

# Comparison of Priene and Pergamum in Hellenistic Period

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## 1 City Plans

Priene and Pergamum both were founded on a sloping ground. However their city plans are quite different.

Priene was built according to Hippodamian grid system. The main roads of the city are in east-west direction, crossed vertically by smaller streets in north-south direction. Due to the slope of the site, these streets were usually stepped. As a whole, the city faces to south; according to Akurgal, a reason for this is the efficient usage of sunlight.

Hellenistic Pergamum, which was founded on a more sloping ground, consists of two parts: Upper and middle city. These cities are connected by *ancient road*. Both of them were built according to free-ranging or *theatrical principle*: Unlike Priene, the buildings are situated on

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terraces of different levels. Buildings face usually to west, to the plain, from where there is an attractive view to the city. To extend the panorama, the Altar of Zeus was not surrounded by colonnades, and the west sides of the upper agora and the temenos of the Temple of Athena are not closed.

The center of the upper city should have been the theatre, because the terraces look like concentric semicircles with the center at the theatre. All buildings around it, e.g. upper agora, Temple of Athena, Altar of Zeus, the palaces of Eumenes II and Attalus I and the building which was standing in the Hellenistic period on the location of Trajaneon, are facing to the west where the theatre is situated. And besides, we know that Hellenistic Pergamum was a city full of cultural and social activities, e.g. the Pergamene library was one of the greatest among others of that time, competing with the library at Alexandria, so Pergamenes should have given a great importance to it.

The center of Priene was the agora. It was next to the main street thoroughfare of Pirene. Three side of it was surrounded by stoas, and it was below the sacred stoa. It was a commercial agora, but festivals and ceremonies were also held there; and it may have also had a political function, because it is not far from the bouleuterion and the prytanieon.

If we compare the city plans we see a similarity. Important buildings were constructed on the hilltop. In Priene, the most important building was the Temple of Athena. It was built by Pytheus (4<sup>th</sup> c. BC) on the summit of the hill, where it can be viewed from everywhere in the city. In Pergamum, we see that the palaces, barracks and arsenals, which are of political and military importance are built on hilltop. Moreover, those buildings were obstructed by other buildings on the hillside.

This example shows us that Pergamum was a *royal* city; the political and military buildings were more important than the religious buildings. In fact, some religious buildings has a propaganda- rather than a religious function. For instance, the Altar of Zeus and the propylon Temple of Athena contains some reliefs depicting the victories of Pergamene kings against enemies (Galatians, Gauls, Macedonians, Seleucids etc.). Also, there exists a heroon on the site where the Pergamene kings used to be worshipped. We don't see such ruler cults in Priene (maybe except the House of Alexander).

## 2 Similar and Different Buildings (in style or function)

Priene and Pergamum both had similar type of buildings. In this section we will compare the following pairs:

Priene	Pergamum
Temple of Athena	Temple of Athena
Sanctuary of Demeter	Temple and Temenos of Demeter
Altar of the Temple of Athena	Altar of Zeus
Temple of Zeus	Temple of Dionysus
House of Alexander	Heroon
Peristyle Houses	House of Attalus
Theatre	Theatre
Agora	Agoras
Gymnasium	Gymnasia

Both cities have also a prytanieon. Priene had a bouleuterion; but Pergamum doesn't, because Pergamum itself was a royal city; it had palaces for kings. Pergamum, in addition, had also a

very large library. Priene had a stadium next to the lower agora. At Pergamum, there was no stadium, the athletes should have run on palaestra. Hellenistic Priene was on coast; there were a lot of Egyptian traders coming to Priene; as a result, there was a temenos for Egyptian gods (temple of Serapis at Pergamum was built in Roman period). Let us analyse the buildings in the table above.

## 2.1 Temples of Athena at Priene and Pergamum

Priene Temple was a classical 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC Pytheus' temple. It has  $6 \times 11$  columns of Ionic order with asiatic bases used. Its stylobase measures approx. 19 m.  $\times$  37 m. It has a closed opisthodomos and a long pronaos.

The Pergamum dates back to 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC. It has  $6 \times 10$  doric columns. Its stylobase measures 12 m.  $\times$  21 m. So it is a smaller temple. Its opisthodomos is open and its pronaos is shallower than the Priene temple.

Both temples had a doric stoa. However, unlike the Pergamum temple, the Priene temple is obstructed by this stoa from being seen from distance. The temenos of Pergamum temple has no stoa on west side, to improve theatricality. The Priene temple had a purely religious function; but as I mentioned before, the main aim of the Pergamum temple was propaganda. As an example, the propylon of Pergamum temple depicts wars and victories of Pergamene kings against enemies. Another feature of this propylon is that it is a 2-storey building with doric (below) and ionic (above) columns and orders; the combination of orders is a character of Hellenistic architecture. Also in the temenos of Pergamum temple some statues (e.g. *Dying Gaul*) have been found which are typical Hellenistic artistic works.

## 2.2 Temples of Demeter at Priene and Pergamum

Both of these temples carry similar features in common: These are the earliest temples dedicated to Demeter (and her daughter Kore) in Asia minor. In the rituals, animals were slaughtered as sacrifices and their blood was poured into sacrificial pits. Sanctuary of Demeter at Priene is one of the oldest temples at Priene, it is located far away from the city and it does not have a regular plan. Temple of Demeter is prostyle, it has an altar in the middle of the temenos. Moreover, there are seats in the temenos for watching sacrificial rituals.

## 2.3 Altar of the Temple of Athena at Priene and the Altar of Zeus at Pergamum

Both of these altars are horse-shoe shaped. Altar of Zeus was the biggest and the most important building at Pergamum. It has Ionic stoa with asiatic bases. Similar to Temple of Athena, it is also rather for propaganda: On frieze, there are reliefs depicting gods against giants (resembling the battles of Pergamene kings against Gauls).

## 2.4 Temple of Zeus at Priene and Temple of Dionysus at Pergamum

There are a lot of similarities between these two temples. Both of them are prostyle and of Ionic order. In the temple of Zeus we see the affects of Pytheus still remaining. For instance,

the bases are asiatic. However, intercolumnation is wider, which emphasizes the theatricality of the temple, as usual as other characteristic Hellenistic temples. Temple of Dionysus is located near the Pergamene theatre, at the end of 250 m. long theatre terrace. It has a high podium which increases its visibility. Both of these buildings had an accentuated façade and pronounced axiality.

## 2.5 House of Alexander at Priene and Heron at Pergamum

Alexander the Great, during his campaign to the East, is supposed to have stayed in the -so called- *House of Alexander* at Priene in order to support the construction of the Temple of Athena (on inscription it is read that the temple is dedicated to him). This house is later converted into a sacred place for worship of imperial cult. It has a large courtyard, and many large and small rooms around it. With this character, it resembles a lot to the heron at Pergamum. It was also a temple for imperial cult (especially for worshipping Attalus I and Eumenes II). It consists of a large courtyard and many attached rooms, too.

## 2.6 Peristyle Houses at Priene and House of Attalus at Pergamum

The house on the theatre road at Priene resembles the house of Attalus at Pergamum. The house at Priene consisted of 26 rooms (probably it belonged to a rich man). It had a small courtyard in the entrance; and two other courtyards inside the men's and women's section. These courtyards had many rooms around it. So they were peristyle houses. The house of Attalus was also peristyle. It has a 20 m.  $\times$  13.5 m. courtyard surrounded by rooms of different sizes. The largest among them was called *oikoi*. In the house at Priene there are oikos, too.

## 2.7 Theatres of Priene and Pergamum

The theatre at Priene is situated in north-east part of the city. It was not only a cultural place, but also a meeting point for people's parliament. The water-clock situated in front of the stage is an evidence for that. Although the temple experienced some alterations in Roman period, the Hellenistic theatre was horse-shoe shaped. The parodoi were open and diagonal. It had 5000 people capacity. The 50 rows it possessed were cut perpendicularly by 6 narrow stairways in order to make it easier to climb. The middle part of fifth row of the cavea (called *prohedria*) was reserved for important people. There also existed some holes around these seats to set up the tents (called canopies). On the rim of the orchestra there was an altar for Dionysus.

Pergamum theatre was built on the west hillside so that it has a very attractive view from outside. We have mentioned before that it was in a central position in the upper city (acropolis) of Pergamum. The theatre itself has a strange shape because of the slope of the terrain. It is divided into three horizontal parts. The lower part was horse-shoe shaped in the Hellenistic period. Later it got its current semicircular form. It is divided perpendicularly into 7 narrow stairways, whereas the second and third parts are divided into 6. The theatre had 80 rows which provided a 10 000 people capacity. One of its features differing from the theatre at Priene is that its stage was portative. The reason for that is probably not to obstruct the panorama from the cavea to the plain and the river *Selinus*. As in all theatres, the temple of Dionysus mentioned in (2.4) was situated close to it, at the end of the theatre terrace.

## 2.8 Agoras of Priene and Pergamum

As we have mentioned before the agora at Priene (3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC ) was rather commercial. The main road of Priene passes on north side of the agora. On the other sides there exist stoas with doric columns. The stoa on the north of the main road is called *sacred stoa*. It had high steps so that people walking on the stoa had a fantastic panorama. The columns of this stoa are doric and ionic order. So this stoa was a typical hellenistic building emphasizing theatricality. On the west side of the agora there was a row of shops. The altar of Hermes was situated in the middle of the agora. Also, marble statues have been found in the surrounding stoas. There was also a prostyle agora temple.

Hellenistic Pergamum had two agoras. The *upper agora* was situated next to the Altar of Zeus. It was divided into two by the ancient road coming from the middle city. On north-east and south-west sides of the agora there was doric stoas. The other sides were open in order to increase the sight form outside. The stoas were built in different levels: Inner part of the stoa had three storeys, whereas the outer part, sitting on a higher ground, had only one storey. These features of the upper agora match with theatricality style. This agora was a political agora; we know that because there are palaces and military buildings in the upper city o Pergamum. When the city began to grow, a second *commercial agora* had been built in the middle city. It is surrounded by stoas of doric order.

## 2.9 Gymnasia of Priene and Pergamum

There are two gymnasia in Priene: The upper gymnasium dates back to 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC, however, it had been changed a lot during the Roman period. We only know that it was a perisyle building; it had rooms surrounding a courtyard. The lower gymnasium was an athletic centre. It was peristyle, too. The courtyard was functioning as a palaestra. It was surrounded from four sides by stoas of doric order. The propylon on west side was also of doric order. On north and west stoas there were reading and training rooms. One of the rooms on northern stoa was ephebeion (where some inscriptions of children have been found), and another was probably a boxing room. There was also a stadium next to the lower gymnasium. It was longer than the sacred stoa. The stoa next to it was of doric order. There were also steps for spectators.

In Pergamum there were three gymnasia. The lower gymnasia were for *ephebes*, middle gymnasium for adolescents, and upper gymnasium for young men. The upper gymnasium was the largest. It consisted of stoas of doric order surrounding a courtyard. This courtyard was used as an athletic ground. Due to the slope, the southern stoa had two storeys, the lower part used as an athletic ground, too; but later it was closed with earth to prevent it to crash down. The middle gymnasium was also very large. On east and south sides of the palaestra there were stoas. One room of the eastern stoa was dedicated to the worship of Hermes or Heracles. There was also a temple for them across to it. It was a prostyle, with four columns of Corinthian order. Unlike Priene, the Hellenistic Pergamum had no stadium.

## References

- [1] Akurgal E. *Ancient Civilizations and Ruins and Turkey*. Istanbul, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., 1993.