca" – the process of finding analogues to other deities in one's own religious tradition. This interpretation is an essential theoretical prerequisite for the development of cultural diffusion. J. Candeias Sales [2] in the study "Political Ideas Expressed by Visual Narratives: The Case of the Ptolemaic Egyptian Temples" explores the iconography of Egyptian temples from the time of the Ptolemies, connecting its themes and plots with the political goals of the ruling dynasty, to legitimise non-Egyptian pharaohs as the legitimate rulers of Egypt. For this purpose, the entire dictionary of millennial Egyptian artistic tools of "symbolic codified meaning" was used in combination with new Hellenistic symbols of the new power. The studies of M. Minas-Nerpel [3] "Egyptian Temples" and "Pharaoh and Temple Building in the Fourth Century BCE" [4] are devoted to the architecture and decoration of temples in Ptolemaic Egypt.

A separate group consists of studies devoted to the cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis in the architecture of the Greco-Roman world since the process of cultural exchange is investigated on its example. The subject of Isis is not fundamentally new and is widely discussed in the scientific literature. Some aspects of the cult functioning in Ancient Rome and their importance in the political and social systems are analysed based on the papers of E. Huzar [5] "Roman-Egyptian relations in Delos", C. Teixeira [6] "The Cult of Isis in Rome: Some aspects of its Reception and the Testimony of Apuleius' *Asinus Aureus*", V. Broadbent [7] "Augustus, Egypt, and Propaganda", in generalised works [8; 9], P.J.E. Davies [10] "Aegyptiaca in Rome: *Adventus* and *Romanitas*. In *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*", O. Perechko [11] "Religious policy of the Roman government of the principate era (I-II Centuries AD): Traditional and foreign cults", L.H. Petersen [12; 13] "The Places of Roman Isis: Between Egyptomania, Politics, and Religion".

An important basis for the study was papers devoted to individual objects of the cult of Isis in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome: E. Huzar [5] "Roman-Egyptian relations in Delos" (architectural features of the Temple of Isis

on the island of Delos), V. Kockel [14] "Towns and Tombs: Three-dimensional Documentation of Archaeological Sites in the Kingdom of Naples in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries", M.E. Moormann [15] "The temple of Isis at Pompeii", I.A. Bragantini [16] "Note on the Temple of Isis at Beneventum". They discover the history of the uprising of objects and analyse the features of their architectural design in the context of the influences of Egyptian culture.

The architectural features of Villa Adriana in Tivoli were analysed from the publications of Z. Mari & S. Sgalambro [17] "The Antinoeion of Hadrian's Villa: Interpretation and Architectural Reconstruction", Z. Mari [18] "Villa Adriana" & Ch. Jencks [19]. The first two publications were important not only from a historical standpoint but also because they present the reconstruction of the villa. Aspects of the use and mixing of forms of different cultures in the architecture of Villa Hadrian were also examined in the study of S. Linda [20] "The Phenomenon of the "Greek Renaissance" in the Architecture of Imperial Rome". Thus, the papers presented above formed a solid scientific foundation, since the importance and features of the cult of Isis in the ancient world were determined on their basis, its influence on the architecture of objects associated with the cult, and reconstructions of buildings that do not exist today were presented.

However, the issue of cultural diffusion as a methodological basis for the development of architecture was not considered. This determines the scientific originality of this study: the interpretation of the phenomenon of cultural diffusion has become a prerequisite for the search for new meanings in the architecture of the ancient world and remains an important methodological technique in modern design practice.

The purpose of the study is to demonstrate that cultural diffusion, or interaction, is an important mechanism of form-making in architecture, which contributes to the development of qualitatively new solutions that reflect the characteristic features of various cultural environments. This is demonstrated by the example of objects belonging to the cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis since this particular cult was one of the most widespread at the turn of the millennia before and after the common era in Greco-Roman civilisation. It is also important to show that the practice of cultural diffusion has become an essential prerequisite for subsequent processes of conscious interpenetration and mixing of architectural forms from different environments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The general philosophical basis was the dialectical method, which consists of cognition of reality in its inconsistency, integrity, and development. The object of research appears as an important link in the solid, indissoluble process of architecture development, the appearance of which is due to certain reasons, and which itself becomes the foundation for subsequent architectural development.

The following empirical and theoretical research methods were used in the study. Empirical methods included: observation, description, and photo fixation of objects under study. Theoretical methods included working with literary sources (analysis, systematisation, and generalisation of

scientific monographs and papers); the analysing of objects according to the following criteria: planning structure, characteristic details and fragments; the semiotic analysis to identify symbolic meanings of objects; synthesis, comparison, and generalisation methods were used to form conclusions.

The first stage included the determination of the study subject, outlining the chronological boundaries of the study: this is the time approximately from the 3rd century BC – to the 2nd century AD – the time of the spread of the cult of Isis. The territorial boundaries of the study were also defined – countries that belonged to the Greco-Roman civilisation, where the cult of Isis was most widespread: Ptolemaic Egypt, Ancient Greece, and Rome.

In the second stage, based on papers, specific objects were identified for analysis: in Egypt, these are temples from the time of the Ptolemies (the temple of Khnum in Esna, the temple of Sebek, Hathor and Khonsu in Kom Ombo, the complex of the Temple of Isis on Philae island near Assuan), in Ancient Greece – the temple of Isis on the island of Delos, and in Ancient Rome – the temple of Isis and Serapis in Rome, the temples of Isis in Pompeii (frescoes are kept in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples) and Benvenuto. Separately, another object was used to complete the analysis – Villa Adriana in Tivoli near Rome. Although the architecture of the villa is not directly related to the cult of Isis, it is nevertheless a typical example of the final phase of cultural diffusion in architecture – the conscious involvement of another culture in one object to generate new forms and meanings.

In the third stage, all identified objects were examined, and their description and photo recordings were performed. Unfortunately, many of them have become ruins or minor remains (the temple of Isis and Serapis in Rome, the temple of Isis in Benvenuto, the objects of Villa Hadrian in Tivoli), so the text part of the study is based on the analysis of literary sources that are devoted to the history of their erection, development, and scientific reconstructions. The analysis of the papers was conducted in parallel since this is an important part of the methodology of this study. Works of general nature and those devoted to individual objects were analysed.

The fourth stage included the analysis from the aspect of planning design, borrowing elements from another cultural environment, their importance in the overall architectural image of the building and the meaning of the object. Also at this stage, the comparison of the objects was conducted.

During the last, fifth stage, methods of systematisation and generalisation were used to formulate the conclusions of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Hellenisation of Egyptian architecture during the Ptolemaic period. The creation of the Empire of Alexander the Great in the 3rd century BC substantially influenced the worldview of the people of that time since the new society was a cultural synthesis of East and West. This was a time of widespread use of various mystical trends, characterised by religious and philosophical syncretism. A unique example is Ptolemaic Hellenistic Egypt, where the emergence of new cults was closely linked to the geopolitical situation, in the context of which religion was skillfully used for specific ideological purposes to strengthen power. Ptolemaic Egypt was home to representatives of various ethnic groups, dominated by the Egyptians and Greeks, who created new syncretic types of artworks that absorbed the features of both traditional Egyptian and Hellenistic culture. Such an example is the cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis, which changed substantially in Hellenistic times due to the interaction of cultural and religious traditions of different peoples. Nevertheless, the modernised Cult of Isis very quickly gained popularity among the local residents. Probably, one of the reasons was the phenomenon of “interpretatio Graeca”, that is, a process during which the Greeks found analogues to other deities among their own religious tradition since the elements of the cult of the Egyptian gods easily fit into the religious consciousness of the Greeks [1]. Thus, Isis was identified with Demeter, who was credited with the unique power of fertility and maintenance of life on Earth (Fig. 1). At that time, the cult of Isis was a serious rival to early Christianity and Mithraism. These processes were also reflected in the architecture.



Figure 1. Marble statue of Isis from the Temple of Isis in Pompeii. 1st century AD

Notes: In her hands, the goddess holds attributes that in ancient times were considered an integral part of her image: the sistrus in her right hand (a musical instrument), which is now lost, and the Ankh in her left hand – the key to the afterlife. Elements of the ancient archaic tradition (hairstyle, large rounded eyes) are combined with motifs of traditional Egyptian art (characteristic posture, body outlines visible under clothing)

Source: photographed by the author at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples (Italy) in 2021

As noted above, after the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great, and later, the establishment of the Ptolemaic Kingdom, there is an inevitable, but a productive synthesis of local artistic culture with the traditions of Ancient Greece. Mainly, this involved the construction of temples, which were an important political and diplomatic tool for strengthening power. The Ptolemies called themselves pharaohs and left many of their images in the traditional Egyptian manner in the decoration of temples. Kings from the Ptolemaic dynasty were represented in traditional clothing and symbols, with typical gestures, legitimising their presence as kings from the family of ancient Egyptian pharaohs [2].

The originality of the new synthesising style is demonstrated by the temples of Ptolemy III in Karnak, the

temple of Horus in Edfu, the temple of Khnum in Esne, the temple of Hathor in Dendera, the temple of Sebek, Hathor, and Khonsu in Kom Ombo. In total, over a hundred temples were built from the Mediterranean to the Nubian desert, from the oases of the Western Desert to the Red Sea [3]. A special place among them is occupied by the Isis complex on Philae Island, called by Herodotus “the Pearl of Egypt” (Fig. 2). The Isis complex was built by the order of Pharaoh Ptolemy II (reigned in 285-246 BC) and his successor Ptolemy III (reigned in 246-221 BC). Subsequently, the temple complex was decorated during the imperial period during the time of the emperors Augustus and Tiberius (27 BC – 37 AD). Even in the second century AD, Emperor Hadrian (reigned in 117-138) was still completing the gate [4].



Figure 2. Temple of Isis from Philae Island (Agilkia island), Assuan, Egypt. 3rd century BC – 2nd century AD

Notes: General view of the temple complex from the river Nile

Source: photographed by the author in the city of Assuan (Egypt) in 2019

Temple of Isis from Philae Island is a complex of buildings located on the island of Agilkia (the temple was moved from Philae Island in 1972-1980 due to its flooding during the construction of the Assuan dam). The complex is characterised by a picturesque and asymmetric urban planning structure. Two columnar porticos lead directly to the temple building, which is slightly shifted from the axis of the main entrance, two more temples devoted to Nubian deities and a chapel of Imhotep are located nearby. To the east of the Temple of Isis, under the rule of Ptolemy VI, a small temple of Hathor was built, and to the south of it – one of the most beautiful structures on the island – the famous Trajan’s Kiosk with fourteen capitals in the form of flowers, above which were to be

carved sculptural faces of Isis-Hathor. To the west of the temple of Isis was the “Hadrian’s gate”, decorated in the 2nd century in the Egyptian style. The island also has two nilometers – small pools that were used to measure the water level in the Nile. Nilometers were the property of Hellenistic times [4].

The temple of Isis, like other temples of the Ptolemaic era, was extremely richly and intricately decorated, full of peculiar visual narratives. For example, the pylons of the temple were like giant political posters that visualised certain references: the victory of Pharaoh Ptolemy XII (Cleopatra’s father), depicted in the traditional pose of the Pharaoh. He stands and holds his kneeling enemies by the hair, ready to sacrifice them to the temple deities Isis, Horus, and Hathor [2] (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Decoration of the first pylon of the Temple of Isis from Philae Island (Agilkia island), Assuan, Egypt

Notes: The relief depicts the victory of the non-Egyptian pharaoh, Ptolemy XII, over his enemies by traditional iconographic means

Source: photographed by the author on the island of Agilkia near the city of Assuan (Egypt) in 2019

In fact, such a rich, complex decoration with polychromy, which is often repeated thematically and compositionally, can be found in other temples (for example, the Temple of Horus in Edfu), researchers associate precisely with Hellenistic influences that transformed the established

norms of depiction [2]. Thus, pharaohs from the Ptolemaic dynasty can also be seen with Greek attributes, as, for example, on the columns of the Temple in Esne, the Pharaoh is depicted with a laurel wreath in his hands, which was a symbol of victory in Ancient Greece (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. Decoration of the column of the hypostyle hall of the Khnum temple in Esne, Egypt

Notes: Hellenistic element in the traditional image of the pharaoh: in his hands he holds a laurel wreath – a symbol of victory in the Greek world

Source: photographed by the author in the city of Esne (Egypt) in 2019

A characteristic feature of the Egyptian temples of the Ptolemaic era was their picturesqueness, which was manifested in the asymmetric overall composition of the temple complex (the asymmetry was inherent in the Greek urban planning tradition, and not the Egyptian one, where strict symmetry

was always preserved), in the variety of forms of capitals, in the richness and complexity of decoration, in the combination of various plant themes in one element. All this can be attributed to the influence of the architecture of the Hellenistic era, which tended to be excessively decorative (Figs. 5, 6).



Figure 5. Capitals of the hypostyle hall of the Temple of Sebek, Hathor and Khonsu in the city of Com Ombo, Egypt

Notes: The columns of the hypostyle hall have various capitals of complex, combined shapes

Source: photographed by the author in the city of Com Ombo (Egypt) in 2019



Figure 6. Capitals of the portico of the Temple of Isis on the island of Philae (Aglikia island), Assuan, Egypt

Notes: The portico Capitals have different shapes, which gives the impression of picturesqueness and excessive decorativeness

Source: photographed by the author on the Agilkia island near the city of Assuan (Egypt) in 2019

However, long before the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great, Greece, at least from the archaic to classical periods, was already facing Isis through trade with Egypt, particularly in Delos, which was an important trading dock during the Hellenistic period. Migrations from Greece to Egypt and Egyptians to Greece also contributed to the introduction of Isis in the Greek world. Evidence of these long-term connections is the Temple of Isis on the island of Delos, near the Mykonos Island in Greece. A small Doric

temple in Anta was built in the 2nd-1st century BC [5]. The Sanctuary of Isis was not the only temple dedicated to the Egyptian deity. Nearby was the temple of Serapis (Osiris), the official patron saint of the Ptolemaic dynasty. Today, only a reconstructed fragment of the portico of the temple of Isis is on display, in front of which there is a small altar. Despite being devoted to the same goddess as in Egypt and at the same time of construction, the temple was completely Greek in its architecture (Fig. 7).



Figure 7. Temple of Isis on the island of Delos, Greece. 2nd-1st century BC

Notes: General view of the temple

Source: photographed by the author on the island of Delos (Greece) in 2019

The cult of Isis became international and was not associated with specific forms, adapting to the local architectural tradition, which perfectly illustrates the construction of temples of Isis in Ancient Rome. Moreover, in the 1st century AD, during the period of intense Greek influence, the Romans encountered the Egyptian cult of Isis precisely because of its Hellenistic Form [6].

The cult of Isis in the architecture of Ancient Rome. *The culture of Ancient Rome*, like the aforementioned Egyptian and Greek, did not develop in isolation and was not closed off from the outside world. A sign of its openness was the incorporation of achievements of other cultures, primarily conquered peoples, into the construction practice. Such an example was the intensive egyptisation of the architecture of Ancient Rome. From about the 3rd century BC (during the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt), close economic and cultural relations between ancient Rome and Egypt began to be established [6].

In 31 BC, the Roman general Octavian (later Emperor Augustus), after winning the naval battle of Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII, “introduced Egypt to the Roman people”, as officially stated in his “Res Gestae” [7]. Egypt became an official province of the Roman Empire and opened to the Romans, who became interested in exotic art, mystical cults and mysterious rituals, and a period of all-encompassing Egyptomania began, which was reflected in various practices. Thus, the transportation of architectural objects from Egypt to Rome has become popular. Immediately after the conquest of Egypt, Emperor Augustus moved several monumental obelisks from Heliopolis and placed them in The Circus Maximus and the Martius campus in Rome. At the end of the 15th century, Pope Sixtus V ordered it to be placed on Piazza del Popolo, where it is still located today (Fig. 8). A total of 10 obelisks were transported from Egypt to the Eternal City. They not only decorated the city but also served as propaganda tools, proof of the power of the emperors and strengthened their authority [7].



Figure 8. The first obelisk was brought to Rome from Egypt by Emperor Augustus in the 1st century BC

Notes: The obelisk is now located on Piazza del Popolo in Rome

Source: photographed by the author in the city of Rome (Italy) in 2016

Another example of the egyptisation of ancient Roman architecture was the use of the pyramid shape in the construction of tombs for Roman patricians. The pyramid of Gaius Cestius at the gate of Sao Paulo in Rome (Fig. 9), which was built in 18-12 BC, is still in good condition. It is a structure with a height of 36.4 m, with a base length of 30 m. Today, it is widely believed that the shape of the pyramid is a repetition of the forms of the Nubian pyramids that Gaius Cestius may have seen during the military campaign in Nubia in 23 BC. Although there are also opinions about the Egyptian inspirations of the pyramid of Gaius

Cestius (however, the Nubian origin also has its own grounds, because burial in the pyramids was not exclusively an Egyptian tradition). It is known that this pyramid was not the only one built in Rome at one time. Thus, an even larger pyramid was located on the site between the modern buildings of the Vatican and the mausoleum of Hadrian in Rome. In the 16th century, it was dismantled by the order of Pope Alexander IV, and marble cladding was used for the stairs of St. Peter's Cathedral [8]. Historical sources indicate that the Romans built pyramids in other parts of the Empire, an example of which is the Pyramid of Falcon, located near Nice [9].



Figure 9. Pyramid of Gaius Cestius, 1st century BC

Notes: The pyramid is located at the gate of Sao Paulo in the city of Rome

Source: photographed by the author in the city of Rome (Italy) in 2019

Egyptian motifs became very popular in wall paintings, images of sphinxes appeared on Roman coins, astrological practices spread, and Roman emperors and citizens began to practice Egyptian religious cults [10]. Egyptian deities, because of their versatility, were suitable materials for adaptation to a different cultural environment. Most of them were associated by the Romans with several gods of the ancient Pantheon at once. Thus, Serapis, for example, was associated with Zeus and Hades, and Isis was associated not only with Ceres (which was the most common), but also with Fortuna and Venus. Therefore, the gods of the Egyptian pantheon gradually took over the functions of their ancient analogues and became more universal and were actively included in the religious circulation of Ancient Rome [11].

The emperors were initially ambivalent about the entry of Eastern religious rites into Rome. Thus, for example, the emperor Augustus on the one hand honoured foreign ancient gods, and on the other – forbade the construction of their shrines in Rome and the holding of divine services. Researchers suggest that Augustus may even have restored old Roman temples to attract people to the traditional religion. However, Augustus and other emperors could no longer stop the powerful wave of egyptisation of Roman life. In the 1st century AD Rome was already a huge metropolis, with a population approaching almost a million. People from all over the Empire came to the city, worshipping their gods. The Romans also joined in honoring

foreign gods. Thus, the cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis, as a Mother Goddess with a large circle of responsibilities, became widespread in the ancient world. According to Ovid, sacred rites in honour of Isis became commonplace among Roman women. However, by order of the Senate, the altars of Isis, Serapis, and other gods were removed from the Capitol, they were restored again under pressure from the citizens. Some foreign cults had to be allowed at the request of the Oracle [11]. This cult was so important that temples dedicated to Isis were built throughout the Empire, decorated with both original fragments brought from Egypt, and sculptures and details made in the Egyptian style.

Sometimes the Roman emperors themselves (Caligula, Nero) professed the cult of Isis [12]. In 43 BC, the temple of Isis and Serapis (Osiris) was built on The Champ de Mars in Rome. It was a semicircular space bounded by a portico with a sanctuary-apse in the centre and exedras on the sides, the entrance to the temple was through a spacious rectangular courtyard. The total dimensions of the complex (according to the reconstruction) were 220×70 m. To date, only one image of the entrance to the temple of Isis and Serapis is known: these are reliefs on the mausoleum of Khateria – a three-span arch with the inscription “ARCVS AD ISIS” on the entablature. Little remains of the temple in Rome: several obelisks and a bust of a woman – “Madame Lucrezia”, which may have depicted Isis, and a giant foot – possibly also a fragment of a statue of Isis (Figs. 10, 11) [13].



Figure 10. “Madame Lucrezia” – a female bust, presumably a fragment of the statue of Isis from the temple of Isis and Serapis, 1st century AD

Notes: the bust is located in Piazza Venezia in Rome

Source: photographed by the author in Rome (Italy) in 2019



Figure 11. A giant foot, possibly a fragment of a figure from the Temple of Isis and Serapis, 1st century AD

Notes: the sculpture is located at Via di Santo Stefano del Cacco in Rome

Source: photographed by the author in Rome (Italy) in 2019

A temple dedicated to Isis was also built in Pompeii (Fig. 12). The excavations of Pompeii became an extremely important event in the archaeological world in the second half of the 18th century. Already in 1998 Pompeii, being well preserved, began to be perceived as a future tourist attraction: the surviving exhibits found were transferred

to the museum, and the ruins began to be conserved “in situ”. The Temple of Isis was one of the first sites discovered and explored. Already at the end of the 13th century, an inventory of the ruins and its model were made, and numerous frescoes were transferred to the National Archaeological Museum in Naples [14].



Figure 12. Temple of Isis in Pompeii, 1st century AD

Source: photographed by the author in the city of Pompeii (Italy) in 2016

The Temple of Isis was built in the 1st century AD. From an architectural standpoint, it was a prostylos raised on a high podium with two exedras flanking the cella. Behind the four columns were side niches, in which were located statues of Harpocrates (Horus) and Anubis – Egyptian deities associated with the cult of Isis. The temple was located

in the centre of the peristyle fence, to the back wall of which two halls adjoined – for the initiation ceremony and a refectory. The halls were decorated with numerous paintings on religious Egyptian themes. Nearby was a smaller building – the purgatory, with a reservoir with sacred water from the Nile (Nilometer), which symbolised Osiris (Fig. 13) [15].



Figure 13. Purgatory with a pool of water from the Nile in Pompeii, 1st century AD

Source: photographed by the author in the city of Pompeii (Italy) in 2016

The temple was built in accordance with Roman tradition, but the decoration and frescoes indicated a close connection with Egyptian culture. These are images of religious ceremonies, mysteries, and mythological subjects (Fig. 14). Iconography presents the Hellenisation of the image of

Isis: it is presented in the form of a Roman Matrona, and only the plots of images, and certain symbols, such as the musical instrument sistrus, the key Ankh or the image of snakes nearby, connect it with the theme of the Egyptian deity.



a



b

Figure 14. Frescoes from the Temple of Isis in Pompeii, 1st century AD

Notes: a – Mysteries of Isis – a religious rite of initiation, which was performed in the cult of Isis in the Greco-Roman world. The rituals were based on a Greco-Roman model, but on Egyptian material; b – a fresco depicting Isis finding a boat with the coffin of Osiris on the Nile. Cobras in Egyptian mythology represent the protection of Isis. The deities of the winds are depicted according to Greek models

Source: photographed by the author at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples (Italy) in 2019

It is known that temples of Isis were built throughout the Roman Empire. In 88-89, Emperor Domitian built a temple dedicated to Isis in Benevento, a small town north of Naples. The temple was decorated with original Egyptian sculptures and two granite obelisks. The temple was destroyed, apparently, during the time of Emperor Theodosius at the end of the 4th century, who banned all non-Christian cults. The remains of the shrine were later incorporated into the city's system of fortifications or used for the construction of other buildings. In 1903, during archaeological research, many fragments of sculptures and Temple decorations were found, which are on display in the collection of the Museo del Sannio, and one of the Egyptian obelisks adorns Piazza Papiniano in Benevento [16].

The peak of the cult of Isis in the ancient world occurred in the 2nd century AD. It even reached the UK and the countries of the Far East. However, with the spread of Christianity, the popularity of Isis fell, and in the 4th century, the

emperor Justinian stopped the activity of all temples, even the most important sanctuary of Isis on Philae Island in Egypt.

The conscious choice of an architectural prototype from a different culture and eclecticism in Hadrian's time.

The situation of the natural process of cultural borrowing and mutual enrichment, demonstrated by the example of the cult of Isis, has become an important prerequisite for the next stage of cultural diffusion – the conscious attraction of forms of another culture to create new ones. An example is the constructions during the time of Emperor Hadrian, when designs borrowed from the architecture of Egypt, Greece and Rome were programmatically mixed in one object, representing new meanings. This approach represents one of Hadrian's most famous and ambitious implementations – Hadrian's villa in Tivoli near Rome, built by the emperor in the 2nd century AD. Ch. Jencks described the residence as "an early eclectic complex from all parts of the Roman Empire" because, in a grandiose complex with an area of

120 hectares, buildings were erected, intertwining the motifs of Egyptian, Greek, and Roman architecture [19, p. 78-79].

A typical example of the use of Egyptian motifs in a new cultural context is the Antinoeion complex, a memorial dedicated to the Emperor Hadrian's favourite young man Antinous, who tragically died in the Nile (Fig. 15). According

to the reconstruction, the semicircular portico behind which the Tomb of Antinous was located decorated the solemn square. On the central axis was an obelisk flanked by two statues of Antinous in the form of the Egyptian god Osiris. Two Roman tetrastyle temples surrounded by canals (which symbolised the Nile) articulated the main entrance [17].



Figure 15. Remains of the Antinoeion complex in Villa Adriana

Notes: The complex is located in Tivoli near Rome

Source: photographed by the author in the city of Tivoli near Rome (Italy) in 2016

One of the most romantic objects of Villa Adriana (and the best preserved to date) was the Canopus (Fig. 16), also associated with honouring the memory of Antinous. Canopus was supposed to resemble the ancient Egyptian settlement of Canopus near Alexandria (hence its name, now the area is called Abukir), where Antinous drowned. The centre of the complex,

located on a narrow artificial site, was a reservoir measuring 119 m×18 m, surrounded by statues of Caryatids (copies of the statues of Jerachtheion) and Selene. The pool was completed with a richly decorated Pavilion in the shape of an exedra, which was called the Serapeum (after the name of the Temple of Serapis, which was located in ancient Canopus) [18].



Figure 16. Canopus is a memoir of the ancient Egyptian settlement of Canopus near Alexandria in Egypt at Hadrian's Villa

Notes: The complex is located in Tivoli near Rome

Source: photographed by the author in the city of Tivoli near Rome (Italy) in 2016

These examples demonstrate that the use of forms and meanings from another culture in modern design was a common practice in Roman architecture. In addition, the construction of Hadrian's time demonstrated another new aspect of form-making – the ability to choose a prototype for construction (since there were already several sources for borrowing: Ancient Egypt and Greece) and the justification of this prototype (the formation of semantic connections between the prototype and the newly designed object, which demonstrates the appeal to the Egyptian theme in the architecture of Antinoeion and Canopus). This has already created a new situation for architectural creativity – the conscious choice of an architectural prototype to replicate and mix different shapes in one object [20].

Mixing forms and meanings borrowed from different cultural environments can be interpreted as a natural development of architecture since this method offers new perspectives in creating an architectural image. A typical example is the architecture associated with the cult of the Egyptian deity Isis – one of the most common in the ancient world. The cult was spread across vast territories: from Egypt to Great Britain, from Italy to the Middle East, synthesising local traditions and borrowing elements from other cultures. That is why the analysis of monuments associated with the cult of Isis allows exploring the mechanisms of interaction of various cultural traditions. It can be assumed that the theoretical basis for the development of cultural diffusion was the phenomenon of “interpretatio Graeca” – the process

of finding analogues to other deities among their own religious tradition, and, consequently, the ability to dedicate their temples to not their gods.

In Egypt, the temples of Isis remained Egyptian in shape and structure, continuing the building traditions of the New Kingdom. However, the rich decoration, the departure from the canons in form-making, and the introduction of Hellenistic elements into iconography indicate the blurring of cultural boundaries, their gradual diffusion, due to close economic and artistic ties, and political and ideological expediency.

On the lands of the Greco-Roman civilisation, the temples of Isis remained true to the ancient tradition of construction. However, the subjects of the murals and details testified to the inspiration of another culture. The elements, even minor ones, introduced from another culture, became a kind of marker that gave the usual shapes completely new meanings: ancient temples in shape became Egyptian in meaning due to new iconography.

Temple construction, centred around the cult of Isis, demonstrated a new methodological approach in architectural formation – the ability to mix elements from different cultural environments, which became a prerequisite for the next stage of development of form and meaning in architecture: conscious choice and mixing of forms from several different prototypes within one artwork, as demonstrated by the example of construction in the time of Hadrian. From this aspect, the architecture of Imperial Rome during Hadrian's time can already be interpreted as a phenomenon that represented the establishment of a trend of historicism in architecture, and the methodological prerequisites for this trend were laid hundreds of years ago – in the phenomenon of cultural diffusion of Egyptian and Greco-Roman traditions.

CONCLUSIONS

The study proposed the term cultural diffusion, which can be interpreted in architecture as interpenetration, the blurring of clearly defined cultural boundaries. This phenomenon is on the one hand a necessary consequence of the political and ideological situation (incorporation into one's own culture of the achievements of other, often enslaved, peoples to achieve a certain goal, most often political or ideological), and on the other – an important methodological step in form and meaning development, which opened new opportunities and prospects in architecture.

The architecture of the ancient world, despite a huge number of papers and studies, still carries a lot of unknown. At that time, the foundations of world architecture were laid not only in the formal aspect (the emergence and development of the order system and building typology, etc.) but also in the methodological and design aspect, since then various methodological approaches in architectural formation were established. These were both autonomous processes that took place in one isolated cultural environment and mixed processes that attracted the capabilities and means of different cultures, and which are proposed to be defined as cultural diffusion.

The examples of temple construction associated with the cult of Isis analysed in the study demonstrate various variants of mixing, where autochthonous architectural traditions remain dominant, combined with elements-markers introduced from another cultural environment. Thus, the dominance of the Egyptian tradition is evident in the architecture of the temple complex on Philae Island. However, the purity of the design is blurred by Hellenistic influences: the asymmetry of the layout, excess and variety of decoration. Temple of Isis on the island of Delos is a typical Greek temple in Anta, where the Egyptian deity was indicated only by initiation and individual elements. Examples of combining Roman architectural traditions with Egyptian influences include the temple of Isis and Serapis in Rome and the temples of Isis in Pompeii and Benvenuto. These were typically Roman temples in their overall architectural and spatial design, where only decorations and frescoes indicated a close connection with Egyptian culture. A more complex example of combining different cultural elements in one object is the Villa Adriana complex in Tivoli, where Roman, Greek, and Egyptian motifs created an original and eclectic architectural work. It also demonstrated a new issue for the architect that had not previously arisen: the problem of choosing a prototype and justifying it for solving a specific creative problem.

Cultural diffusion, as a method in architectural creativity, is a necessary prerequisite for the next stage of development of architectural form and meaning – conscious borrowing and use within one architectural unit (building or complex) fragments from different (sometimes several) architectural environments, which is evident in the next stages of architecture development (in particular, in the architecture of historicism). However, the formal and substantive aspects of cultural diffusion, theoretical foundations and mechanisms of implementation still require further investigation.

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«Культурна дифузія» в архітектурі стародавнього світу (на прикладі культу Ізиди в III ст. до н.е. – II ст. н.е)

Анотація. Практика запозичення та змішування архітектурних форм і змістів із різних культурних середовищ бере свій початок ще в архітектурі стародавнього світу і є актуальною до цього часу. Тому з'ясування її витоків, механізмів та причин розвитку представляється важливим питанням теорії та історії архітектури. Метою статті є ввести у науковий обіг поняття «культурної дифузії», як методичного прийому змішування архітектурних форм із різних мистецьких середовищ, що сприяє напрацюванню якісно нових вирішень, які формують нові архітектурні образи та синтезують нові змісти. Також важливим є обґрунтувати явища культурної дифузії як першого та необхідного етапу наступних процесів розвитку архітектурного формо- та змістоутворення – етапу свідомого та обґрунтованого вибору архітектурного прототипу для нового проектування. Основним матеріалом для статті є об'єкти, пов'язані з культом Ізиди – одним із найбільш розповсюджених релігійних культів в архітектурі стародавнього світу, що належав до греко-римської цивілізації. З аспекту методики стаття спирається на аналізі та систематизації наукових публікацій, присвячених архітектурним об'єктам, пов'язаних із культом Ізиди, а також на результатах візуальних спостережень (описах та порівняльному аналізі). У статті на прикладі архітектурних об'єктів, пов'язаних із культом Ізиди, показано, що в архітектурі Стародавнього світу були сформовані різні методичні підходи в архітектурному формоутворенні: як автономних процесів у різних культурах, так і «змішаних», які залучали можливості та засоби різних культурних середовищ, що відкривало безмежні перспективи для розвитку як архітектурної форми, так і архітектурних змістів. Науковою новизною є інтерпретація процесу культурної дифузії як важливої методичної передумови нового архітектурного формо- та змістоутворення в архітектурі наступних періодів. Цим зумовлюється практичне значення роботи, оскільки явище культурної дифузії, як методичного прийому для творчості архітектора, є актуальне і сьогодні

Ключові слова: Стародавній Єгипет, елліністична Греція, імперський Рим, архітектурне формоутворення, взаємодія культур, храми Ізиди