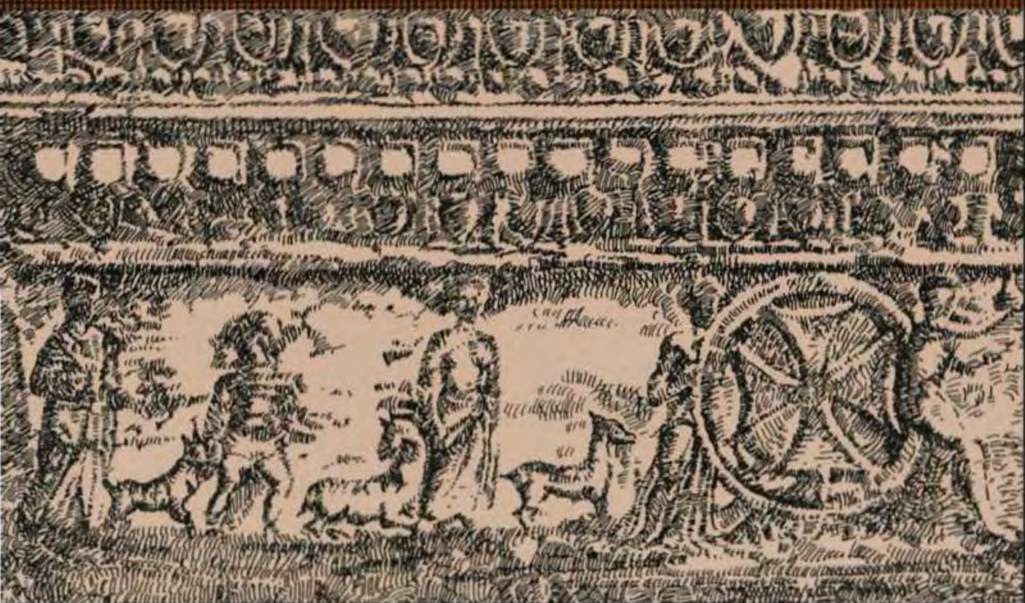
The Usable Past

Greek Metahistories

Edited by K. S. Brown
and Yannis Hamilakis



Contents

Figures vii

Foreword xi

Acknowledgments xiii

1. The Cupboard of the Yesterdays? Critical Perspectives on the Usable Past 1
K. S. Brown and Yannis Hamilakis

I. Projects: The State in Action

2. Monumental Visions: The Past in Metaxas' *Weltanschauung* 23
Philip Carabott

3. "Learn History!" Antiquity, National Narrative, and History in Greek Educational Textbooks 39
Yannis Hamilakis

4. The Politics of Currency: Stamps, Coins, Banknotes, and the Circulation of Modern Greek Tradition 69
Basil C. Gounaris

II. Fractures: Resisting the National Narrative

5. The Macedonian Question in the 1920s and the Politics of History 87
Patrick Finney

6. Recollecting Difference: Archive-Marxists and Old Calendarists in an Exile Community 105
Margaret E. Kenna

7. The Ethnoarchaeology of a "Passive" Ethnicity: The Arvanites of Central Greece 129
John Bintliff

III. Conversations: From Past to Present

8. Dimitris Pikionis and Sedad Eldem: Parallel Reflections of Vernacular and National Architecture 147
Eleni Bastéa

9. Spaces in Tense: History, Contingency, and Place in a Cretan City 171
Thomas M. Malaby

10. Poked by the "Foreign Finger" in Greece: Conspiracy Theory or the Hermeneutics of Suspicion? 191
David Sutton

11. Afterword 211
Loring M. Danforth

Index 223

About the Contributors 237

8

Dimitris Pikionis and Sedad Eldem: Parallel Reflections of Vernacular and National Architecture

Eleni Bastéa

Introduction

In this chapter I examine how architectural heritage, woven into our lives through personal and collective memory, becomes a testimony to the past—a past, however, that reflects current theories of history and culture. Beginning with my own reflections on my familiar architecture in Greece, I move to the writings and work of two prominent architects of the twentieth century—Dimitris Pikionis (1887-1968) from Greece, and Sedad Hakkı Eldem (1908-1988) from Turkey—and examine the influences that the native landscape, built environment, and local history exerted on each. I reflect on the process through which we come to understand local and national architecture from a personal point of view, acknowledging that some of these memories and experiences embody both individual preconceptions and national ideologies.

Considering the efforts of their respective countries to develop distinct political positions and national identities in the twentieth century, the considerable similarities in the architects' writings and built projects might come as a surprise at first. If, however, we realize that the countries of southeastern Europe share a common architectural heritage of the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires and that they also followed similar steps in constructing their respective Western, national identities, then the modern architectural similarities become comprehensible. Only by taking into account the broader region's common historical past can we begin to understand the foundations underlying these architectural similarities that are apparent not only in the work of Eldem and Pikionis but also in the work of several other architects working in Greece and Turkey during the twentieth century.

I believe that parallel studies of personal and collective stories about our relationship with built space can help us rebuild the historical and cultural bridges that crossed the Mediterranean in earlier times but have been neglected more recently. We can begin to learn how built space enters into our personal

and historical consciousness by examining how architects remember the built environment and how they may interpret it in their own design work, keeping in mind the power of personal preconceptions and national ideologies to shape and alter those memories.

Personal Reflections

In an urban history seminar in St. Louis, I ask my students to what city or place they feel most connected. Proud of their adaptability, most of them assure me that they could live almost anywhere, while those from small towns insist that they certainly do not want to go back home. "Where is it that you want to be when you die?" I prod them further, trying to get past their airs of detachment and noncommitment. Of course, I do not get any answers. Maybe it is an inappropriate question, given the university setting, yet that is the only approach that allows me to examine my own attachment to the architecture of a place.

I left Thessaloniki when I was seventeen, yet I find myself going back in spirit whenever I embark on a new project and need an infusion of courage and inspiration—whenever I am searching for a bit of my old self. When I actually visit the city, I realize that I do not know the new generation of its inhabitants—slim girls in black tight pants, cool Eurokids, and recent immigrants of all ages. I secretly miss the close-knit provincialism of the 1960s and 1970s and hold on to the city I remember from my childhood with the stubborn, fixed gaze that former residents share with the elderly. Nevertheless, I claim Thessaloniki as "my town."

I grew up in an apartment building across from a mosque. The mosque, Alaca İmaret or İhak Paşa (1484), was used by the local Boy Scout chapter until more recently, when it was spruced up and turned into a cultural exhibition space. My silent dialogue with the exterior of the mosque occurred every day, as I opened or closed the shutters to our second-story balcony doors, all the time facing the generous curves of its domes across the street from me, almost at eye level. In a wordless way, the perpetual presence of the mosque across from our balcony, surrounded by utilitarian apartment buildings and a small square, became my first alphabet of architecture, my own primer for understanding space.

I discovered vernacular architecture by visiting Thessaloniki's Upper City, a short walk uphill from our house. The narrow streets and the old, decaying houses, painted in ocher tones became the subject of high school art projects: sketches, drawings, and even a slide presentation accompanied by popular Greek music. It was chic to look at your own city with the eyes of the tourist, camera-strap around the neck, eyes scanning the street for telling architectural details, searching for the secrets of ancient aesthetics of the departed builders. At fifteen, I felt that reading modern Greek poetry and taking pictures of other people's old houses was the pinnacle of culture.

Looking back at that period twenty-five years later, with the inevitable layers of other memories and references, I now come to realize that those powerful and indelible experiences of space were also selective, eclectic, and ahistorical.

Living in a city of homogeneous Greek population, I subconsciously transposed that homogeneity to the past, assuming that most of the older buildings belonged to a similar but earlier era of the city. Even the powerful presence of the mosque did not make me realize that it was originally part of an Ottoman-Turkish community of buildings and people. It did not occur to me until much later that our apartment building, like all others around us, must have been built on land that was owned by Turkish families. It did not register in my adolescent mind that some of the houses we loved to photograph in the Upper City that gave Thessaloniki its undeniable local color were inhabited by Moslem Turks until the early 1920s. I saw them as examples of "our" vernacular architecture that made me proud of our city in a personal, though vague, way.

What I find puzzling, however, is that as I look back I have no awareness of the city's earlier Moslem inhabitants. Of the 160,000 residents who lived in Thessaloniki in 1912, 61,500 were Jews, 46,000 were Moslems, 40,000 were Greeks, and the rest were French, English, and Italian. Most Jewish families lived in the flat downtown area, in small, densely built houses. The Greeks lived in some of the downtown sections, near the churches, and along the eastern Byzantine city walls. The Moslem population lived in the Upper City, along with the Dönme Jews—followers of a Jewish mystical movement who were forced to adopt Islam but also maintained their Jewish tradition. The Moslem, Turkish-speaking families began a large-scale emigration to Turkey in 1912, with the last of the Moslems, the Dönmes, and some Jewish families leaving Thessaloniki in 1922 (Demetriades 1983; Anastasiadis and Stathakopoulos 1986). Built for the most part after the 1950s, present-day Thessaloniki bears little resemblance to the early twentieth-century city. Most single-family houses have been replaced by multistory apartment buildings, made of reinforced concrete frames with brick infill. The population is primarily Greek, with a Jewish community of about 1,500, as most of the Jews were deported during the German occupation of the country (1940-1945) and perished in concentration camps.

Taking my parents' families as the norm when I was growing up, I assumed for the longest time that most of Thessaloniki's inhabitants were also refugees from Asia Minor and central Anatolia. That was not, in fact, far from the truth, since the exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece that was dictated by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne brought 117,000 Christian Greek refugees from Turkey to Thessaloniki. Overall, approximately 1,100,000 Christian Greeks from present-day Turkey moved to the Greek kingdom, while some 380,000 Moslem Turks were transferred to Turkey (Clogg 1992, 101). Smyrna, now Izmir, the birthplace of my paternal grandparents, was always in the air as I was growing up. The ambiance of the earlier Smyrna and Thessaloniki, both polyphonic and diverse Mediterranean commercial centers, comes alive, for me, only when I leaf through books, old or new illustrated volumes, coffee-table books that pander to nostalgia for a colorful, distant past. Old postcards from the early twentieth century, with their legends in French, Ottoman Turkish, and Greek, now appear like stage sets of an era that has left few other marks.

Painful as the thought appears to me, I am now coming to realize that similarly for the new generations growing up in Izmir, the old houses alone, even if they are described as "Greek" or "Armenian" houses, cannot communicate any more about the past than the houses of Thessaloniki's Upper City. Whether I revisit Thessaloniki in person or in my mind's eye, I acknowledge the impact it has had on my own understanding of space. But I am also becoming aware of the attendant blind spots that have marked me for life. Architecture students in Turkey, just like architecture students in Greece and everywhere else where the past weighs more than the present, take pride in the formal aesthetics of the local vernacular architecture, with only a vague understanding of the historical and social realities reflected in those houses. They produce clean, measured line drawings of the old buildings, categorize them by building type, propose creative reuses, and test their design skills as they undertake the study of local vernacular heritage for their professional diploma work.

My own path toward learning the language of space was also influenced by the way the government and my schooling packaged that architecture. While I guard these memories as precious and inalienable parts of my identity and my youth, I realize that I have also incorporated in my interpretation of space my country's national agendas. I might have learned about space by facing a mosque, walking home, and photographing old buildings. I might bear their memory like an afterimage etched on my retina, the multiple exposures of that city written on my body. Yet, I also learned to see the city through the stories and histories I heard at home and at school, through the books and newspapers I read, through the movies and the television programs I watched. These placed my private knowledge of Thessaloniki in a national context, shared by most others who grew up in Greece. At school I learned about the Hellenistic city that Kassandros founded in 315 BC, naming it after the sister of Alexander the Great. I did not learn about the city that my grandparents encountered in 1922, or the post World War II city of interior migration. Official modern Greek architecture resided in Athens, while the architecture of the Aegean islands came to represent the country's official, picture-perfect vernacular building idiom. In Thessaloniki, modernity was, on the whole, misrepresented in the gray concrete-frame apartment buildings of the 1960s and 1970s that housed most residents and filled them with the pride of ownership. Modern architecture of the sort that graces magazine covers was employed primarily on the buildings of the university campus and the temporary pavilions of the city's annual international trade fair. Though close to the downtown today, both the university campus and the fairgrounds are set apart from the rest of the city. For me, modern architecture was disappointing. I followed the common pattern of identifying my love for the city with love for the old buildings, the ones that are perpetually in danger of demolition. My immediate surroundings provided me with my original "language of space," a language that future experience might slowly expand but not alter fundamentally because it is intricately bound to my memory.

Recent Studies on Memory

Currently, all fields are turning to the study of memory as a way to understand ourselves and our environment better. Sociologists and psychologists have distinguished three types of memory: the personal, the cognitive, and the habit-memory. Personal memories are located in one's own past. Cognitive memory covers what we remember because we had to learn it at some point in the past: maps we studied, poems and historical dates we once memorized. Habit-memory, also called "motor memory," describes the process of remembering how to write, read, swim, or ride a bicycle. We might not remember when or how we learned to ride a bicycle, but we can demonstrate that we remember the act through performing it (Connerton 1989, 22-28). In his pioneering studies on collective memory *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mèmoire* (1925) and *La Mèmoire Collective* (1950), Maurice Halbwachs argued that every recollection, even the most personal and private thought and sentiment, exists in relationship to a social group. Our memories are localized within a social group, situated in the mental and material spaces provided by that group. The apparent stability of these material spaces surrounding us allows us to conserve our recollections (Connerton 1989, 36-37; Halbwachs 1992, 52-53).

While research on memory is continuously recasting its questions, methods, and conclusions, it can offer us a useful language for describing the personal and collective experience of built space. My experience of walking up and down the streets of my hometown, or of finding my way from our house to my aunt's house, is best described by the concept of habit-memory or motor memory. Nevertheless, we do not remember spaces through only one form of memory. I cannot separate the experience of walking to my aunt's house from memories of my aunt herself and of our family gatherings. All memory—personal, collective, and of habit—is connected to the social, political, and physical space of a community. Our histories are bound in space, just as they are bound in time. It would follow, then, that built space could be the basis for a larger narrative that not only respects the unique characteristics of the local and national stories but also acknowledges their common myths and begins to compare them.

Recent work among historians and anthropologists has also begun to establish connections among memory, history, and space. One of the most prominent and ambitious efforts is the multivolume study on French history *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1984-1992) by Pierre Nora and his colleagues. In Nora's words, their work underscores the "importance of memory and the search for the *lieux* that embody it, the return to our collective heritage and focus on the country's shattered identities" (Nora 1996, 1: xxiii-xxiv). Halbwachs had left historical developments mostly outside his analysis of collective memory (Boyarin 1994, 24); Nora and his colleagues, on the other hand, concentrated on the collective memory of the French republic in their effort "to write a history in multiple voices. . . . [A] history . . . less interested in 'what actually happened' than in its perpetual reuse and misuse, its influence on successive presents . . . . [A] history that is interested in memory not as remembrance but as the overall structure of the past within the present" (Nora 1996, 1: xxiv). By focusing on the idea of the French

nation, the work has downplayed the existence of opposing political communities and their own collective memories (Gildea 1994, 10-11; Boyarin 1994, 19). As other historians have pointed out, there has been a consistent local opposition to the concept of the French nation both from among the conservatives and from the peasantry (Gillis 1994, 8-9). Nevertheless, Nora's work, with its emphasis on the multiple voices and its search for common cultural agents, offers a valuable model. In my own work I do not focus on the construction of any one nation as a concept or as a symbol, but rather on the capacity of the built environment to forge connections among the residents of neighboring countries.

Dimitris Pikionis and Sedad Hakkı Eldem: Toward a Comparative Approach

What first attracted me to a parallel review of the architecture of Pikionis and Eldem was their common preoccupation with vernacular architecture, reinterpreted through modern means, and the thematic affinity of their published testimonies. Studying their background, we can discern the palpable influence of the native landscape, built environment, and local history and the intellectual climate that charged the building heritage of each country with a distinctive meaning. Furthermore, each architect's teaching and design work reflects both his Western training and his creative response to modern trends. If we step back far enough from each architect's immediate surroundings, national culture, and history, it is possible, I believe, to discern several common patterns marking their respective bodies work, as transmitted through their buildings, writings, and teachings. These similarities should not be interpreted as the result of personal acquaintance or reciprocal influence. None of the material I have examined suggests that Pikionis and Eldem knew each other or even knew of each other's work. Pikionis and Eldem conceived of their architecture as the local, indigenous, albeit learned product of their own national culture, each responding to his own country's historical, economic, and political conditions. So far, architectural historians have also examined each architect's contributions within the framework of his national environment. What I hope to show here is that even work that has been conceived of and received as the product of a national culture can be examined in a broader, comparative context that underscores its similarities to contemporary work in a neighboring country that faced similar issues of nationalism and modernization.

While both Pikionis and Eldem came to be strong advocates for the local building traditions, they were trained by Western European architects and incorporated both the principles and elements of the modern movement in some of their designs. Pikionis, who was born and grew up in Piraeus, completed his civil engineering degree at the National Technical University in Athens in 1907.

Figure 8.1. State Monopolies Directorate (Sedam Eldem, 1934-1937), Ankara.

He continued his studies in painting and architecture in Munich and Paris, returning to Greece in 1912. Born in Istanbul, Eldem received his primary school education in Geneva and attended the gymnasium in Munich. He studied architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul (1924-1928) under the Italian architect Guilio Mongeri, who had designed some of the major buildings in Istanbul and Ankara. He continued his studies in Paris and Berlin (1929-1930) (Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 26, 159).

Eldem's State Monopolies General Directorate in Ankara (1934-1937) and Pikionis' Elementary School on the Lycabettus Hill, Athens (1933), reflect both the architects' familiarity with modern architecture and each government's support for modern architecture (figures 8.1 and 8.2).

Eldem won the commission for the Directorate, his first opportunity to design a major state building, through an international competition. At the time, the pursuit of modernity in Turkey was reflected not only in Kemal Atatürk's westernizing reforms but also in the new economic policies that supported the

Figure 8.2. Lycabettus School (Dimitris Pikionis, 1933), Athens. (Mark Forte)

extensive building program of the early years of the republic. Further developed in the 1930s, this program included the building of the new capital city, Ankara, the construction of service and industrial buildings throughout the country, and the development of models for school buildings (Batur 1984, 68-93). The Lycabettus school by Pikionis was part of a government school-building initiative (1930-1932) by Minister of Education George Papandreou that led to the construction of six-thousand new school rooms and the repair of two-thousand existing ones. This ambitious building program also succeeded in establishing the modern architectural idiom in Greece (Philippides 1984, 181; Tzonis and Lefaivre 1984, 19). As each country was actively engaged in the construction of the nationalist state, architecture came to the aid of national ideology.

In the 1930s, as the two countries were crafting their respective images, they each turned, in part, away from the international trends and closer to their local traditions. In Greece this turn reflected a broader cultural shift, as artists and writers, fluent in the contemporary Western currents, sought to define the elements of Greekness in both high and low art. This initially open and wide-ranging search became codified by the state after the establishment of General Metaxas' dictatorship on 4 August 1936. Metaxas elaborated the notion of the "Third Hellenic Civilization," third after the civilizations of ancient Greece and

of Byzantium (cf. chapter two in this volume). While this state-sanctioned "return to the roots" often resulted in uncritical imitation of existing works, broader questions regarding cultural heritage and identity remained in the foreground, at times transcending official rhetoric.

In Turkey, a similar movement to embrace regional architecture was approved by legislation in 1934, decreeing that "the Ministry [of Public Works] will see to it that a Turkish architectural style is developed in order to maintain a certain uniformity." The focus on regional and national architecture gained full momentum in 1940, two years after Atatürk's death, in part as the result of World War II. Shortages in imported building materials forced architects to reconsider traditional building materials and construction methods. Ideologically, nationalism was called on to provide internal cohesion and withstand external pressures (Philippides 1984, 181-249; Vitti 1989; Alsaç 1984, 94-104).

In his 1965 essay "Universal Civilization and National Cultures," philosopher Paul Ricoeur described the following condition:

> Whence the paradox: on the one hand, it [the nation] has to root itself in the soil of the past, forge a national spirit, and unfurl this spiritual and cultural revendication before the colonialist's personality. But in order to take part in modern civilization, it is necessary at the same time to take part in scientific, technical, and political rationality, something which very often requires the pure and simple abandon of a whole cultural past. . . . There is the paradox: how to become modern and return to sources; how to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization. (1965, 277)

While Greece and Turkey were not colonies per se, they did confront many of the cultural dilemmas facing former colonies. Dimitris Pikionis and Eldem embody perfectly their generation's quandary: how to be modern and return to sources. Throughout their careers, each struggled with the ghosts of nationalism and modernity and each became a leading advocate for a "return to the roots."

Representative Works by Pikionis and Eldem

Both Dimitris Pikionis and Sedad Eldem created buildings that were directly inspired by vernacular architecture. On larger-scale buildings we can see the influence of local architecture on the Experimental School in Thessaloniki (1935) by Pikionis and on the Faculties of Sciences and Letters, University of Istanbul (1942), designed by Eldem and Emin Onat (figures 8.3 and 8.4).

With their use of interior courts, projecting tile roofs, and overall formal vocabulary, both building complexes draw inspiration from the large, elaborate private mansions of the late Ottoman period that can be found to this day in northern Greece, Turkey, and the Balkans (Architectural Association [AA] 1989, 42-43; Philippides 1984, 207-9; Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 62-67). Reflecting on his two schools, Pikionis wrote in 1958: "The Lycabettus School was built around 1933. When it was completed, it did not satisfy me.

Figure 8.3. Experimental School (Dimitris Pikionis, 1935), Thessaloniki. (Mark Forte)

That is when I considered that the universal spirit had to be coupled with the spirit of nationhood; and from these thoughts came the Experimental School in Thessaloniki [and others]" (Pikionis 1987, 34).

Figure 8.4. Faculties of Sciences and Letters, University of Istanbul (Sedam Eldem and Emin Onat, 1942). (Aga Khan Trust for Culture)

On a smaller scale, we can compare the Taşlýk Coffee House in Istanbul by Eldem (1947) with the refreshment pavilion next to the small Byzantine church of St. Dimitri Loumbardiaris in Athens by Pikionis (1951-1957) (figures 8.5 and

Figure 8.5. Taşlýk Coffee House (Sedam Eldem, 1947), Istanbul. (Aga Khan Trust for Culture)

8.6). These works are compatible and comparable because they are both sensitive to the site and draw inspiration from the local vernacular building tradition without simply imitating historical examples (AA 1989, 51-57; Philippides 1984, 295-304; Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 50-51). The Taşlık Coffee House drew directly from local domestic architecture both in its plan layout and in the prominent cantilevered projection of the central *sofa* space. In incorporating the language of traditional architecture into a contemporary building, Eldem aimed to demonstrate that tradition had a crucial role to play in the development of modern Turkish architecture. While drawing inspiration from his surroundings, Pikionis also acknowledged the influence of Japanese architecture, as can be seen especially in his incorporation of wood and bamboo in the Loumbardiaris pavilion and in the generous wooden structure portico he added in front of the church.

Figure 8.6. Refreshment Pavilion (Dimitris Pikionis, 1951-1957) by the church of St. Dimitri Loumbardiaris, Philopappou Hill, Athens. (Mark Forte)

At the urban landscape scale, the Loumbardiaris complex was part of Pikionis' most important design: the landscaping of the Acropolis and Philopappou Hills in Athens (1951-1957) (figure 8.7). A sensitive and meticulous work, it was carried out primarily on the site, with little aid of preliminary drawings. By employing a direct, hands-on approach to building and incorporating a variety of paving materials, Pikionis tried to come as close as possible to the building methods of contemporary vernacular builders (AA 1989, 70-97; Philippides 1984, 295-300; Loukaki 1997, 306-29).

Eldem's design career was much more extensive and varied in scale than Pikionis's. For example, Eldem collaborated on the design of the Istanbul Hilton (1952) with the corporate firm of SOM, which was based in New York and directed by Gordon Bunshaft (Bozdoğan 1997, 141; Krinsky 1988, 52-55). In his later buildings Eldem expertly married the elements of modern and local architecture, as we can see in one of his most celebrated works: the Social Security Agency Complex in Zeyrek, Istanbul (1962-1964) (figure 8.8). Not only does the project incorporate building elements of traditional houses, but it also takes into account the scale and morphology of urban neighborhoods (Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 85-95).

Figure 8.7. Landscaping by the Loumbardiaris church and refreshment pavilion (Dimitris Pikionis, 1951-1957), Athens. Pikionis arranged the landscaping around the Acropolis Hill (1951-1957) in a similar manner. (Mark Forte)

Eldem and Pikionis: Reflections on Ancient and Vernacular Architecture

Eldem's recollections are permeated by a fervor for local landscapes and building traditions. "As a student I was doubly rebellious," he asserted in the 1980s. "I was violently against the 'neo-Turkish' of domes and arches. . . . I was equally against the *kübik* international style. And at the same time, I was passionately in love with the Turkish house. If thereafter I have achieved something in my career I owe this achievement to the persistence of these strong feelings" (Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 44).

Recalling his studies in Istanbul, Eldem commented: "In our free time we used to go to the Topkapı Palace. . . . I was drawing sketches, taking down details. We were nourishing our souls (forgetting lunch time). It was a surprise for Mongeri [Eldem's professor] to find out our extra-curricular studies about Turkish architecture" (Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 28). "To understand the meaning and the beauty of the materials and to discover a modern character in those old buildings, I was spending all my Sundays and most of the weekdays wandering in the streets of Istanbul. . . . I was in love with the beauty I was gradually discovering. It was not the beauty of finished classical compositions, it was rather the overall effect and harmony of certain rhythms and motifs,

Figure 8.8. Social Security Agency Complex, Zeyrek (Sedam Eldem, 1962-1964), Istanbul. (Aga Khan Trust for Culture)

certain smaller elements" (Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 26). For Eldem, "the greatest achievements of Islam are those of the past. . . . We must first journey into our past and seek our inspiration there" (Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 143).

During the 1930s and 1940s Sedad Eldem advocated his commitment to the "native" or "national" style (terms that he used interchangeably) of the Turkish house (Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 44). During his long and productive career, this commitment to regional heritage remained unflagging. Lecturing in 1978, he advised his colleagues and students:

> Before attempting to look to the future, and in order to protect ourselves from the influence of alien cultures, we must concern ourselves with our own architectural heritage, reap its fruits and take strength and inspiration from it. Any other approach would be unproductive and would necessarily be swallowed up in the flood of world architecture. We must first gain an understanding of our own individuality, become familiar with the values of our own culture and architecture and learn to love them and be proud of them. Only after structuring the new foundations with the help of knowledge and sensitivity can we design our own new style (Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 165).

Reflecting on his work in 1980, he reiterated: "The chief aim of my fifty years of professional life has been to create a regional architectural style. I have approached the problem from various angles, not all of which have been appropriate or successful. With time I have become even more convinced that internationalism in architecture is not a productive choice" (Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 171).

In an autobiographical essay written in 1958, Pikionis wove together references to his family, nature, and ancient ancestors:

> My grandmother used to take my sister and me down to the headland of the Phreattys every day for a walk. We strolled over the jagged rocks where the sea breeze gently stirred the slender stalks of the wild plants that sprouted through the cracks; we wandered across the god-bearing soil that was littered with bits of broken pottery, picking our way between gaping wells that spoke to me of the ancient people who once dwelled in this land—my land. And thus I gradually formed an image in my mind of the spirit and the history of my land. (AA 1989, 34)

Although nature inspired an almost religious awe in him, he experienced the ancient landscape both through his body and through his mind: "While still at school, I often took long walks exploring the Attic countryside. . . . But who can adequately describe the impact of these sites upon a young man still enveloped in Goethe's 'magic mantle of poetry'?" (AA 1989, 34). As a student in Munich, he reminisced: "I was studying Aeschylus and my eyes were filling with tears, contemplating, like Goethe's heroine, *the distant land of the Greeks*" (AA 1989, 28). Here the landscapes of Pikionis' own experience were refracted through the multiple lenses of Aeschylus and Goethe and his heroine. Distance and nostalgia etched them in his memory. Upon his return to Greece in 1912, after his studies in Munich and Paris, the familiar landscape helped anchor him once again: "As the boat reached the port of Patras, my eyes were struck by the cold, dazzling whiteness of a piece of marble lying in the mud. Such was its impact against the things surrounding it that I thought: 'Now I will have to revise everything I have learned up till now'" (AA 1989, 36).

Gradually, Pikionis began to discover vernacular architecture, the architecture of the people, which came to represent a spiritual terrain for him. "The local people [*laos*] are the true builders, holding on to the ancient quality of their art. . . . But thoughtlessly we follow the foreign [prototype], always to be left behind it," charged Pikionis in a 1925 article which pioneered the study of vernacular architecture in Greece (Pikionis 1987, 63, 69). In the same article, he cautioned that when "conditions are agitated by something foreign, by the lie of civilized life, for example, this naturalness of the people is in danger of being lost" (Pikionis 1987, 59). Writing in 1952, he criticized rationalism, because its aim to "fulfill human needs in a strictly materialistic way completely ignores the spirit" (Pikionis 1987, 256). It is the people "who hold the memory . . . of the Greek essence [*ousia*]," he wrote in 1954 (Pikionis 1987, 44). Pikionis tried to incorporate vernacular building methods in his own works by studying local natural material and local building details and by searching for truth in con-

struction. There would be no "pleasure in piling up stones and carving marble, or lining up sounds and words, if a human entity, the whole world, *god* were not contained in these partial actions," he had written in 1925 (Pikionis 1987, 65-66).

In his later writings, Pikionis reconsidered some of his previous pronouncements against the foreign-brought architectural traditions. "But why does the presence of the foreign haunt me like that? I am captivated by this attraction of the antithetical worlds," he confessed in 1946 in an essay about the Castle in Rhodes (Pikionis 1987, 206). There, he reflected that the "four peoples, the Greek, the Roman, the Frank and the Turk [who] left, marked on the stones and the marbles the ideograms of their being, of their life ideal, as each one had grasped it" (Pikionis 1987, 209-10). His journey of exploration, a difficult journey that used architecture as its mileposts, led him closer to the culture of the Ottoman past. He approached Moslem architecture at once with reverence and pronounced distance: "The water fountain. The Frank made water fountains, too. But you sense that they are an act of administrative welfare. For the Turk, they take on a human, religious meaning. . . . I am talking about the innermost kinship and the unbridgeable contrasts of the races [*phyle*] and of the ideals" (Pikionis 1987, 218). Pikionis came back to the same questions about opposing traditions and artistic shapes in an autobiographical article he wrote in 1958, at the age of seventy-one. "Someone said, correctly, that the course of Hellenism is dependent on our responsible position between the East and the West. And I will add: and from the competent composition of the opposing currents into a new shape [*morphe*]. I could analyze how this problem manifests itself in Architecture. But it would suffice here to say that I am from the East [*eimai anatolites*]" (Pikionis 1987, 35).

Conditions-at-large in Greece and Turkey

The above-mentioned similarities and parallels notwithstanding, there were also significant differences in the conditions facing Eldem and Pikionis. While both countries struggled to define their positions regarding tradition and modernity in architecture and the arts, the struggle was much more heated in Turkey. Eldem was not the first to employ architectural forms inspired by local building traditions. Kemalettin Bey (1869-1927) was an important early proponent of the national/native movement. He believed that Ottoman architecture, as distinct from other Islamic architecture, owed its unique character to the national essence of the Turkish people and to the distinctive materials and techniques derived from the physical environment. Kemalettin's works, which included mostly public buildings and some restoration work, show a curiously eclectic mix of Ottoman and modern elements. Along with his colleagues, Kemalettin laid the foundations for the "First National Movement" in architecture, a movement that gained prominence after 1912. The defeat of the Balkan Wars and the ensuing national introspection created a fertile ground for the development of a national architectural style that mixed Ottoman and Western details, as exemplified by the Ankara Palas Hotel by Vedat Tek and Kemalettin (1924-1927). The tide turned

by 1926, however, and suddenly Kemalettin's buildings were criticized for being neither modern nor Turkish enough. The leaders of the republic, who favored an international orientation, ushered in the period of "*Kübik* [Cubist] or Functional Architecture" (1927-1939). They invited European architects to design many of the public buildings in the new capital of Ankara and to reorganize the Academy of Fine Arts (Tekeli 1984, 16).

It was in the midst of this modernist-international climate that Eldem began the study of the Turkish house and its reinterpretation with contemporary building materials. In 1932 Eldem started a seminar on the Turkish house in the Academy of Fine Arts, undertaking extensive documentation of the surviving traditional houses in Istanbul, Bursa, and other towns of Anatolia. The seminar also became the center for opposition to the imported *kübik* style, fostering the development of the "Second National Movement" (1940-1949). This movement sought inspiration not from the lost world of the Ottoman Empire, but rather from local tradition and national taste (Bozdoğan, Özkan, and Yenal 1987, 44-45). Sedad Eldem, who had originally faced considerable opposition, gradually gained prominence, though the debates regarding tradition and modernity in architecture remained heated. His retrospective thoughts, expressed in the late 1970s and 1980s, appear to reflect both a wisdom attained over a long career and the lively intellectual life in Turkey during the late 1970s.

Pikionis also faced opposition from several of the mainstream architects in Greece, who considered him an incurable visionary, out of step with the times (Philippides 1984, 304). Such criticisms must have been quite familiar to Eldem, as well. Yet the overall political and cultural climate in Greece was more responsive to the study of vernacular architecture and local traditions. While the Kemalist reforms spelled a radical break with the Ottoman past as they ushered in Western models, the Greek state and intellectual elite sought to establish a connection and continuity among the different expressions of local cultural production. In the period between 1880 and 1922 the nineteenth-century worship of the ancients gave way to an orientation toward the recent past and the future, with the Greek villager seen as the pure and genuine product of the ancient Greek soil, his songs, artifacts, and customs studied by Greek folklorists and other intellectuals (Kyriakidou-Nestoros 1978, 154-55; Bastéa 1990, 94). The 1922 military defeat of Greece shifted the political focus to the interior of the state, strengthened the sense of "Greekness"—now amplified by the influx of Greek immigrants—and hailed a "return to the roots." Studying contemporary villagers and their environment acquired a new significance: it proved the unity and continuity of the Greek race. Pikionis' pronouncement, "I am from the East [*eimai anatolites*]," may reflect not only his spiritual affinity with the East but also the cultural debt of the Greek state to the Hellenism of the East that had been forcibly and forever uprooted from there after the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922.

Among the intellectuals who laid the foundations for the study of traditional architecture was the art critic Pericles Giannopoulos who exalted in 1902 "the invisible and incomprehensible nature which, like everything Greek, from the Parthenon to the brigand-poet—the klepht—and the Megara villager to the dry

little flower, without a single exception and distinction, is invisible, because of its beauty, to our coarse eyes and . . . souls" (Bastéa 2000, 182). One of the architects who had already been exploring local building traditions was Aristotle Zachos, whose first major design was the house for folklorist Angelike Chadjimichale in Athens (1924-1927). While Zachos' interpretation of vernacular architecture lacked originality, it prepared the ground for Pikionis' own forays into the vernacular.

Architects, artists, and other intellectuals in both countries continued their explorations into native culture during the postwar decades, but at a decidedly smaller scale. Both Turkey and Greece were eager to display a westernized façade to the world, as is evident by the emblematic presence of the Hilton hotels in Istanbul and Athens (1958-1963). The fundamental similarities in the work of Eldem and Pikionis are also evident in the work of their followers. While they were both distinguished and often pioneering in their theoretical and design contributions, they were certainly not alone in their explorations of vernacular and modern architecture. Having both also taught at the university, they influenced by example other practitioners, as well as their own students. The legacy of Pikionis can be readily seen in the work of Aris Konstantinidis (1913-1993), who also blended the principles of vernacular architecture and the modern movement. In Turkey, the work of Turgut Cansever and Ertur Yener, notably their Turkish Historical Society building in Ankara (1966), similarly employs an amalgam of modern and vernacular idioms that is becoming part of an evolving Mediterranean tradition.

The Memory of Place

Although the sources of architectural design cannot be pinned down to one or two specific factors, the similarities in the architectural work of Pikionis and Eldem may be attributed, in part, to the correspondence in the economic and cultural conditions facing their respective countries. Both states crafted a distinct, national image that paid homage to the ancestors, underscored racial and cultural continuity of the population, and displayed the state's ability and eagerness to join the Western world. While educated in the West and conversant in the vocabulary of the modern movement, both Eldem and Pikionis resisted the tide of westernization and came to be seen, alternately, as the lone and regressive apologists for tradition, or as the visionary prophets for what is now called "critical regionalism" (Tzonis and Lefaivre 1992, 17-19; Frampton 1992, 314-27).

I believe that the evident parallels in their work are also based, in part, on their memories of similar vernacular buildings. The houses that they each studied and recorded carefully, the houses that became prototypes for Turkish and Greek indigenous architecture, respectively, were part of the same building tradition that dated from the Byzantine and Ottoman periods. As architecture came to the service of the nationalist state agenda, the charge to develop a distinct,

national architectural vocabulary became an operative force in both countries, virtually unchallenged by architects and their contemporaries. Given the political context of the interwar years, the focus of each state on distinct, national identities in architecture and the arts may be understandable. Nevertheless, comparing the conditions in both countries from our perspective, it becomes evident that terms like the "Greek house" and the "Turkish house," loaded as they are in the political and cultural sphere of each country, are rather empty of meaning in an architectural sense, as they do not define distinctly different types of form. Acknowledging the common architectural tradition in Greece and Turkey, along with the attendant similarities and differences, will help us understand better our built environment and its impact on us.

As is evident from each architect's evocative words, the impact of the familiar landscape was fundamental in their later development. The process through which each architect came to discover this familiar landscape was neither static nor monolithic. In drawing inspiration from their surrounding environments, both Sedad Eldem and Dimitris Pikionis were selective and focused, recording only those architectural examples that evoked a creative response in them. Eldem made no references to the late Ottoman and Orientalizing architecture of the early twentieth century that he would have encountered as an architecture student. He consciously decided to see and study the architecture of the Topkapı Palace. Later, passing over the newer architecture of the 1930s, he concentrated instead on the humbler domestic architecture of western Anatolia that he examined in his seminar on the Turkish house. When Pikionis first described the Attic landscape or the streets of Athens, he focused on the remnants of antiquity and the testimonies of the ancient civilization depicted in the poetry of his favorite authors. There were no references to the distinguished neoclassical Athenian buildings or even to the humble vernacular buildings that later came to figure so prominently in his writings. As he started searching for an indigenous way of building, he began to notice and extol the works of the vernacular builders. And like Eldem, he made no references to the modern work that was going up in the 1930s. As he revisited the old landscapes toward the end of his career, he also began to focus on specific examples of Moslem architecture and decoration, at once familiar and foreign.

One of the common patterns developing in this study of Eldem and Pikionis is the selective nature of the memory of space. These findings are also in keeping with my own experiences, outlined in the opening section. While the memory of the built environment may be imprinted or encoded on our body at an unconscious level, it may not register in our conscious mind until we have a conceptual frame for understanding it and recalling it. Current theories on autobiographical memory point out that we continuously revisit and rearrange our past memories to reflect and explain our current experiences (Kotre 1995). Furthermore, when people are asked to describe their life, they usually include only those events and experiences that fit into a logical narrative form (Robinson and Taylor 1998). Similarly, I would suggest, we cannot recall our memories of the built environment unless we are able to integrate them into a coherent narrative. This narrative may reflect personal and family experiences, school instruction,

social exchanges, and national and international events and rhetoric. Our memory of place is an alchemy of buildings and narratives.

Epilogue

In *Imagining the Balkans* Maria Todorova commented that "probably the most striking feature of the dominant discourses in the different Balkan countries is the remarkable similarity between them" (1997, 182). However, she cautioned at the conclusion of her study, "One of the charms of the Balkan nations, but also their curse, is that they have incredibly rich and dense histories, but they are usually self-contained" (p. 186). While I found this to be true during my own early academic training, we can now discern a noticeable, if not inevitable, change. People in the region are cultivating the soil for productive dialogue at both the cultural and the political level. Focusing on the memory of place across nations is not always an easy task, as it inevitably incorporates the study of displacement, immigration, and loss of place. Nevertheless, I am optimistic that through our concerted efforts, the study of our common built heritage, its meanings, and memories, can lay the foundations for a common language. As the Arabic proverb goes, "We resemble our neighbors more than we resemble our ancestors."

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