

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE IN GREECE:

KEFALONIA AND ITHAKA

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Cultural Context

After the collapse of the Roman Empire Greece became a provincial backwater in the Byzantine Empire and subsequent Ottoman occupation. During these times appreciation of ancient Greek architecture was virtually non-existent. It was only in the 18th century that the “Greek Style” gained attention following archaeological excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii and the discovery of the Greek temples at Paestum. The publication of the magnificent three-volume *Antiquities of Athens* by James Stuart and Nicholas Revett in particular brought wide spread recognition to ancient Greek architecture. Architects in England took a great interest in the Greek Revival style and visits to Greece became as an essential part of their education. Later in the 19th century numerous scholars continued to study Classical remains on-site but they were outnumbered by antiquity treasure hunters who exported their archaeological finds to Britain, France or Germany (Tsigakou, 1981). The most egregious act was that of Lord Elgin who removed much of the Parthenon sculptures and transferred them to England.¹

In Greece itself interest in antiquities began after the Greek Revolution and the establishment of a new, independent and sovereign state in 1832. King Otto created a government Archaeological Department in 1834 that began a systematic survey of all archaeological sites during the years 1834-1836. During this time the restoration of the Parthenon was commenced. Concern over the looting and destruction of the country’s ancient treasures by traffickers led to the founding of the Archaeological Society of Athens in 1837 with the purpose to locate, restore and protect the antiquities of Greece.



Figure 1: Parthenon, Athens. Photo by the author.

Since the 19th century actions to safeguard the country's cultural heritage, the conservation of buildings of historic or architectural value, has followed two paths. The first path is the protection of antiquities through legislation that took place from 1893 to the present time. The second path is the safeguarding of the country's traditional architecture beginning with the landmark legislation of 1978.

Antiquities Legislation

From the end of the 19th century the legislation to protect the country's architectural heritage has included measures to control the buying and exporting of antiquities (1932), compulsory expropriation to enable the state to preserve antiquities (1893; 1971), the founding and maintaining of archaeological museums and government archaeological services (various years from 1930 to 2002), and the protection of buildings of value built after 1830 (1950).

One of the laws, N.3028 of 2002, is significant as it formulated a new concept of "monument" and re-organized government departments. The new concept is embodied in the law's stated objective: the protection of the country's cultural heritage from ancient times until the present-day with the purpose to preserve historical recollections for present and future generations and to improve the cultural environment. This law distinguishes two categories of monuments, ancient and newer. Ancient monuments (Group α , Article 6) are defined as those belonging to pre-

historic, historic, Byzantine and Post-Byzantine periods up to 1830. Newer monuments, those after 1830, are subdivided into two groups. First is Group β (Article 6), monuments that have historical, artistic or scientific value of an architectural, planning, community, ethnological, folklore, or technical nature that are more than 100 years old and created after 1830. Second is Group γ (Article 6), monuments that belong to the last 100 years that have historical, artistic or scientific value and are of an architectural, planning, community, ethnological, folklore, or technical nature. Church buildings are not included in the monuments designation but have their own category.

Decisions on the designation of monuments are made by the Minister of Culture on the advice and recommendations of Local (Regional) Monument Councils (ΤΣΜs), the Central Archaeological Council (ΚΑΣ) and Central Council for Newer Monuments (ΚΣΝΜ). All monuments are recorded and registered in a National Monuments Archive. The decentralized departments of the Ministry (Museums, Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities and Ephorate of Recent Monuments) are spread throughout Greece while the Ministry's administrative departments are situated in Athens.

Traditional Architecture

Separate from the preservation of antiquities is the protection of buildings that have a traditional style of architecture. In Greece after World War I there was a reappraisal of imported cultural forms and attempts were made to define a national identity based on traditional elements. From the 1920s to the 1940s, the architect Aristotelis Zahos was a pioneer who sought to define the character of Greek vernacular architecture in his work but he went unrecognized. Another architect, Dimitris Pikionis, had more success possibly because his designs were based on traditional forms that he derived from a study of folk architecture from antiquity to modern times. He believed in what he called "transhellenic" forms that transcended time. The efforts of these two and other vernacularly-minded architects did not succeed due to the introduction by enthusiastic young architects of Modernism that was sweeping Europe in the 1930s. Modernism was quickly and widely adopted in Greece as a rational approach to architecture and in opposition to the prevailing Neo-classicism style.

The need to protect the country's traditional architecture was recognized in the landmark law of 1978 (ΠΔ/19.10.1978) that provided for the

designation of traditional settlements and the prescription of development criteria. The country's general building regulations were modified in 1985 and again in 2000 to provide for the protection of Greece's architectural heritage (N.1577/1985 & N.2831/2000). While the responsibility for the preservation of antiquities lay with the Ministry of Education initially but now with the Ministry of Culture, the protection of vernacular buildings is under the Ministry of Environment, Land Order and Public Works (Υ.Π.Ε.Χ.Ω.Δ.Ε.) responsible for, in addition, City Planning, Settlement Development and Housing.



Figure 2: Traditional architecture on the waterfront of Argostoli, Kefalonia (pre-earthquake). Photo courtesy of Archives, Corgialenios Museum, Argostoli, Kefalonia.

An important provision of the 1985 and 2000 laws allows the Ministry of Environment, Land Order and Public Works to designate as “preserved” (διατηρητέα) buildings that are either isolated, in a group, or in a district with their own specific development regulations for their protection. These “preserved” buildings, groups or districts may be inside or outside the approved “city” plans of designated traditional settlements. The “preserved” process begins when the Ministry identifies a building of architectural heritage characteristics. A file is prepared with detailed written and photographic descriptions of the building that is then

forwarded to the relevant local municipality and city planning service for any objections to the proposed designation.

Case Study of Kefalonia and Ithaka

In Kefalonia and Ithaka, two Ionian Islands off the west coast of Greece, there are numerous antiquity sites both ancient and newer (Patricios, 2002). There are archaeological museums in the capital of Kefalonia, Argostoli and in the towns of Vathy and Stavros, Ithaka.

As to traditional architecture in Kefalonia and Ithaka this was influenced by the lengthy occupations of the islands by the Venetians followed by the British. Unfortunately, the outstanding architectural heritage of these islands was largely destroyed in the devastating earthquake of August, 1953. What buildings remained were considered of such value that in 1982 a legislative decree was passed that applied specific building regulations to the designated preserved buildings in Vathy, the capital of Ithaka. The regulations were to apply to the remaining settlements on the island but did not identify them. In 2003, however, thirty-one settlements in Kefalonia and Ithaka, such as Fiskardo and Kioni respectively, were recognized and declared as traditional within the meaning of the law (N/29/1/2003).

The focus of the 1982 decree is to protect the environment or setting of the designated traditional settlements. In addition, there are regulations for new buildings that control, firstly, their development and massing and, secondly, their morphology:

A. DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS INCLUDE:

The minimum dimensions for lot frontage, lot depth, and lot area and the maximum lot coverage, number of stories, building height and height for the roof, are all specified. Prefabricated buildings or buildings on piloti are prohibited.

B. MASSING & MORPHOLOGY REGULATIONS INCLUDE:

Building massing, roof pitches, external wall finishes and paint color, wall openings, lintels, window materials, shutter types, entrance doors, metal lattice security bars, colors for external doors and windows, maximum projection of open balconies and distances from property boundaries, balcony railings, projections for horizontal and vertical cornice projections and for door and

window surrounds/frames are all to be consistent with traditional prototypes.

Thus it is only in the mid-1980s that the modern style of architecture in new buildings began to be replaced by buildings following the traditional style as expressed in the regulations. The result has been the abandonment of flat roof, austere white box-like buildings and the appearance of new buildings that follow the principles of traditional architecture – pitched tile roofs, pastel colored walls, projecting balconies, cornices and wooden shutters. Overall, it is disappointing that there are not many successful examples of contemporary buildings consistent with traditional styles.

Greece and the Charters of Athens and Venice

After the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments met in Athens in 1931, certain resolutions and general principles adopted by the Congress appear to have had some influence on the activities of the Greek government concerning antiquities. This cannot be said for the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites adopted in Venice in 1964 which had no immediate impact in Greece. Concepts expressed in this Charter, though, are belatedly evident in the comprehensive and sweeping law of 2002.

A theme of the 1931 Athens Charter, in contrast to the 1964 Venice Charter, was the emphasis on legislation to solve the problems of preservation and protection of historic sites (Resolution 3; Article II). The Athens Charter called for the preservation of monuments very largely through appropriate actions on the part of public authorities (VIIb). As was seen earlier in the paper this has been the approach in Greece. Resolution 7 stated that attention should be given to the protection of areas surrounding historic sites. This concept manifested itself in the Codification Law of 1932 (N.5351, Article 50) in which excavation for building materials within 500 meters of an ancient monument was prohibited. The members of the Congress in Athens recorded in the Charter document a unanimous tribute to the Greek Government for the responsibility it took for archaeological work and the acceptance of collaboration of archaeologists and experts from other countries. It is interesting to note that the protection of antiquities was initially under the Ministry responsible for education. Later the responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Culture, a shift in the perception of antiquities.

The far-reaching 2002 law, *Preservation of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage* (N.3028), incorporates significant concepts from both the Athens and Venice Charters. From the Athens Charter the reference to the artistic, historic or scientific value of buildings (Article II) has been included almost verbatim in the law's section on the definition (Article 2ββ) and characterization of monuments (Article 6). Another concept adopted from both Charters is the importance of preserving the setting of monuments. The 2002 law deals extensively with the establishment of Protection Zones for monuments (Articles 10 to 17). Most significantly, the major aim of the 2002 law is to protect the cultural heritage of the country from the oldest times to the present so as to maintain historical memories for current and future generations. This aim reflects the Venice Charter concept that historic monuments remain today as living witnesses of old-age traditions, are a common heritage and there is a common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations. The Greek approach goes beyond the conservation and restoration of ancient buildings, though, and incorporates protection of more recent buildings of architectural value and strict control of new buildings in designated traditional settlements.



Figure 3: Typical traditional residential architecture in Kefalonia. Photo by the author.



Figure 4: Typical traditional residential architecture in Ithaka. Photo by the author.

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¹ The Parthenon sculptures included about half (some 75 meters) of the sculpted frieze that once ran all round the building, plus 17 life-sized marble figures from its pediments and 15 of the 92 *metopes* originally displayed high up above its columns.

I · N · T · B · A · U

International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture & Urbanism
PATRON: HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES

The INTBAU Venice Declaration On the Conservation of Monuments and Sites in the 21st Century

The Athens Charter of 1931 made an important contribution toward the development of an extensive international movement for the safeguarding of our common heritage for future generations. The Venice Charter of 1964, noting problems which have continually become more complex and varied, re-examined the Athens Charter, made a thorough study of the principles involved, and enlarged its scope in a new document.

Almost half a century later, we have witnessed new problems and new complexities. Foremost among them is the challenge to maintain coherent and sustainable urban environments, within which historic monuments are often seamless elements, and living repositories of important and useful knowledge. It has also been noted that the Venice Charter did not sufficiently address challenges beyond Europe and the United States, and overlooked the vital role that traditional building crafts continue to play. Lastly, a number of logical contradictions have become evident within the Charter itself, or within its over-rigid interpretation.

Accordingly, a group of international leaders in conservation, architecture, urbanism and environmental planning, met in Venice in November, 2006, and agreed that the time has come to clarify the Venice Charter and its interpretation, addressing in particular the following issues:

- **The PREAMBLE** notes our common responsibility to safeguard ancient monuments for future generations and to “hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity”. It is now understood, however, that any act of conservation or restoration is inevitably an act of alteration based upon historically partial knowledge. Hence the goal of authenticity must not be interpreted to require an absolute state of preservation of pre-categorized moments in time. Rather it must reflect the complex pattern of change and recurrence across the ages, including the present. It is to be established as much in interpretive materials as it is in the techniques of accurate conservation.

- **ARTICLE 1** wisely includes urban and rural settings in the definition of an historic monument. We note that this may also include an historically unique settlement pattern or organisational structure within the landscape, which may embody important knowledge for future settlements.

- **ARTICLE 2** calls for recourse to all the sciences and techniques which can contribute to the study and safeguarding of the architectural heritage. We emphasize the importance of scientific investigation, particularly for useful but overlooked knowledge embodied in historic monuments, which may prove to be relevant in unforeseeable ways to our challenges today and in the future. The participation of the public in scientific, educational and political exchanges on these topics is vital.

- **ARTICLE 4** calls for the permanent maintenance of monuments. We note that maintenance using new elements in a compatible character is not “false historicism” provided the new elements can be readily distinguished by experts, or with the aid of interpretive materials.

- **ARTICLE 5** prohibits changes to the lay-out of a building, even when making use of it for some socially useful purpose. But such changes must be allowed where the alternative is a threat to the building’s survival, where the changes are not inharmonious as called for in Article 6, and where careful documentation of the changes is maintained. As much as possible, such changes should also incorporate the building’s original spatial quality and structure.

- **ARTICLE 9** calls for new work which “must be distinct from the original composition and must bear a contemporary stamp.” But this goal must be dynamically balanced with other needs, including the need for coherent and enduring human environments. Thus, new work may be distinct from the original composition while still harmonizing with that composition. A contemporary stamp may be provided in a number of ways,

The INTBAU Venice Declaration

including interpretive information or identifying marks or characteristics. It is not necessary to create a striking juxtaposition, which may violate the mandate to preserve the traditional setting or the relations of mass and color (Article 6, Article 13).

- **ARTICLE 11** states that “the valid contributions of all periods to the building of a monument must be respected, since unity of style is not the aim of a restoration.” But styles cannot be strictly assigned to a unique origin in a specific time or context, as they may be found to recur in repeated revivals within different periods and contexts. Therefore a variation of styles can be tolerated and accepted for any period, including the present. At the same time, a unity of composition can be maintained, and does not require a unity of style.

- **ARTICLE 12** states that “replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence.” However, this need not be interpreted to forbid replacements in a compatible style. It requires only an honest distinction of the new work, which may be made identifiable with the aid of interpretive information.

- **ARTICLE 13** prohibits additions that detract from the interesting parts of a building, its traditional setting, the balance of its composition and its relation with its surroundings. Together with other articles, this must be interpreted to mean that contemporary additions that politely take their place within the harmonious composition (including revival styles, if deemed appropriate, as well as innovative new styles) are allowable. Additions that are deliberately discontinuous, discordant, or self-consciously dominant, must not be allowed to damage the balance of the composition or the relation with its surroundings.

SIGNED by the authors, this 8th day of January 2007:

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