



**CONSTRUCTED MEANING:  
FORM AND PROCESS IN GREEK ARCHITECTURE**

*edited by*

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# FORGING A NATIONAL IMAGE: BUILDING MODERN ATHENS

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Καὶ πιστεύω ὅτι κανείς δὲν ἔχει τὸ δικαίωμα νὰ σκεφθῆ καὶ νὰ ἐργασθῆ διὰ τίποτε ἄλλο πρὶν, παρὰ διὰ τὴν δημιουργίαν μιᾶς Πατρίδος....Καὶ Πατρίς δὲν θὰ πῆ τίποτε χωρὶς ἰδικήν της Ζωγραφικὴν, Γλυπτικὴν, Ἀρχιτεκτονικὴν, Φιλολογίαν, Μουσικὴν καὶ τόσα ἄλλα.<sup>1</sup>

And I believe that nobody has the right to think of and to work for anything but the creation of a Nation....And a Nation cannot be comprehended without its own Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Literature, Music, etc.

THE ESTABLISHMENT of the independent Greek state in 1833 signaled, at first, a concerted, national turn towards the ancient Greek culture. Classical Athens, its culture, and its monuments inspired, to a large extent, the government's initial architectural direction. As time went on, however, a more complex combination of internal and external influences came to define the political, social, and cultural orientation of the new nation. Focusing on the major architectural production and its concomitant theoretical framework during the first century after liberation, it is my aim here to examine the shifting definitions of national Greek architecture within the context of these historical parameters. This examination reveals close parallels between the development of a national architectural ideology and identity, on the one hand, and the broader construction of a national cultural image on the other.

The War of Independence (1821-27) left both the towns and the countryside in a state of desolation. Athens, with a meager population of 4,000 people and few inhabitable buildings, was proclaimed the capital of Greece.<sup>2</sup> During the first decades of the new nation, extensive building



activity was undertaken. Neoclassical architecture, introduced by the Bavarian court that ruled Greece until 1862, easily became the dominant architectural style throughout most of the nineteenth century. Offering concrete references to the ancient Greek past, it provided a common vocabulary for the new nation. Furthermore, as a widespread European style, neoclassical architecture created a concrete, visual link between Athens and the other cities that the new capital aimed to emulate. Neoclassical architecture, in other words, was at once an international and a national style for nineteenth-century Greece, celebrating the return of ancient Greek architecture to the country of its birth.<sup>3</sup>

Little interest was expressed at first for the Ottoman-era architecture which had been executed in the most elaborate cases by trained, traveling building groups, and in the majority of the cases by local builders. The nineteenth-century Greek press expressed, for the most part, not reverence, but disdain and even animosity for the architectural monuments of the immediate past, tangible reminders, as they were, of the country's dark ages. Deriding the conditions in Athens, the liberal newspaper *'Αθηνα* commented in 1835: "Inside the ruins there exists rubbish from many years covering the dead bodies of dogs, cats, etc. To tell the truth, the seat of the Greek state does not at all differ from an African or a Turkish city."<sup>4</sup> Here the "Turkish city" had lost its specificity, becoming rather a symbol of a backward culture, the antithesis of progress and modernity. Similar disparaging comments contrasted the crooked roads of the old Ottoman towns with the wide, straight streets of the newly planned cities.<sup>5</sup>

By the early twentieth century, however, one distinguishes a clear ideological shift. Writers, architects, and scholars began approaching the vernacular architecture of the Greek countryside with different eyes, trying to find in it those timeless elements that were unique to the Greek people. Studying vernacular architecture became a search for a common mode of expression, a search for the elements of Greekness that persisted through time, a search for self-knowledge and connection with the past. Architects exalted the natural and true elements of *λαϊκή* (*laiki*/vernacular) architecture and art, pointing to the genuineness and wisdom of the simple people who built in the villages. Since the early twentieth century several prominent, university-educated, Greek architects and writers have tried to discover anew the truths that governed this architecture, incorporating them in their own buildings, teachings, and theoretical writings.

Most of the work on the question of Greek identity and cultural continuity has focused on the study of language, customs, religion, and history, all inseparably connected with Greek concepts of self. To these might also be added architecture. In this case, both vernacular and state-sponsored architecture, at once topical and global, was influenced both by tradition, local conditions, and dominant international currents. Although it employs such widely-used materials as bricks and stones, and adopts styles that have taken hold around the world—the neoclassical style, for example, was extensively used both in Europe and its colonies during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—architecture can and does, in



fact, assume unique interpretations in each country. That is exactly what the emerging architectural theory in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries managed to do for Greece: it developed a national mirror which reflected the international neoclassical style, at first, and the common, mediterranean vernacular, later, as uniquely Greek creations.

In order to describe the conditions that brought about the establishment of neoclassical architecture in the nineteenth century and its challenge by vernacular architecture in the twentieth century, I will construct below the profiles of two typical architects working in Greece in the 1850s and 1920s, respectively. Though fictitious, both are drawn to be representative, rather than radical or outstanding for their time. Through an overview of their architectural education, professional influences, and the political climate of each period, I will explore the definition of Greek architecture in each period and what political and cultural parameters affected this definition.

Manolis Georghiou grew up in a small town of the Peloponnesos in 1810. His father belonged to one of the traveling building groups that undertook construction projects in various parts of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>6</sup> Most building, however, came to a halt during the Greek War of Independence, and the family fled to Attica to avoid the destruction brought about by the Turko-Egyptian army. After the creation of the independent Greek state in 1833 and the establishment of Athens as the new nation's capital, the Georghious, along with many other Greek families, settled in Athens in search of a better future.<sup>7</sup>

In 1832 the European powers offered the Greek crown to Prince Otto, son of King Ludwig I of Bavaria. In 1834, accompanied by his own Bavarian court and an army of 3,500 Bavarian troops, Otto established himself in Athens, the new capital. Manolis Georghiou, who had apprenticed as a builder under his father, saw a bright future ahead. The king and his court were taking great interest in the rebuilding of Athens. They had just approved a new city plan, designed by two young, German-trained architects, Stamatios Kleanthes and Eduard Schaubert, which called for the opening of new, wide, straight streets, the creation of several squares, and the construction of new civic and government buildings.<sup>8</sup>

The establishment of the new capital sent a signal to several prominent Greek families who lived abroad, that Athens could now provide a fertile ground for their businesses and their fortunes. Architects and builders were needed not only for the several government buildings proposed in the plan, but also for the new residences of these returning wealthy Greeks. These lucrative prospects attracted people from the building profession to the capital. The majority of the state-sponsored, civic building was supervised by German-trained architects summoned there by the government, with Bavarian, Italian, and Greek builders doing most of the construction. By the last third of the nineteenth century there were enough trained Greek builders to fill most local needs.

Like most of his Greek colleagues, Manolis had no formal education. In the early years of Otto's rule, *τέκτων* or *ἀρχιτέκτων* (architect) referred to builders who had apprenticed under another master builder.



These builders were often unable to read or write, and used a proxy sign in the real estate transactions that required their signature.<sup>9</sup> At the same period, we also find references to an *ἐμπειρότεχνος* (skilled man) who, in major towns, had to approve of a building's plan before construction could commence. Skilled men apparently were not always to be found in smaller towns, so there the regulation was not as strictly enforced. The ambiguity of the term "skilled" in the documents implied the as yet undefined profession of the architect.<sup>10</sup> It is not clear how these "skilled men" obtained their training or positions. One can only assume that they learned the basics of building design and construction also through apprenticeships.

All of the initial town planning and building projects that were undertaken in the new state in its early decades were directed by foreign architects and engineers. An 1836 royal decree announced the establishment of a vocational architecture school that met on weekends and was staffed by high school teachers, architects, and other educated foreigners.<sup>11</sup> However, despite the ambitious and inspired tone of the decree, the school itself had little impact on the professional building world. It was dissolved in 1843 with the decree that ordered most foreigners to stop serving in state positions. An attempt in 1844 to initiate a university-level architecture school, the Royal School of Arts, was similarly unsuccessful. Under the direction of Lysandros Kaftanzoglou (1811-85), a well-respected architect educated in the Academy of San Luca in Rome, the school failed to offer any architecture courses, concentrating rather on the visual arts. Although the reasons are not clear, a combination of professional rivalry among architects, coupled with a lack of support from the government, contributed to the school's failure and Kaftanzoglou's eventual dismissal in 1862.<sup>12</sup>

During Otto's years the best school for architecture was the Athenian soil itself, on which a large number of complex structures were erected by foreign architects. The new architecture in Athens differed drastically from what one would have seen in Ottoman towns of the early nineteenth century. The royal palace (1836-43), designed by the Bavarian court architect Friedrich von Gaertner, and the university (1839-64), designed by the Dane Christian Hansen, established the official style (Figs. 1 and 2). Subsequent prominent buildings, both public and private, helped anchor northern European neoclassicism in Greece. Local builders, having apprenticed under trained foreigners, went on to apply what they had learned to more modest building commissions of their own. Even humble residences began to assume a regular, symmetrical façade. In the back sides, however, lots often retained the internal arrangement of the Ottoman times, with a private courtyard and the irregular property lines that were the norm in Athens.

The excavations on the Acropolis which were also directed by the Bavarian administration provided still another training ground for those architects involved in the restoration of ancient buildings. While most did not take an active role in the building of Athens, Christian Hansen was a notable exception. Having carefully studied the architecture of the extant



classical Greek and Roman buildings in Athens, and having participated in the restoration of the Athena Nike temple on the Acropolis, he was able to apply his knowledge in the new buildings he designed.<sup>13</sup> Since work on the Acropolis was followed by the press, we can assume that many interested individuals, not just those directly involved with the works, were indirectly influenced by the reconstruction going on.

While the neoclassical style was considered most appropriate for civic structures, an eclectic mix of styles characterized the architecture of private residences, some designed in the northern romantic neo-gothic style, others adapting motifs of Byzantine architecture to modern uses. Kleanthes (1802-62) and Kaftanzoglou, two of the most successful architects at the time and strong proponents of neoclassicism, displayed, nevertheless, a considerable stylistic diversity in their work overall. To complete the picture of the new capital, one should also consider the few surviving Ottoman-era houses as well as those erected without building permits in various parts of the city by migrant village workers, following the tradition of their places of origin. Of those, the Anafiotika neighborhood at the base of the Acropolis is one of the few that have survived. Manolis Georgiou and his compatriot architects, however, would probably have only looked at those settlements with disdain, as is evident from the press of the time. Only the work of academically trained architects could serve as a legitimate prototype. Manolis learned a lot about such work by following the press. First of all, there were the building decrees with extensive descriptions of new regulations, published regularly by Otto's government in the *Government Gazette*.<sup>14</sup> The most important of those decrees were also reprinted in the press. Bidding announcements for the construction of major projects were also printed, often describing in detail the specifications for the work to be undertaken. In the papers one could find praise for major structures, criticism for the sloppiness of other buildings, and various debates about the condition of Athens. The work of the few Greek architects who held major commissions was usually presented in a favorable light, while most of the foreigners received harsher criticism.

Some architects also made a point of presenting their work and opinion either through the press or through privately printed pamphlets. When Kleanthes and Kaftanzoglou argued over the commission of the Arsakeion Building, a women's teaching school, in 1845, many people took notice. Of the two, Kleanthes was the more practical type. He designed numerous houses in several different styles, following the directions given to him by his clients. His training in Berlin, under Karl Friedrich Schinkel, had prepared him well for the wide range of design and construction opportunities afforded in nineteenth-century Athens. Kaftanzoglou, on the other hand, never missed the opportunity to make references to the advanced theoretical studies he had carried out in Italy and the multitude of societies to which he belonged. His work was inspired both by the Renaissance and neoclassicism.

Both Kleanthes and Kaftanzoglou prepared designs for the Arsakeion which survive today. At the time, they were circulated to the trustees of the school and other interested parties. The former stressed his



use of neoclassical motifs while the latter also incorporated some Renaissance details. Kaftanzoglou and Kleanthes published short pamphlets with criticisms of each other's designs. Kleanthes defended his austere neoclassical design while attacking his colleague's work as follows:

Regarding the façade. None of the four façades appropriately characterizes the idea of the Parthenon; it would be highly desirable if this national Parthenon were built more according to the Greek style (*ἐπὶ τὸ Ἑλληνικώτερον*, because it does no honor to us Greeks to erect Parthenons in Athens imitating Tuscan architecture, while all the rest of the countries in Europe are zealously imitating Greek architecture in their buildings.<sup>15</sup>

This reference by Kleanthes to a Greek Parthenon was not sarcastic. It demonstrated his sincere search for an appropriate Greek architecture at a time when Greece, as a political entity, was young and unstable. Similarly, Kaftanzoglou supported his design by making references to the Roman writer Vitruvius who had codified the ancient Greek orders, and tried to arrive at his own definition of Greekness, one that remained closer to the Italian and French teachings of the time. Having studied in Italy, he had first-hand knowledge of both the classical Roman and the Renaissance buildings and could compose in both idioms. It appears that his choice of architectural style was related to the commission at hand. While his designs for private residences or churches incorporated Renaissance motifs, his major civic buildings followed the more somber neoclassical style, as is exemplified by one of his last major commissions, the Polytechnic University (1861-76), a most competent composition in the neoclassical mode.

Manolis Georgiou probably did not have the theoretical foundations to enter into such debates, nor could he judge the aesthetic merits of the final Arsakeion design, as it was carried out by Kaftanzoglou (Fig. 3). Had he seen the proposals by Kleanthes and by Kaftanzoglou, he would probably have concluded that they were both rather similar in style, the debate being due more to professional antagonism than to specific design disagreements. What mattered to him was the fact that both architects were upholding the significance of ancient Greek architecture and using it as the measure of their own creations (Fig. 4). Manolis's own course was to study the buildings they designed and transfer their designs, as best as he could, to commissions that came his way. When his relatives in the Peloponnesos asked him to build a house on their property, he promptly exported there the new Athenian style, the national style.<sup>16</sup>

Born almost a century later, in 1900, Lykourgos Papadakis, the composite architect of the 1920s generation, came from a much different background. His family, originally from Crete, had moved to Smyrna in the nineteenth century where they operated a successful export company. In 1910, the Papadakis family moved first to Paris and from there eventually settled in Athens in 1922.<sup>17</sup> Lykourgos attended French schools in Smyrna and Paris. Always interested in the arts, he decided to enter the School of



Architecture in Athens which had been established in 1917. Most of his professors had studied in foreign universities, and were familiar with contemporary movements in the arts. Unlike Manolis, who marveled at the rapid growth of the capital, Lykourgos was not impressed by Athens. Surrounded by friends who had also traveled or studied abroad, he found the local cultural scene rather deprived. He and his friends visited the Acropolis to study the antiquities, read the classics, attended poetry readings, and even wrote occasionally for the literary magazines that had been established since the late nineteenth century. They also played tennis and organized excursions into the countryside, much like their bourgeois counterparts in other European capitals. Describing those special elements of Greekness that characterized their culture was not as simple for Lykourgos and his generation as it had been a century earlier.<sup>18</sup>

Lykourgos envied the strong and focused convictions of the nineteenth century. At the time neoclassicism had represented both the modern and the national Greek style. This was not the case any more. Practicing architects of the early twentieth century drew from a variety of traditions. Athens, with its planned, wide boulevards and new, imposing structures—both civic and residential—had indeed begun to look like a modern European city, that being the explicit agenda of the government and most of the politicians. Its turn-of-the-century architecture was marked by the prolific and talented work of Ernst Ziller (1837-1923), a German architect who came to Athens in 1859 to supervise the construction of Theophil Hansen's Academy building and remained active there until the early twentieth century. His numerous works, which included the Schliemann house and the palace for Prince Konstantine, both dating from 1890, as well as the Royal Theater and the Stathatos house, both of 1895, endowed Athens with an air of splendor and turn-of-the-century grandeur (Fig. 5). His elaborate façade decorations and wrought-iron balcony railings were quickly copied by local builders who used them on numerous simpler buildings. Several other architects, both Greek and foreign, had also contributed to the making of the new capital. One could single out the austere classical design of the Archaeological Museum, the work of Ludwig Lange and Panagiotis Kalkos, begun in 1868, the imposing final design of the Zappeion building by Fr. Boulanger and Theophil Hansen, begun in 1874, or the competent compositions of Anastasios Metaxas, architect of the building that houses the Benaki Museum. Most of this work, with the exception of the Museum, hardly shared the economy and simplicity of the earlier neoclassical Athenian structures, notably the Royal Palace and the University. Instead, they reflected the exuberant and highly decorous architectural styles of the *fin de siècle*, prevalent in all of Europe (Fig. 6).

By the turn of the twentieth century, the classically-based intellectual underpinnings of modern Greece were challenged by a new wave of writings that considered all of Greek history, including the Byzantine years, as part of a continuum that had to be understood as such. Seminal in this effort was the work of the historian Constantine Paparregopoulos, who in 1853 began the publication of his *Ἱστορία τοῦ ἑλληνικοῦ ἔθνους* (*History of the Greek Nation*), the first work on Greek history to



incorporate the Byzantine years in a continuous narrative that began in antiquity and came to the present.<sup>19</sup> Fifty years later, Pericles Yiannopoulos, one of the first Greek intellectuals to criticize his compatriots' unchecked imitation of foreign currents in the arts, wrote in one of his essays: "It is completely impossible to explain any Greek subject or all of Greek history correctly without having the deepest knowledge of the contemporary Greek person."<sup>20</sup> He went on to give a two-pronged message. On the one hand, he attacked that "most amazing hatred for our own things and [the] tragic appropriation of all foreign things," whereas, even when talking about something Greek, "instead of looking at the thing that we have in front of us we start saying whatever we read in the European books."<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, he began to sketch out a much broader definition of Greekness, one that included "every Greek thing, from the Parthenon to the *kleftis* (rebel/bandit) and to the Megara villager and the most modest dry little flower." While remaining critical of northern European theories, Yiannopoulos was not an advocate of cultural isolation. He encouraged the study of other peoples, but not the slavish imitation of their ways and philosophies. "Don't run to Europe thirsting for a Master," he admonished in 1902.<sup>22</sup>

The influx of 1.2 million Greeks from Asia Minor, hailing both from cosmopolitan centers, like Smyrna and Constantinople, as well as from minor, Turkish-speaking villages, also challenged existing notions of a "national" or "Greek" way of life. What did a villager from Attica have in common with the likes of Lykourgos Papadakis? Could there be a definition of Greekness that embraced all expressions of Greek life and culture? By the early twentieth century many Greek intellectuals, reared to believe in the glories of ancient Greece and the advancements of French rational thought, began looking at the Greek villagers and their lifestyles, searching for continuity with the past. Katharevousa, the archaic Greek language that had been cultivated in the nineteenth century by the educated classes, came under attack. Many younger writers began using demotic Greek, which, although also cultivated to an extent, claimed its roots in the spoken language of the common Greek. Before long, similar winds of populism were to blow in architecture.

One of the most charismatic and influential instructors at the Polytechnic University in Athens, Dimitris Pikionis, (1887-1968) was also one of the first major architects to study the vernacular landscape.<sup>23</sup> He exalted the "natural" and "true" elements of Greek *laiki* architecture and art, elements that "have a poetry that springs only from the truth."<sup>24</sup> He celebrated the genuineness and wisdom of the Greek people, qualities that the educated reader could only hope to approximate. He urged his students to study the methods of the traditional builders and adapt them in their own works. Like the writers who attempted to learn from the common idioms of the villagers, Pikionis and his students found inspiration in the architecture of the people which had remained neglected up to then. Like Yiannopoulos, Pikionis criticized the blind imitation of foreign ways. "Whoever follows foreign prototypes will always remain behind them," he



wrote in the above-mentioned article. Nevertheless, he remained open and sensitive to a multitude of influences. Classical, Byzantine, northern Greek, and even Japanese architecture informed his work. Pikionis's landscaping of the Acropolis hill, completed in 1957, along with the restoration of the church of St. Dimitris Loumbardiades, and the design of the refreshment pavilion next to it at the bottom of the hill have since become paradigmatic for their successful adaptation of vernacular architecture. At the beginning of his career, when Papadakis and his contemporaries were searching for an appropriate architecture for modern Greece, Pikionis experimented with various forms, both modern and vernacular, in his open-ended search for expression.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, the discovery of the common architectural landscape and the critique of foreign architectural styles had been influenced by the international currents of romanticism which sought to record the local traditions, idealizing them in the process. Nevertheless, the study of vernacular architecture gained sufficient momentum within Greece to warrant special notice.<sup>26</sup>

Lykourgos Papadakis, out of school in the mid-1920s and with no need to make a living, did not rush to build. For one thing, he was critical of most contemporary architecture in Athens. The restraint of mid-nineteenth-century classicism had given way to an unchecked international pluralism by the end of the century. Caught between these seemingly antithetical cultural currents, Lykourgos expressed the frustrations of his generation in his private writings about art and architecture. Was architecture supposed to take its inspiration from the simple villager, like his teacher, Pikionis, advocated, or was it supposed to properly adapt contemporary currents to local needs, continuing the tradition of nineteenth-century designers? What was the role of the modern architect, or the man of letters in general, in this cultural maelstrom? And what was to be the definition of Greek architecture? The debates went on. Lacking the theoretical foundations to enter into these debates, the contemporaries of Manolis Georgiou left them to the foreign and foreign-trained architects. However, Lykourgos Papadakis and his generation could base their arguments in search of a national style on well-established, theoretical traditions that acknowledged both western and eastern influences on Greek culture. Lykourgos Papadakis, our fictitious architect, left no built work. Perched at the crossroads of the twentieth century, he remained unable to cast a line, perplexed and uncertain about the future.<sup>27</sup> Others continued to struggle (Fig. 7).

In his analysis of folklore and modern Greek ideology, *Ours Once More*, Michael Herzfeld observed:

There are, after all, two competing views of Greece. One built from the accumulated materials of European Classical scholarship...The other involves reflexive knowledge—a self-portrait that does not always flatter, a Greek's understanding of what it means in practice to be Greek.<sup>28</sup>

The second view, Herzfeld continues, is:



more likely to dwell on the traces of Turkish values in everyday Greek life. This is not a distinction between 'ideal' and 'real' so much as a contrast between two 'realities,' two notions of what matters in the attempt to define Greekness.<sup>29</sup>

As we have seen, one can examine the origin of this dual vision of modern Greece not only through the country's customs and literary production, but also through the study of its post-liberation architecture. While today these two "competing views of Greece" co-exist, what I have tried to juxtapose in this essay was the early period of the modern Greek state when this duality was not yet acknowledged, with that precarious period in the 1920s when the second, newly-defined view, revealing the everyday Greek values—they wouldn't have called them "Turkish" at the time—came to challenge the classical ideal.

Like poets, historians, and politicians, Greek architects similarly struggled to define this at once elusive and all-encompassing notion of Greekness, looking both within and outside the borders of the new nation for architectural and ideological references. The inability of the early twentieth-century architects to arrive at a singular style aptly reflects the struggle of the two views of Greece, as described above. Taken together, the seemingly competing traditions of the West and the East make up a complex and multifaceted whole: the culture of the modern Greek nation.



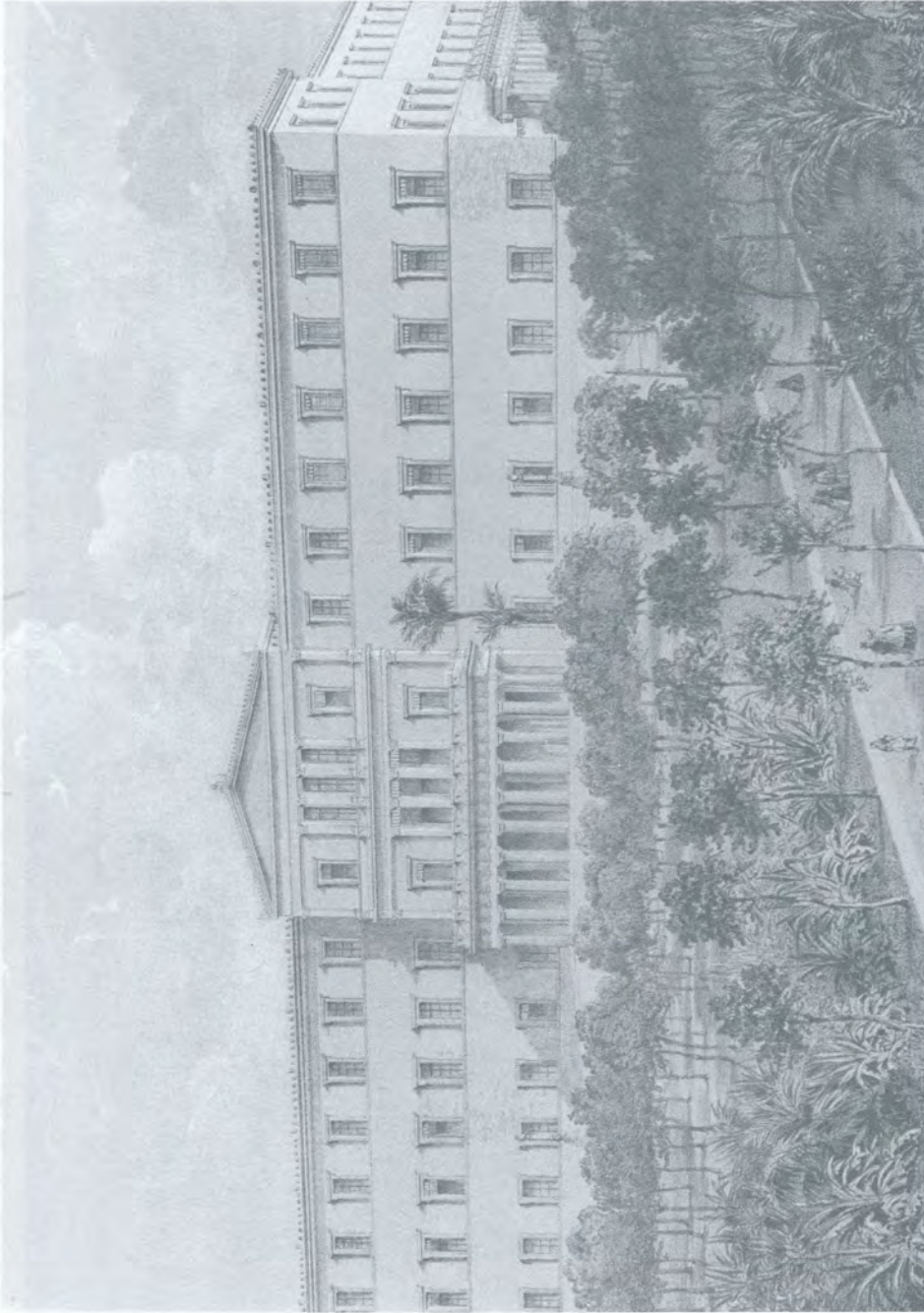


Fig. 1. The Royal Palace (1836-43) designed by Friedrich von Gaertner (Marino Vréto, Athènes moderne, Paris: C. Reinwald, 1861).



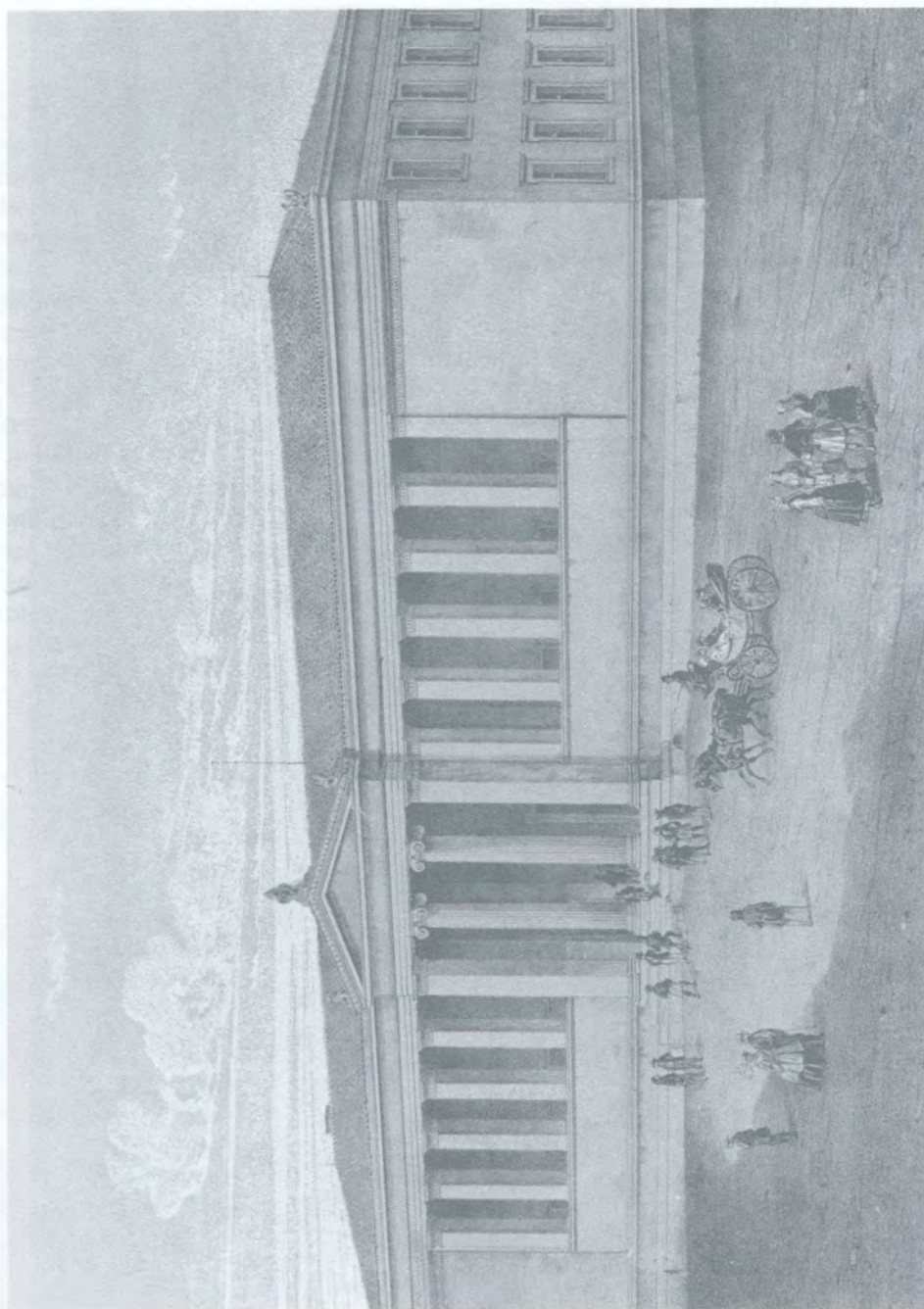


Fig. 2. *The University (1839-64) designed by Christian Hansen (Marino Vrétó, Athènes moderne, 1861).*





Fig. 3. The Arsenaleion School (1845-52) designed by Lysandros Kalfantzoglou (Marino Vrétó, Athènes moderne, 1861).



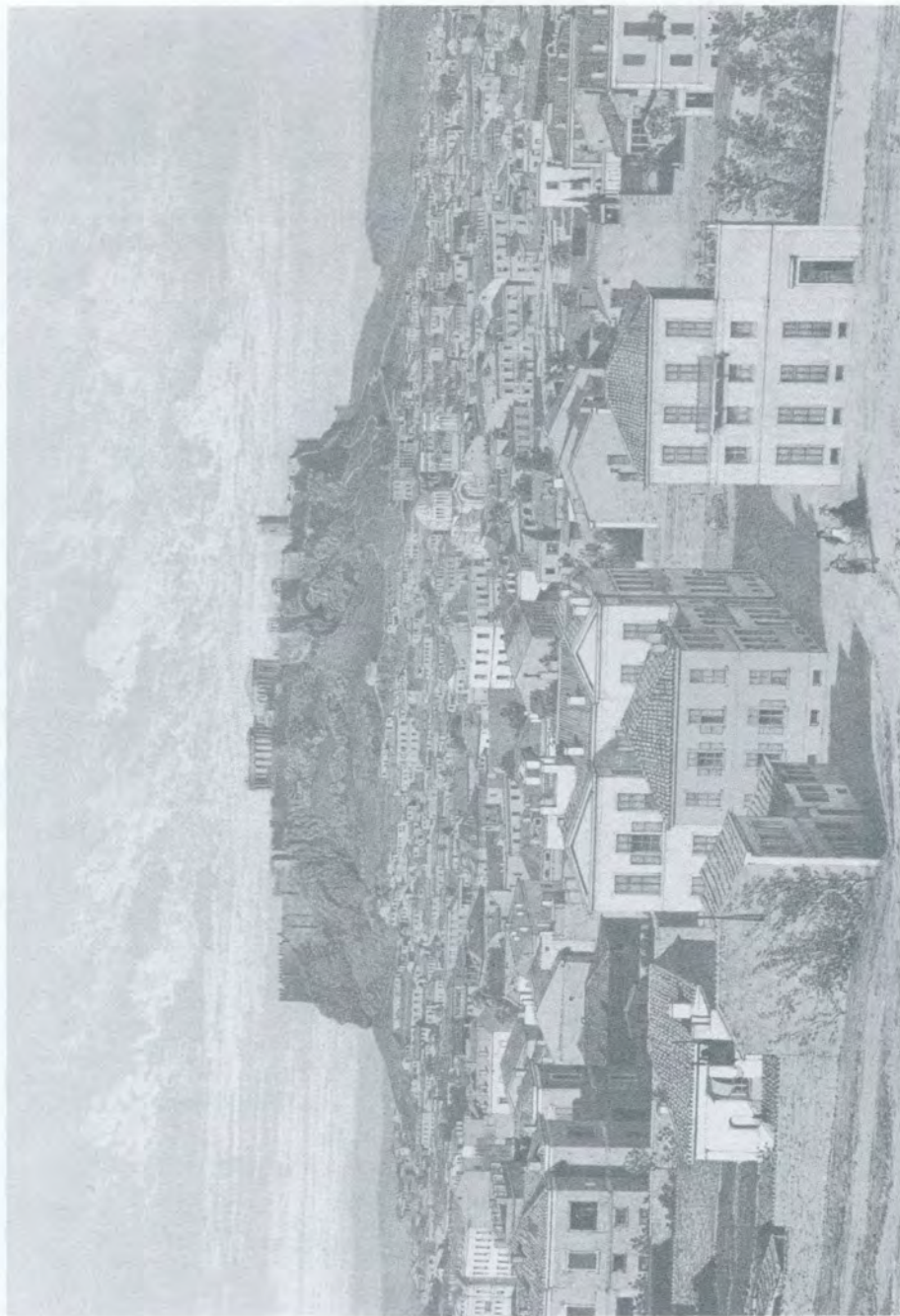


Fig. 4. View of Athens in 1861. Most new houses had simple, regular and often symmetrical façades, giving the streets a new-found regularity. Little experimentation and the full-scale adoption of a restrained neoclassical vocabulary resulted in a rather homogeneous capital city (Marino Vrêto, *Athènes moderne*, 1861).



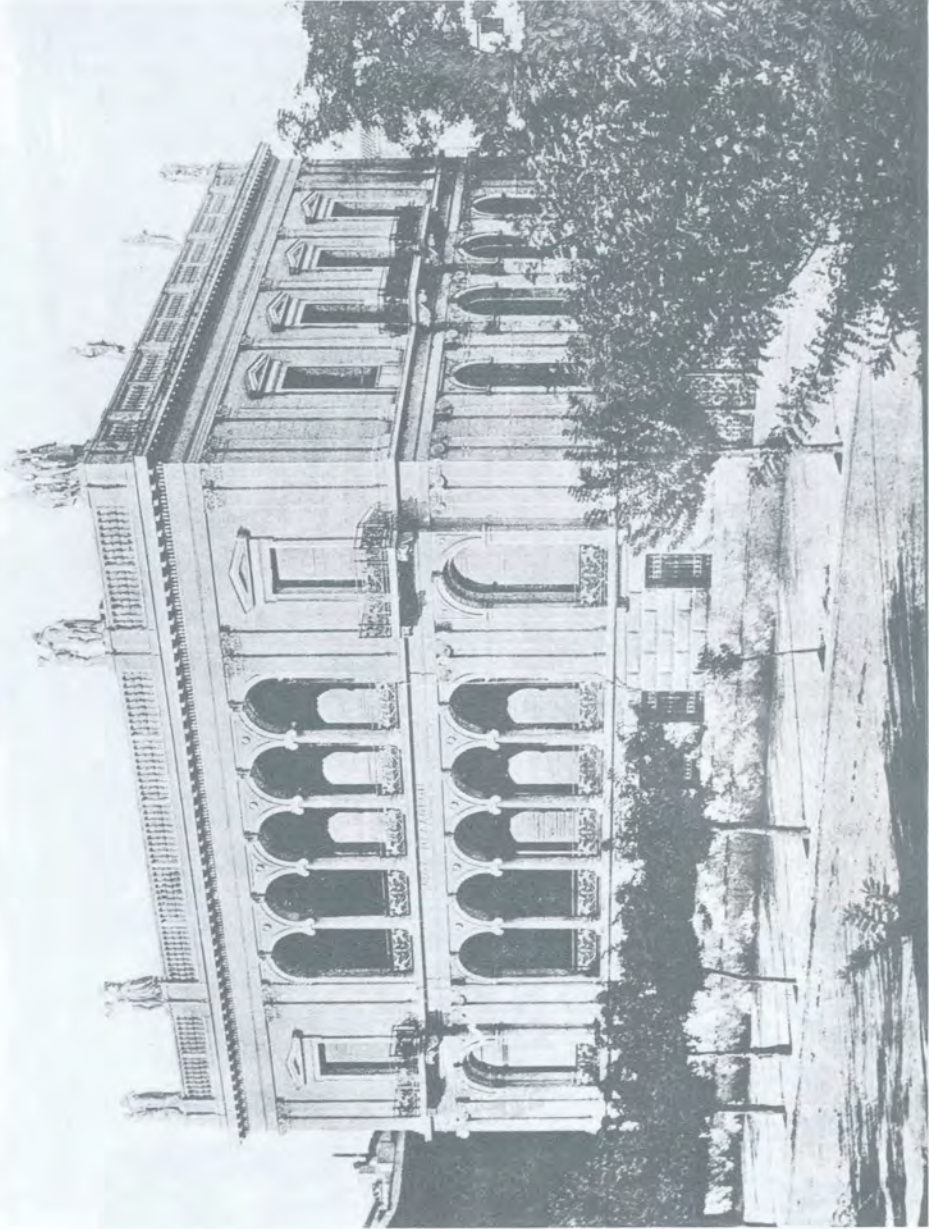


Fig. 5. The house of archaeologist H. Schliemann, designed by Ernst Ziller in 1895 (Athens, Benaki Museum Photographic Archive, N. Xanthopoulos collection).



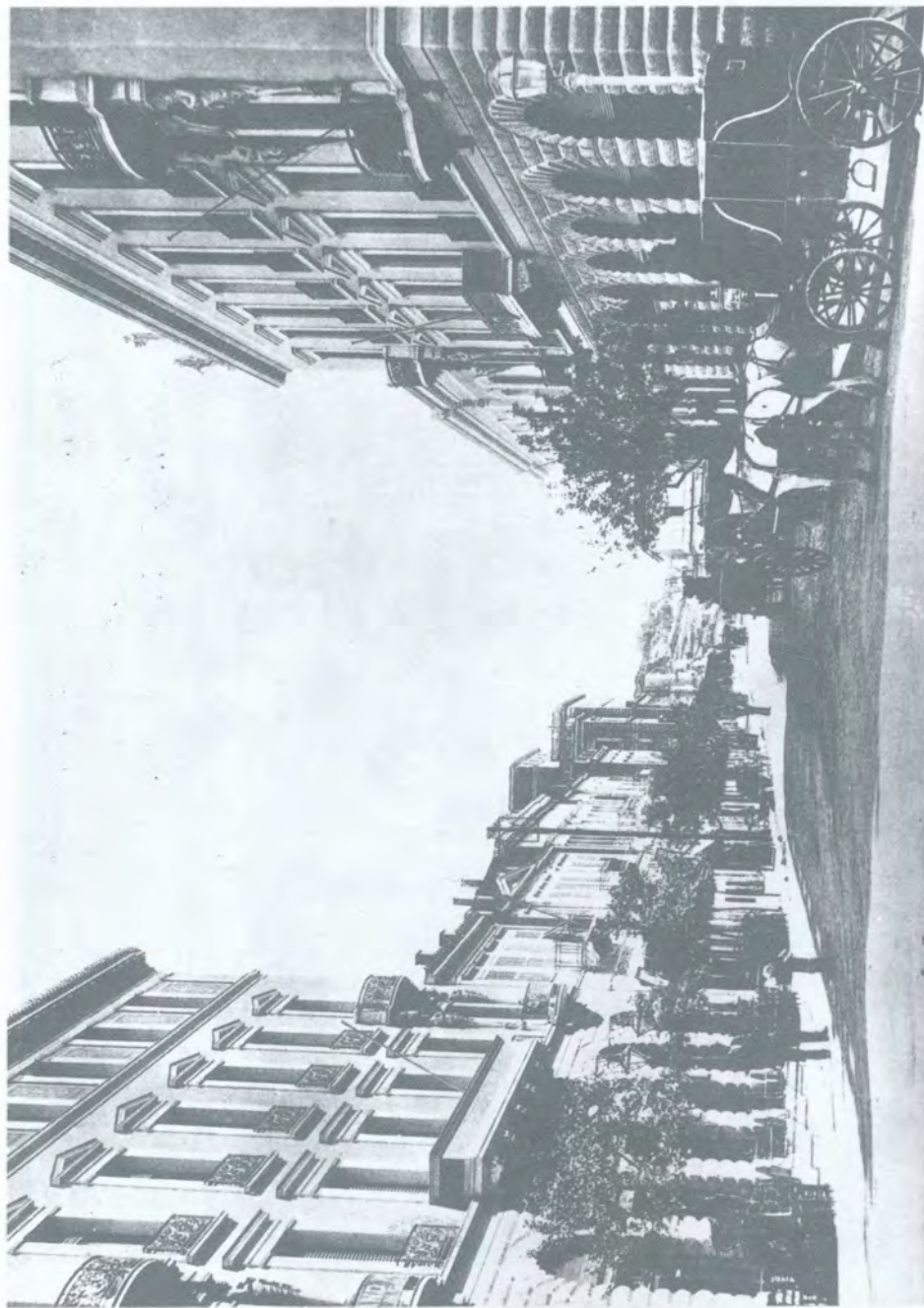


Fig. 6. View of Athens Street c. 1900. In the foreground are the hotels Bangion and Alexander the Great, both designed by Ernst Ziller (Athens. Benaki Museum Photographic Archive. N. Xanthopoulos collection).





Fig. 7. Creative vernacular adaptations of neoclassical motifs, like that of the house with the Karyatides on Ag. Asomaton Street, probably puzzled, intrigued, and delighted our fictional hero Lykourgos Papadakis, as it delights this author and her contemporaries (Photo: Mark Forte, 1992).



## NOTES

1. Pericles Yiannopoulos, "Ἡ σύγχρονος Ζωγραφική" ("Modern Painting") in *Ἀκρόπολις* (December 1902). Reprinted in Pericles Yiannopoulos, *Ἡ ἑλληνική γραμμή (The Greek Line)* (Athens: Galaxias-Ermeias, 1965), p. 72. Here and throughout, all translations are the author's.

2. For a comprehensive overview of the urban history of Athens, see John Travlos, *Πολεοδομική εξέλιξις τῶν Ἀθηνῶν (Urban Development of Athens)* (Athens: Kapon, 1993).

3. On neoclassicism in Greece, see Hans Hermann Russack, *Deutsche bauen in Athen* (Berlin: Wilhelm Limpert, 1942); Costas Biris, *Αἱ Ἀθήναι ἀπὸ τοῦ 19ου εἰς τὸν 20ον αἰῶνα (Athens from the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Centuries)* (Athens: The Foundation of the History and Town Building of Athens, 1966); and John Travlos, *Νεοκλασικὴ ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ στὴν Ἑλλάδα (Neoclassical Architecture in Greece)* (Athens: Commercial Bank of Greece, 1967). For the most complete and critical introduction to modern Greek architecture, see Dimitri Philippides, *Νεοελληνικὴ ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ (Modern Greek Architecture)* (Athens: Melissa, 1984).

4. *Ἀθηνᾶ* (27 July 1835).

5. Here I am painting the broad picture and general public opinion. Some architects, notably the designers of the new plan for Athens, Kleantes and Schaubert, as well as Kaftanzoglou who also worked in Athens, proposed the preservation not only of the classical ruins, but also of buildings from the Byzantine and the Ottoman years. The general public, however, was unaware or at least not influenced by the architects' proposals. Several earlier structures, including small Byzantine churches that had fallen in disrepair, were demolished during the nineteenth century to make room for the new roads and squares and, more generally, to usher in the modern era.

6. For a study of building groups from northern Greece, see N. K. Moutsopoulos, "Οἱ πρόδρομοι τῶν πρώτων Ἑλλήνων τεχνικῶν ἐπιστημόνων: Κουδαραῖοι Μακεδόνες καὶ Ἡπειρώτες Μαῖστορες" ("Forerunners of the First Greek Technical Scientists: Koudaraioi Macedonians and Epirote master Builders") in Pavlos Kyriazēs (ed.), *Πρῶτοι Ἑλληνες τεχνικοὶ ἐπιστῆμονες περιόδου ἀπελευθέρωσης (First Greek Technical Scientists after the Liberation)* (Athens: TEE [Chamber of Greek Architects-Engineers], 1977). Similar building traditions existed in southern Greece.

7. I am using the example of General Makrygiannes as the basis for the Gerghios' move to Athens. That Makrygiannes, who returned to Athens in May 1833 with his family, would choose to make his home there leads us to believe that Athens projected an attractive image to enterprising Greeks, a point also supported by the growth of the Athenian population to 29,700 people by 1840. See J. Vlachogiannes (ed.), *Στρατηγὸς Μακρυγιάννη ἀπομνημονεύματα (Memoirs of General Makrygiannes)* (Athens: E. G. Vagionake, 1947, 2d ed.), vol. 2, pp. 57-59. See, also, John Anthony Petropoulos, *Politics and Statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece 1833-1843* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), part two.

8. All references given in notes 2 and 3, except for Travlos, *Neoclassical Architecture in Greece*, discuss the plan of new Athens in detail.



9. See, for example, the 26 June 1837 and 10 November 1837 issues of *Ἀθηνᾶ* where, in both cases, the architects requested to sign in an auction admitted that they were illiterate.

10. See Eleni Bastéa, *The Rebirth of Athens: Planning and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century*, Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Architecture, University of California, Berkeley, 1989, p. 53.

11. Decree dated 31 December 1836/12 January 1837.

12. Costas Biris, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Ἐθνικοῦ Μετσοβίου Πολυτεχνείου (History of the National Metsoveion University)* (Athens: National Technical University, 1956), pp. 19-151.

13. See Aristeo Papanikolaou-Kristensen, *Χριστιανός Χάνσεν: Επιστολές και σχέδια από την Ελλάδα (Christian Hansen: Letters and Drawings from Greece)* (Athens: Okeanida, 1993).

14. See, for example, the 3/15 April 1835 planning decree, which established guidelines for the layout of new cities, in Bastéa, *The Rebirth of Athens*, p. 53.

15. Stamatios Kleanthes, *Ἐκθεσις περὶ τοῦ ἐν Ἀθήναις ἀνεγερθησομένου καταστήματος τῆς φιλεκπαιδευτικῆς Ἑταιρίας (Exposition Regarding the Future Public Building of the Society of Friends of Education)* (Athens, 1845), p. 16.

16. Clearly, the neoclassical architecture of modern Athens influenced the building practices in the surrounding Greek towns, some of which already possessed strong local architectural traditions. For an extensive analysis of the creation of an important provincial capital, see John Travlos and Angeliki Kokkou, *Hermoupolis: The Creation of a New City on Syros at the Beginning of the 19th Century* (Athens: Commercial Bank of Greece, 1984), also published in Greek. See also Philippides, *Modern Greek Architecture*, pp. 98-102, for a discussion of the complex relationship between local and official architecture during the nineteenth century.

17. The travels and relocations of the Papadakis family, a constructed profile based on the travels of some of my own relatives, followed a pattern that was common among many merchant Greek families at the time. Indeed, many of those who came to Greece after the 1922 Asia Minor Disaster followed a Turkey-France-Greece itinerary, as, for example, Seferis, Theotokas, and K. Politis. See Mario Vitti *Ἡ γενιὰ τοῦ τριάντα: Ἰδεολογία καὶ μορφή (The Generation of the 30s: Ideology and Form)* (Athens: Hermes, 1989, first publ. 1977), p. 24, n. 5.4.

18. Dimitri Philippides, whose own search for that quality of Greekness propelled his study of modern Greek architecture, cited Seferis's aphorism: "The example of the Academy building is not unique. We all know that. Yet, we do not realize that most of the time, when we talk about the Greekness of a work of art, it is about the Academy building that we are really talking." Philippides, *Modern Greek Architecture*, p. 65. Original in George Seferis, *Δοκίμιές (Essays)* (Athens, 1974), vol. 1, p. 101.

19. For an excellent analysis of K. Papanregopoulos's impact on the development of a historical consciousness in late-nineteenth-century Greece, see K. Th. Dimaras, *Κ. Παπαρρηγόπουλος (K. Papanregopoulos)* (Athens: Cultural Institute of the National Bank, 1986).

20. Pericles Yiannopoulos, "Πρὸς τὴν ἐλληνικὴν ἀναγέννησιν" ("Towards the Greek Renaissance") in *Ἀκρόπολις*, March 1903. Also in Pericles Yiannopoulos, *Ἡ ἐλληνικὴ γραμμὴ (The Greek Line)* (Athens: Galaxias-Ermeias, 1965), p. 15.



21. Pericles Yiannopoulos, "Η σύγχρονος ζωγραφική" ("Modern Painting") in *Ἀκρόπολις*, December 1902. Also in Yiannopoulos, *The Greek Line*, pp. 23, 18.

22. Yiannopoulos, *The Greek Line*, pp. 45, 68-69.

23. After completing his degree in civil engineering at the University of Athens, Pikionis went to Munich to study painting, and then on to Paris, where he studied both painting and architecture.

24. Dimitris Pikionis, *Κείμενα (Collected Essays)*, Agni Pikioni and Michael Parousis (eds.) (Athens: Cultural Institute of the National Bank, 1987), pp. 53-69. The essay "Our Popular Art and Ourselves" first appeared in the magazine *Φιλική Ἐταιρεία* 1 (4) (1925):145-58. It was also circulated as a reprint.

25. The Moraitis house of 1921-23 in Neo Phaliro was directly influenced by the Rodakis house in Aigina. For an "architectural historiography" of the Rodakis house, see Philippides, "Ο μύθος του σπιτιού του Ροδάκη" ("The Myth of the Rodake House") in *Θυμιάμα στη μνήμη της Λασκαρίνας Μπούρα (In Memory of Laskarina Boura)* (Athens: Benaki Museum, 1994), pp. 261-67. Pikionis's Karamanos house in Patisia became a simplified reinterpretation of the ancient Greek house, while his elementary school on Lykabetos Hill (1933) adapted the contemporary teachings of the modern movement to the Greek conditions and landscape. On this, see Philippides, *Modern Greek Architecture*, pp. 177-78.

26. The complex relationship between vernacular and, for lack of a better word, academic architecture falls beyond the scope of this essay. See, especially, the introductory essays by Spiros Asdrahas, Charalambos Bouras and Dimitris Philippides in the multivolume *Ἑλληνική παραδοσιακή ἀρχιτεκτονική (Greek Traditional Architecture)*, Philippides (ed.) (Athens: Melissa, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 14-56. For a review of the current historiography on the subject, see Eleni Bastéa, "The Sweet Deceit of Tradition: National Ideology and Greek Architecture" in *20/1: Twentieth-Century Art and Culture*, 1 (2) (Spring 1990):85-101.

27. Our fictional hero was not alone in his criticism of early-twentieth-century architecture in Athens. In his *Athens from the 19th to the 20th Centuries*, Costas Biris, in many cases our only authority on the subject, headed the chapter that described the architecture of the period "The Decline of Architecture." Although I do not have any figures indicating the number of architects who chose not to practice at the time, I take Papadakis's reaction to be representative of a small, but accepted group of architects. I am conjuring the dilemma faced by him on the basis of the following conditions: 1) Since the early modern period, when the Florentine architect Leon Batista Alberti (1404-72) introduced the distinction between a builder and an architect, architecture has often been considered a "gentleman's art," studied by men of private means; I am assuming that that was also the case in 1920s Athens, as it was in other parts of Europe, and, to a degree, still is. 2) Focusing on Greece, Philippides refers to the "impass of Classicism" before World War I, which reflected the ideological impass of the society itself, divided between foreign influences, on the one hand, and ethnocentrism, on the other; Philippides, *Modern Greek Architecture*, p. 131; I believe that this "impass" was evident after the war, as well, especially after the Asia Minor Catastrophe. 3) Aristotle Zahos, a German-trained architect who later developed a neo-vernacular idiom, reportedly said that it took him seventeen years to find "his Greek self," thus placing the epiphany in the mid-1920s; Philippides, *Modern Greek Architecture*, p. 139. This is also the time frame in which



Lykourgos Papadakis would have operated.

28. Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece* (New York: Pella, 1986), p. vii.

29. *Ibid.*, p. ix.

by

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WHEN I FIRST BEGAN studying the social context of Greek house design, I was drawn most directly to the widespread village houses and the distant Attic rural houses, which spoke of the best of being Greek. The drawing windows and half-built shells of abandoned or semi-abandoned houses standing near these occupied dwellings seemed anomalous, and not part of the social field. They figured little in the earlier classic theories of familial solidarity and folklore discourses of vernacular architecture which framed my research. Most such studies focused on functioning families operating within intact houses. On its simplest level, this article examines why I came to see the crumbling walls and large foundations of vacant and unfinished housing as a key something in these environments of house and household. Such architectural elements create meaning and movement, give visible form and testify to the dynamic nature of housing in Greece.

On a broader level, this article considers Greek housing not as static, rather than a set of living. What kinds of dwellings are occupied? How do they shape social life, and the cultural understandings surrounding them change over time, and vary according to person? Greek villages, towns, and other settlements have formed and dissolved repeatedly over the centuries as political and social transformations have torn at the fabric and then mended. Under such shifting circumstances, houses were valued for their refuge, ambience, and base of operations. However, they have also been abandoned and replaced particularly houses with modern designs.