The Sweet Deceit of Tradition: National Ideology and Greek Architecture

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During the last two centuries, significant changes in both the form and the meaning of traditional Greek architecture have created a complex reality that is usually missed by foreign visitors and sometimes by the Greeks themselves. Since the formation of the independent Greek state in 1833, attitudes toward the architecture of the past have been in constant flux, reflecting prevailing political conditions and ideologies of the time. This essay analyzes how the concept of a Greek tradition in architecture has evolved and how it has been expressed in twentieth-century building. Particular attention is directed to the complicated meaning of "tradition" in Greek architecture and its contribution to the creation and maintenance of a national identity.

The significance of vernacular Greek architecture was first acknowledged in the early twentieth century, when the rich and varied local building heritage inspired young architects, who were often educated in Western European schools. Several proceeded to combine local and international vocabularies to create new, personal design languages that expanded the practice of architecture in modern Greece. Since then, Greek writers, architects, and scholars have approached the study of indigenous architecture with an urgency surpassing the conventions of academic inquiry. The architecture of the past has been the object of a search for a common mode of expression, a search for the elements of Greekness that persisted through time, a search for self-knowledge. While the necessity to identify traditional architecture as an inseparable part of the country's past is intense, the actual grounds that define this architecture are constantly shifting. The first part of this essay reviews the literature on traditional Greek architecture and points to methodological problems inherent in it. The second part examines the interplay between research on traditional architecture and twentieth-century architecture in Greece.

Traditional Greek architecture studies

Most studies of traditional Greek architecture have adopted one of two approaches. The first, which I shall call "chronological," encompasses and examines most structures built in Greece before the twentieth century. The second, or "qualitative" approach, introduces the concept of architectural morality and considers as traditional only those buildings that express particular architectural or ideological truths. Reviewing certain critical issues in each of these methodological approaches reveals that the concept "traditional architecture" is more closely bound to political circumstances and ideology than it is to built form per se.

The chronological approach

The multi-volume *Greek Traditional Architecture*, arranged geographically and edited by D. Philippides, is an excellent example of the chronological approach.[1] Each volume reviews representative pre-twentieth-century domestic architecture that survives within one area of modern-day Greece. Although informative, this and other chronological studies tend to overlook the complex historical events that preceded the formation of modern Greece. In particular, three problematic issues raised by the chronological approach have not yet been adequately studied: (1) definition of Greek architecture, (2) identification of the traditional builder, and (3) chronological boundaries of traditional Greek architecture.

Definition of Greek architecture

The conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 marked the fall of the Byzantine Empire. By the end of the fifteenth century, most Greek-speaking

territories were subordinated to Ottoman rule. The Turkish advances, however, did not remain unchallenged, and from time to time over the next three centuries, Western European forces, most frequently Venetian, gained temporary control over various Greek regions. Following the success of the Greek War of Independence (1821-27), a Greek nation was finally established in 1833.

The fate of nineteenth-century Greece was decided by England, France, and Russia, who had supported Greece in its struggle against the Ottomans and approved the creation of the independent state. In 1832, the European powers offered the Greek crown to Prince Otto, son of King Ludwig I of Bavaria. He brought to Greece his own court and an army of 3,500 Bavarian troops. Installation of a foreign king afforded the European powers greater control over the domestic affairs of Greece, ensured a Western-style government, and provided a unified leadership to the sectionalized country.[2] With the establishment of an independent state, Greeks celebrated their connection to their ancient forebears. Classical Athens, its culture, and its architecture inspired the new nation, while Ottoman architecture was often despised as a concrete reminder of the long foreign rule.

From the moment the Greek state was established, irredentist visions of expansion into Turkey guided both politics and rhetoric. Although there were several territorial gains, when the Greek army was eventually defeated in 1922, the borders between Greece and Turkey were finalized and the subsequent exchange of populations brought 1,222,000 Greek refugees from Asia Minor to Greece. This marked the end of the Great Idea (*Megale Idea*) that had fired the popular imagination since the late eighteenth century by promising a Greek nation embracing all Greek-speaking communities. At their most extreme, proponents of the Great Idea had even envisioned the incorporation of Constantinople into the Greek nation and the resurrection of the Byzantine Empire. The 1922 military and political defeat thus had multiple cultural repercussions. It 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 roots."

Since 1833, Greece has been extended to include modern-day central and northern Greece, the Ionian islands, Crete, and Western Thrace. The final addition of the Dodecanese did not occur until 1947.[3] Istanbul, Smyrna, Alexandria, and many other cities that continued to be prominent centers of Hellenism until the early twentieth century lie today outside the borders of Greece. However, research on traditional Greek architecture for the most part has been confined to the political limits of modern-day Greece. Considering, however, that the borders of the Greek state were not finalized until after World War II and that several once-thriving Greek communities remain outside the official state, what we today call "Greek" architecture is, inevitably, a historical compromise.

At the same time, research on Greek architecture has generally ignored the problem that there is a lot that the "timeless" Greek architectural landscape does not reveal today. The ideology that fueled the Greek War of Independence and subsequently directed the politics of the Greek state signaled an international enthusiasm for antiquity. Following prevailing nineteenth-century European intellectual currents,

Greek political leaders disparaged Ottoman and other foreign intrusions as inferior to the celebrated age of Pericles.[4] Thus, political circumstance and ideological conviction collaborated in a lengthy process that reaches into the present: the Hellenization of modern Greece. The ramifications of this crusade, primarily one of de-Ottomanization, extended beyond the classical rhetoric that stamped contemporary intellectual works.[5] The conscious return to the ancient past manipulated the architectural landscape as well. While new buildings invoked the classical past, many physical symbols of the Venetian and Ottoman rules were purposely dismantled. At the same time, fires, earthquakes, wars, urbanization, physical deterioration, and limited means for preservation were allowed to contribute further to the destruction of the country's architectural history.

Alteration of the architectural landscape was also a result of demographic changes following the establishment of the Greek state. While Greeks who lived in other European countries immigrated to Greece to seek their fortunes in the newly formed nation, most Moslem Turks left for Turkey. As a result, buildings that had housed specifically Islamic institutions were destroyed or altered to accommodate new functions. Evidence of this process may be observed, for example, in Salonica, a thriving commercial center in northern Greece where more than seventy minarets marked the nineteenth-century skyline. Only one is preserved today.[6]

During the Ottoman period, travellers were often unable to distinguish between the houses of Christian and Moslem inhabitants.[7] Stylistic differences in domestic architecture represented social, rather than religious or ethnic, distinctions. Similarly, modern researchers cannot always distinguish between the Jewish, Turkish, and Greek houses of Veroia, for example, or between the Greek and Turkish houses of the islands.[8] In fact, "Greek" is a relative term, as the architectural remains of the past

1
Salonica, c. 1904. View with several of the minarets that used to mark the city's skyline, indicating the prominence of the Moslem population.

2
Ludwig Lange, Nafplion, c. 1830. View depicting typical houses of the Ottoman era with sahnisia (enclosed second-story projections). Pencil, pen, and watercolor on brown paper. Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich.
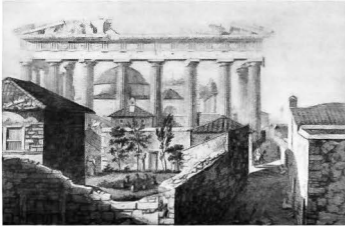
J. Stuart and N. Revett, Acropolis, 1760s. View with the dwellings of the Turkish garrison and mosque inside the Parthenon. These were taken down during the nineteenth-century restoration of the Acropolis.

belonged to an ethnically diverse society.⁹ Nevertheless, the relative homogeneity of the present population is often erroneously projected onto the past.

Trained in French, German, and Italian schools, the architects and engineers who oversaw the rebuilding of Greece after the War of Independence were particularly eager to erase the Ottoman legacy. Stamati Bulgari, the French-trained Greek engineer who renovated the city of Nafplion in 1828, proposed abolishment of the *sahnişin* (enclosed second-story projection) in the houses, purportedly to improve the hygienic conditions of the town.¹⁰ His actual objection, however, derived from the association of the *sahnişin* with Ottoman architecture.¹¹ The inhabitants themselves were equally anxious to remove not only Ottoman traces but even evidence of the Byzantine past. Influenced by contemporary European thought, Greeks in the early nineteenth century romanticized their classical past but detested the Byzantine era, which they considered responsible for their subsequent subjugation to foreign rulers. Even small Byzantine churches were demolished to make way for straight roads because crooked streets were reminiscent of hated "Turkish villages."¹²

Romantic Hellenism had a decisive effect on one of the most important archaeological undertakings of the nineteenth century–the restoration of the Acropolis. Here, the passion for antiquity erased centuries of architectural history. The Frankish tower, concrete evidence of the Frankish occupation (1204-1456), was taken down. Similarly, the dwellings of the Turkish garrison, stationed on the Acropolis hill, as well as their mosque built inside the Parthenon, were torn down in the process of restoration.

Although much of the architectural landscape was not subjected to this purifying process, even the old quarters of towns and villages differ considerably today from what earlier travellers described and illustrated. Today's "timeless" Greek landscape often dates only from the previous century. In a review of American vernacular architecture, which is equally applicable to the Greek situation, Dell Upton points out that "the study of past landscapes, is more than we realize, an exploration of the material culture of the winners." Buildings that survive are usually structurally sturdier, and they often belong to the wealthier residents who tend to dominate the historical record in all its manifestations. Moreover, in the long run, "the buildings

that have survived in numbers are those that have been best adapted to the lives of subsequent generations. They do not necessarily represent the dominant or preferred modes of the past."[15] In Greece we see this process exemplified. Local architecture, which once had served Turks, Albanians, Jews, and other minorities as well as Greeks, was later adapted to the uses of the Greek inhabitants who prevailed after the War of Independence. Thus, what was originally multiethnic architecture is taken to be Greek in contemporary architecture studies simply if it has survived to our days.

Identification of the traditional Greek builder

Although politically Ottoman rule put an end to the Byzantine Empire, architecturally it preserved and developed many of the elements of the Byzantine period. Ottomans administered the affairs of the occupied lands, imposed taxes, and established Turkish communities in the most prosperous regions, but they did not destroy the existing urban and architectural fabric of their dominions. Instead, they imprinted their presence on the Greek land by adding major public buildings that represented the political organization and the ideology of the government: mosques, markets, baths, hostels, poorhouses. The Ottoman administration also constructed major public works, such as roads, bridges, and fortifications. Stylistically, public buildings were influenced both by the dictates of Istanbul, the Ottoman capital, and by local building methods. Because the initiative and budget for most public and civic works came from the Ottomans, these buildings have been considered products of their empire even though Greek builders were often in charge of the work.[14]

Allowed to practice their own religion, Greek subjects maintained the existing Byzantine churches, but had limited funds for building new ones. During the long occupation, therefore, most Greek-initiated architecture was residential.[15] That the design of domestic architecture is often thought to be anonymous results mainly from our lack of historical understanding.[16] While in some cases the owner of a house was also the designer and builder, in other cases the owner hired a building crew to carry out the project. But neither the owner nor the builder was anonymous within his own community.

From the owner's perspective, building a house has always been an expensive undertaking, often necessitated by local dowry or inheritance customs. In many regions of Greece, the father is expected to provide a house for each of his daughters, for their use after marriage. These houses were often attached to the family house or created by subdividing the family house. Building a house has also been viewed as a demonstration of increased wealth and social ascent. In his memoirs written in the mid-nineteenth century, the hard-working and enterprising General Makrygiannes proudly described his various occupations, which led to small-scale commercial activities: "Then I started to trade and the Greeks and Turks had me as a cashier, and I made a fortune ...and there [in Arta] I made a house, and an estate, and I also had cash and a bunch of bonds...."[17] The house was symbolic of his new social standing.

From the builder's perspective, building a house meant exposure and more business, not anonymity. Local communities were not always equipped to carry out extensive building projects by themselves. Recent research has shown that travelling building groups (*boulonkia* or *tsourma*) were in fact responsible for the most complicated

structures, regardless of whether the patron was Greek or Ottoman.[18] These groups travelled widely and adapted their building vocabulary to regional practices. Members of building groups usually came from the same village, and several groups developed secret dialects, which ensured them privacy while carrying out their work. In his study of Peloponnesian building groups, Christos Konstantinopoulos remarks that these groups exhibited the economic structure of business partnerships rather than guilds. In charge of a group was the master builder (*protomastoras*), who was responsible for bringing the team together, setting the travel itinerary, and securing jobs. Then came the builders (*mastoroi*), their assistants (*triotes*), and, finally, the apprentices (*mastoropoula*). Young apprentices who joined the groups were promoted to builders after eight to ten years of service. Building groups hardly ever numbered more than twenty-five members.[19]

The complex public works infrastructure carried out during the Ottoman era was the product of these knowledgeable technicians, who understood the properties of material, the laws of structure, and the prevailing architectural trends of major urban centers. For the wealthy, travelling builder groups served as the architects of the mansions, *archontika*, which, in turn, provided architectural paradigms to local builders. Often, on a plaque over the entrance of a building were carved the name and origin of the master builder, who was proud of his creation and wanted to be recognized.[20]

As this brief survey of historical conditions has indicated, communities in the Greek land all along had been exposed to foreign influences, through invasion and occupation, as well as commercial and intellectual contacts. The extensive journeys of the building groups undoubtedly broadened each region's architectural vocabulary. Finally, the commercial exchanges of prominent Greek merchants with Europe can also be detected in local architecture, decoration, and furniture.[21] Neither the owners nor the builders of earlier Greek architecture operated in a closed society.

Chronological boundaries of traditional Greek architecture

Most chronological studies refer to pre-twentieth-century architecture as "traditional Greek architecture." Yet the cut-off point is never clearly stated, precisely because it cannot be located. In his introduction to *Greek Traditional Architecture*, Bouras states that while the study begins in 1453 with the fall of the Byzantine Empire, "the end is somewhat unclear." In general, the volumes in this series draw the line between the fourth and the eighth decade of the previous century, before the gradual introduction of neoclassicism in the cities, urbanization, and the introduction of new materials.[22] Similar criteria have been used by other researchers, who rarely extend the study of traditional architecture to our century.

However, the distinction between traditional and post-traditional architecture is artificial. Neither urbanization nor importation of styles and materials was new to the nineteenth century. Traditional architecture, which represents the building methods of the Greek people, has changed but has not ceased to exist, for what would come after it? The study of traditional architecture should reach, and include, today's architectural expression. Furthermore, since Greek architecture incorporates both local developments *and* foreign influences, it is futile to attempt to separate the two in order to derive a pure account of "traditional" architecture. Removing

neoclassical and twentieth-century architecture from the study of traditional Greek architecture obscures the effects of historical events on local architecture and hampers our understanding of contemporary Greek architecture.

The qualitative approach

Underlying the qualitative attitude toward traditional architecture is the assumption that only those styles or types of buildings that best represent the Greek character deserve to be considered traditional. While in the twentieth century vernacular architecture has been thought to express the Greek character best, in the nineteenth century neoclassicism held that claim. By focusing on the introduction of neoclassical architecture and on the rediscovery of traditional architecture, the following analysis demonstrates that the definitions of both neoclassical and traditional architecture depended upon a concept of nation and national character that carried a charged political agenda in each case. In addition, it points out some limitations of this approach and suggests alternatives.

The introduction of neoclassical architecture

Neoclassical architecture, introduced by the Bavarian court that ruled Greece until 1862, found a fertile ground in that period of reconstruction because it connected antiquity to the present by offering concrete references to the ancient Greek past. Although architectural historians today often regard neoclassical architecture as an imported, northern European idiom, the Greek intelligentsia at the time hailed the return of the ancient lights to the country of their birth. Because European culture was based on the ancient Greek heritage and because modern Greece, eager to forget the Ottoman legacy, now oriented its policy toward Europe, the adoption of the neoclassical style was doubly justified: it strengthened classical ties and demonstrated the country's up-to-date Western orientation.

The prominence of neoclassicism was established in the middle third of the nineteenth century, when the first major public buildings were designed and executed. All of the architects involved at the time were trained in other European countries and were familiar with the neoclassical style through their studies. Of course Athens, where most of the building activity took place, was also an open museum of ancient Greek architecture. Many of the architects acquired intimate knowledge of the antiquities, recording them in paintings and even assisting in restoration work. Confrontation with the original sources certainly informed the new designs and produced a wealth of interpretations.

Could the neoclassical style have taken hold of Greece had it not been popular elsewhere in Europe? Given the Western orientation of the Greek intelligentsia and the cultural incoherency of the first decades after liberation, it is likely that the new state was not yet in a position to forge its own style. Neoclassicism provided a common vocabulary for all regions of the new nation. It became, in other words, the national style for Greece throughout the nineteenth century.

The creation of a national architectural style parallels the creation of a "national character" undertaken by nineteenth-century historians and folklorists. In her analysis of Greek folklore, Alki Kyriakidou-Nestoros aptly described the goal of the first romantic Greek folklorists who researched and organized local customs: the creation of the *idea* of a national character. In their work, they followed methods

established by German romantic folklorists who began forging the idea of a unified German nation in the early nineteenth century.[23] After centuries of foreign rule that had fostered regionalism and separatism in Greek lands, it was important, for political and social reasons, to forge the vision of a unified nation that shared common traits and modes of expression. In the realm of architecture, a style based on the classical past could serve as one such manifestation of national character or, rather, of the idea of a national character.

The first major neoclassical buildings to be erected in Athens were the palace (1836-43), designed by the Bavarian court architect Friedrich von Gärtner, and the university (1839-64), designed by Danish architect Christian Hansen who had originally come to Greece for its antiquities.[24] Subsequent prominent public and private buildings helped anchor northern European neoclassicism in Greece, just as the Ottoman government buildings and private mansions (*archontika*) had introduced to Greek towns the architecture of Ottoman and European capitals.

The first neoclassical houses were built by the wealthier residents, who had lived in Europe and who often employed foreign architects and builders. Their elements were quickly copied and adapted by local builders, thus affecting the original landscape. Although several studies of traditional Greek architecture have criticized
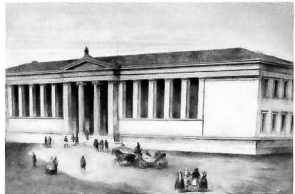
these neoclassical adaptations and excluded them from their scope on the basis of their foreign origins, these houses tell us much about the function of architecture within Greek society. Because owners of neoclassical residences were at the top of the economic pyramid, their taste was influential: by copying the style of the wealthy, others hoped to improve their own status. This familiar process extends to all classes seeking social advancement, and it can be documented in the nineteenth-century rebuilding of modern Athens. What came to be called the "Athenian neoclassical style" was in turn exported to the provinces, which followed the capital's political and cultural lead.[25]

The rediscovery of traditional architecture

In northern Europe, similar quests for a national style had led to the rediscovery of medieval architecture and its appropriation by different nations as their own historical architecture. By the turn of the twentieth century, Greek folklore studies also began to discover the local landscape and, with it, the existing architecture. Major works by Greek writers on Greek architecture began to appear in 1925.[26] In that year, an article by Dimitris Pikionis (1887–1968), one of the major modern Greek architects, ushered in a new way of looking at historical environments. Pikionis exalted the "natural" and "true" elements of Greek popular (*laike*) architecture and art, elements that "have a poetry that springs only from truth."[27] Furthermore, he pointed to the genuineness and wisdom of simple people, qualities that the educated reader never hoped to attain. Several other writers echoed or amplified his convictions about the art and architecture "of the people," providing valuable insights into a subject that had been neglected until the twentieth century. Influenced by international romantic thought, these advocates of popular local architecture criticized the unquestioning adoption of foreign architectural styles.[28]

What brought about this new interest in vernacular architecture in the twentieth century? Contemporary international interest in vernacular architecture was a critical factor. What has been less well explored, however, is the relationship between national ideology in Greece at the turn of the century and this newfound interest in traditional buildings and their makers. By the 1880s, the worship of the ancients gave way to a new ideology that abandoned the classical past and oriented itself toward the recent past and the future. Focus shifted to the modern Greek society that had taken up arms in 1821 and helped establish the new nation. The Greek villager, seen as pure and genuine, was exalted above the ancient Greek and the demotic song above learned literature. In short, on the pedestal of the famous ancestors now rose "the people," and archaism gave way to populism (*laikismos*).[29]

In order to emphasize the continuity of the Greek people and their rightful claims to their famous ancestors, historians and politicians began to construct the history of Greece as a continuum of events from antiquity to the present.[30] This undertaking was first completed by Konstantinos Paparregopoulos, whose seminal 1853 work, *History of the Greek Nation*, established for the first time an unbroken line from antiquity to the liberation.[31] While the study of history up to that point had focused on ancient Greece, Paparregopoulos included also the achievements of the Byzantines and the Ottoman-ruled Greeks who had sacrificed their lives for freedom. Thus, studying contemporary people acquired new significance: it proved the continuity of the Greek race.[32] The repercussions of this shift slowly affected

Konstantopoulos House,
Artemon, Sifnos, 1911-12.
One of many examples of
neoclassical architecture
found in the Aegean islands.

The Schwarz archontiko,
Ambelakia, is one of the
most elaborate mansions
surviving from the Ottoman
period. Having usually made
their fortunes in foreign
countries, most of these
mansions' owners
manifested their wealth and
worldliness in their homes.

architectural theory. It was this nineteenth-century turn from the ancient to the
demotic model that largely prepared the ground for the subsequent twentieth-
century interest in vernacular architecture.

Reviewing the attraction of populism, Kyriakidou-Nestoros points to a critical
problem: the special attributes of "the people" and of popular culture, celebrated in
the 1880s, were still only *ideas* created by liberal ideology, just as the *idea* of the
ancestors had been created in the 1830s.[33] Similarly, Greek intellectuals have created
the *idea* of an unsurpassed traditional Greek builder—wise, pure, talented, and "of the
people"—much as nineteenth-century nationalists had invented an idealized Greek
builder in antiquity.

Qualitative studies extol the architecture created by traditional communities,
peasants, islanders, people in the past, "others." There is usually the implication that
traditional architecture has ceased to exist because we have lost the innocence and
the morality of the traditional builder. This perceived distance, or discontinuity,
between the observer—modern reader/architect—and the object—traditional architec-
ture—is artificial and unfounded. Research on the travelling building groups, the most
extensive work conducted so far on the profession before the liberation, has revealed
that they were as structured, sophisticated, able, and shrewd as any modern architec-

ture office. The fact that members received their training on the site and not in an academic environment does not reflect a choice: there was no school of architecture in Greece until the latter half of the nineteenth century. Moreover, even today most architects would probably agree that they received as much training in real-world practice as they did in school. Therefore, the inclination to regard the pre-twentieth-century builder as morally superior to his modern counterpart signifies, I believe, a romantic but ultimately incorrect understanding of the architecture of the past.

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Similarly unfounded is the exclusion of the *archontika* and neoclassical houses from the realm of most qualitative vernacular architecture studies.[34] The mansions' manifestly self-conscious, pre-planned design, borrowing freely from foreign currents, has been considered the antithesis of the simple Greek dwelling, which was the product of an additive design process. It is true that stylistically the elaborate *archontika* of northern Greece or the neoclassical houses of the Aegean islands do not always fit with the rest of the architectural fabric. In the same way, the economic standing of the mansions' owners set them apart from the rest of the community. Nevertheless, since the study of architecture provides a key to the social structure, everyday life, and overall history of a people, historians must consider the architectural fabric in its totality, accepting its hierarchies and contradictions. This is the only way to illuminate the complex interweaving of that fabric's threads. If the study of traditional architecture concentrated only on the architecture of the poor, it would fall into the same exclusionary error that mars old-fashioned architectural history, which narrowly focuses on manifestations of wealth and power.

New and old Greek architecture

Greek society remains divided between its cultural identification with the West, established after the nineteenth-century liberation, and its historical and social allegiance to the Middle East, resulting from four centuries of Ottoman rule. Through the ideology of "Greekness," modern Greek society attempts to thwart foreign influences. The search for traditional Greek architecture should be seen as part of an urgent search for national identity, for something characteristically Greek. In light of world developments that promote a universal mass culture, the belief in the uniqueness of Greek architecture, poetry, or music can be a weapon against this homogenizing trend.

Three major theoretical forces have shaped twentieth-century Greek culture: the legacy of ancient times; the spirit of the vernacular, which persisted through Byzantine and Ottoman eras; and the identification with contemporary international movements. Pulling in different directions, these forces have contributed to a charged, restless atmosphere fueling expression through language and the visual arts. The development of modern Greek architecture reflects this ceaseless search for a balance between the country's multiple identities. Among twentieth-century architects, no one has better expressed this pursuit than Dimitris Pikionis. Through his teaching, his writing, and his work, Pikionis embodied his generation's quixotic encounters with tradition.[35]

Pikionis's first article on traditional Greek architecture extolled the anonymous artisan who lived and worked close to nature, although he himself was hardly ignorant of contemporary movements in art and architecture. After completing his

studies in civil engineering in the National Technical University of Athens, he went to Munich to study painting. Continuing on to Paris, he studied both painting and architecture. His early architectural work already exhibited his familiarity with the principles of the modern movement, adapted to local conditions. Subsequently, however, he moved further and further away from the internationalism of modern architecture. "The International style has to come to terms with the national," he wrote later. "The 'international' which states the relationships of all people can and must relate to the 'national' which determines the characteristics of people."[56] He became increasingly interested in the particular regional character of local Greek building and sought to capture it in his own designs.

Pikionis not only celebrated the Greek builder in his writings but tried to discover for himself the truths that governed traditional architecture by working with nature, studying building details, and searching for truth in construction. His interests were far-reaching. Classical, Byzantine, northern Greek, and Japanese architecture all informed his own work. His design methods also approximated the methods of nonacademic builders. The landscaping around the Acropolis hill, his most celebrated work, was carried out mostly on the site, with little help from drawings, except to clarify certain details. The result, a richly ornamented pavement that winds up the hill, the restored church of St. Demetres Loumbardiares, and a refreshment pavilion

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Dimitris Pikionis, elementary school, Lycabettos Hill, Athens, 1933. The design demonstrates a competent adaptation of the contemporary teachings of the modern movement.

< 11
Dimitris Pikionis, house in Psychiko, Athens, c. 1954. Abandoning current international trends, the architect here searches for a creative interpretation of vernacular architecture.

next to it, is a truly polyphonic architectural synthesis.

"Whoever follows foreign prototypes will always remain behind them," wrote Pikionis in 1925.[17] Nevertheless, neither he nor his contemporaries could ignore those prototypes. Maintaining ties with international movements was a tangible proof of the country's cultural progress since the liberation.[18] In Pikionis's generation, both those architects who espoused the modern movement and those who questioned it had to come to grips with it. But they also had to come to grips with the vernacular idioms if they wished to express their national identity. In most cases, the direction they chose blended the strong and seemingly antithetical forces of tradition *and* modernity. Even today, Greek architecture is called upon to interpret international currents while endorsing the indefinable Greekness of the built environment that spans millennia.

12 >
Dimitris Pikionis, landscaping around the Philopappou hills, Athens, 1951-57. Restoration of the church of St. Demetres Loumbardiares.

13 >
"Penthouse" addition to an apartment building, demonstrating incorporation of traditional architectural elements (tiles and sloped roof).
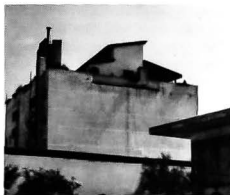
Conclusion

In an essay titled "Universal Civilization and National Cultures," Paul Ricoeur described the cultural crisis experienced by nations rising from underdevelopment:[39]

> 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.[40]

The above description applies with poignant accuracy to the modern Greek situation I have described thus far. Reviving an "old, dormant civilization" while participating in a "universal civilization" has been no small order. In Greece the debate was refueled in 1979, a year dedicated to tradition by the Ministry of Education and Religions. In her article on the official rhetoric that accompanied the "year of tradition," Nora Skouteri-Didaskalou points our attention to the vague and boastful definitions of the term that could include anything and everything.[41] On the one hand, she detected a fear of uncovering historical or social reasons that would destroy the mystique of Greek traditions. Finding out, for example, that the Aegean houses were whitewashed not because of an esthetic preference but in order to check the spread of epidemics might come as a disappointment. On the other hand, she documented the eclectic appropriation of events from the past as bearers of tradition, as well as the propagandistic uses of the powerful, myth-making attributes of this fabricated tradition.[42] She concluded that the creation and transmission of this tradition molds national ideology. Our transmitted tradition, as she argued, is a selected view of the past that supports current political beliefs.[43]

Just as the state selectively defines Greek tradition for its particular political purposes, the architectural establishment appears to do the same for traditional architecture. It has always been the educated elite that has "discovered" and defined what constitutes traditional Greek architecture, and consequently has interpreted it in new buildings. This learned and selective adaptation of popular designs from different parts of Greece is most evident in the architecture and interior decoration of upper-middle-class detached or summer homes that are not bound by the restrictions imposed on urban architecture. As the middle and lower classes copy these learned adaptations of Greek architecture, they produce their own vernacular, which is often met with contempt by the educated. Their solutions seem naive and superficial: ceramic tiles and wooden balcony railings in ordinary-looking apartment buildings, decorative copper pieces on living room side tables. References to the historical architecture of the Greek countryside are thus twice removed. If the pattern that I am beginning to decipher continues, however, the architects of the next generation will probably discover "truth" and "Greekness" in solutions that we dismiss as naive and tacky. This raises the following question: since the recognition of Greekness takes place outside the class that produced the architecture, can we trust the findings?

Qualitative studies of traditional Greek architecture, and to a lesser point chronological studies, have been guided by the *concept* of tradition. Although this

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concept contributed to the making of a national identity in the nineteenth century, today it hinders our understanding of past architecture. Most of these studies mislead us with a deceivingly simple and homogeneous past landscape, dominated by Greek inhabitants. Once the shadows of earlier users have disappeared from the walls, buildings can become empty receptacles for prevailing ideologies.

Illustration credits

1
N. K. Moutsopoulos,
Thessaloniki 1900-1917
(Salonica: M. Molho, 1980).

3
J. Stuart and N. Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens*, 5 vols. (London: J. Haberkorn, 1762-1830).

4, 5
M. Vréto, *Athènes moderne* (Paris: C. Reinwald, 1861).

6, 7
Fr. Stademann, *Panorama von Athen* (Munich: 1841).

8, 9, 10, 12
C. E. Michaelides.

11
Dimitri Philippides,
Neoellenike architektonike
(Athens: Melissa, 1984).

13
M. Forte.

1. Dimitri Philippides, ed., *Greek Traditional Architecture* (Athens: Melissa, 1983 onward). Seven volumes have already appeared in Greek; the work is also being translated into English, German, and French. A final volume is in preparation.

2. John Anthony Petropulos, *Politics and Statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece, 1833-1843* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), 51. This is the best source on the politics that led to the creation of modern Greece.

3. For a critical overview of historical and cultural events since the fifteenth century, see Nikos Svoronos, *Histoire de la Grèce moderne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972).

4. For an excellent analysis of Greek intellectual history during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see C. Th. Dimaras, *La Grèce au temps des Lumières* (Geneva: Droz, 1969).

5. Examples of the process of "purification" included the replacement of Turkish-based words with Greek and the change of Turkophone toponyms to Greek. Later researchers have sharply criticized this arbitrary manipulation of historic toponyms. See Kostas Biris, *Hai toponymiai tis poleos ton Athinon* (The toponyms of the city of Athens) (Athens: 1971).

6. Nikos K. Moutsopoulos, *Thessaloniki 1900-1917* (Salonica: M. Molho, 1980), endnote 262.

7. William Martin Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece* (London: J. Rodwell, 1835), 1:143. Ch. Bouras, "General Introduction," in *Greek Traditional Architecture*, ed. Philippides, 1:24.

8. Bouras, "General Introduction," 21 and note 17.

9. Even before the World War brought the armies of the Entente Allies to its gates, a walk through the streets of Saloniki [Salonica] made the visitor think of a congress of nations, so numerous were the nationalities and so varied and picturesque the costumes to be observed." R. A. Graves, "The New Map of Europe," *National Geographic Magazine* 39, no. 2 (February 1921):178.

10. Vassilis K. Dorovinos, "Ho schediasmos tou Nafpliou kata ten Kapodistriaken perioda (1828-33)" (The planning of Nafplion during the Kapodistrias era, 1828-33), in *Neoellenike poli* (The modern Greek town) (Athens: Association of Neohellenic Studies, 1985), 1:291-96.

11. Reviewing Bulgari's papers, Dorovinos points out that the abolition of the *salvatio* was based not only on hygienic reasons but also on the desire to Westernize the cities. Ibid.

12. The perception that crooked streets characterized Ottoman towns was often repeated in the nineteenth-century Greek press. See, for example, the newspaper *Athena* 7, no. 381 (31 December 1838) and *Athena* 8, no. 209 (11 March 1850). Attitudes toward the Byzantine period changed before the end of the nineteenth century, as will be seen below.

13. Dell Upton, "The Power of Things: Recent Studies in American Vernacular Architecture," *American Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1983): 278-79.

14. Although I am not arguing against existing conventions here, I am pointing out that the relevant literature often considers a work the product of the patron's affiliation (nation, religion) rather than the architect's. On the employment of Greek building groups by the Ottomans, see Christos G. Konstantinopoulos, *Hoi paradosiakoi chtistes tis Peloponnisou* (Traditional builders of the Peloponnese) (Athens: Melissa, 1983), 18. As a specific instance, he cites the late-eighteenth-century Nafplion mosque built by the Greek Antones Regopoulos.

15. For a critical review of the literature on traditional architecture, see essays by Ch. Bouras, "General Introduction," and D. Philippides, "The Methological Problem Today," both in *Greek Traditional Architecture*, ed. Philippides, vol. 1. Also, G. Chadjiyiogas, ed. *Architecture and tradition* (Salonica: Aristotle University, 1980). See also Nikos K. Moutsopoulos, *He architektonike mas klironomia* (Our architectural heritage) (Thessaloniki: 1983), 87.

16. See also Nikos K. Moutsopoulos, *He architektonike mas klironomia* (Our architectural heritage) (Thessaloniki: 1983), 87.

17. General Makrygiannes, *Strategou Makrygianne Apomnimonevmata* (Memoirs of General Makrygiannes), ed. J. Vlachogiannes, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Athens: E. G. Vagionakie, 1947), 1:113. See also Bouras, "General Introduction," 24.

18. Although it is entirely possible that some of these projects were carried out by Ottoman builders, I have not been able to locate any information on Turkish building groups practicing in Greek lands under Ottoman rule.

19. Konstantinopoulos, *Hoi paradosiakoi chtistes*, 48-54. In some groups apprentices were paid a set salary, while in others they received half the pay of the builders and master builders. Assistant builders (*trivos*) received three quarters of that. They were paid both in cash and in kind. Ibid. In his study of Macedonian and Epirote building groups, N. K. Moutsopoulos mentions that there also existed groups with as many as one hundred members, who undertook the building of bridges, roads, hostels, and aqueducts. N. K. Moutsopoulos, "Koudaraioi, Makedones kai Epeirotes Maistores, hoi prodromoi ton proton Hellenon technikon epistemonon" (Koudaraioi from Macedonia and Epirus: Master builders and predecessors of the first Greek technical engineers) in *Hoi protoi Hellenes technikoi epistemones* (The first Greek technical engineers), ed. Pavlos Kyrtazes (Athens: TEE [Chamber of Greek Architects-Engineers], 1977), 358.

20. Moutsopoulos, "Koudaraioi," 370.

21. On the influences on Greek architecture, and for an excellent account of the subject at large, see Dimitri Philippides, *Neoellenike architektonike* (Modern Greek architecture) (Athens: Melissa, 1984), especially 60-64. For the extent of commercial exchange in the Greek lands during the Ottoman era, see Dimitri Karidis, "Poleodomika ton Athenon tes Tourkokratias" (Urban issues of Athens during the Ottoman occupation) (Ph.D. diss., National Technical University, Athens, 1981).

22. See Bouras, "General Introduction," 23.

23. Alki Kyriakidou-Nestoros, *He theoria tes hellenikes laographias* (Theory of Greek folklore), 3rd ed. (Athens: Etaireia spoudon neoellenikou politismou kai genikes paideias, 1978), 22.

24. For an overview of nineteenth-century official architecture in Athens, see Hermann Russack, *Deutsche bauen in Athen* (Berlin: Wilhelm Limpert, 1942). See also my Ph.D. dissertation, "The Rebirth of Athens: Planning and Architecture in the 19th Century" (University of California, Berkeley, 1989).

25. The most extensive stylistic study of the importation of neoclassicism into Greece is by S. Skarpai-Heupel, "He morphologia tou germanikou klasikismou (1780-1848) kai he demiourgike aphomiose ston gro ton hellenike architektonike (1833-1897)" (The morphology of German classicism [1780-1848] and its creative assimilation by Greek architecture [1833-1897]) (Ph.D. diss., University of Salonica, 1975).

26. Angeliki Chadjimichali, *Skiros* (Athens: 1925); D. Loukopoulos, *Hai Aitolikai oikiai, skeui kai trophai* (Aitolian housing, utensils, and foods) (Athens: 1925); Dimitris Pikionis, "He laike mas techne k'emeis" (Our popular art and ourselves),

Philike Hetaira 4 (1925), cited in *Greek Traditional Architecture*, ed. Phillipides, 1:38 (Greek edition).

27. Pikionis, "He laike mas techne k'emeis," 158.

28. Although this movement of "return to the roots" had many exponents, some actually more eloquent than Pikionis, I shall concentrate on him here because he not only wrote but also built along the lines of his teachings. For a critical review of the modern vernacular, as developed by contemporary Greek architects, see Philippides, *Neoellenike architektonike*.

29. Kyriakidou-Nestoros, *He theoria tes hellenikis laographias*, 134.

30. In 1830, the Austrian historian Fallmerayer claimed that the modern Greeks were not related to the ancient Greeks. J. P. Fallmerayer, *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart: 1830). His work, which had great impact in Greece but little elsewhere, instigated extensive rebuttals by Greek historians who set out to prove that the nineteenth-century nation was related by blood to the ancient Greeks.

31. Konstantinos Paparregopoulos, *Historia tou hellenikou ethnous* (History of the Greek nation) (Athens: Koromelas, 1853).

32. The concept of the "Greek race" is recurrent in nineteenth- and even twentieth-century historiography.

33. Kyriakidou-Nestoros, *He theoria tes hellenikis laographias*, 134-35.

34. One of the most influential qualitative studies of traditional architecture is Aris Konstantinidis, *Ta palia Athenaika spitia* (Old Athenian houses), 2nd ed. (Athens: Polytypo, 1983). In this extensively illustrated work, he attempted to distinguish the "truly Greek" houses from those that were influenced by foreign styles. In this case the author, Konstantinidis, not the architect or the owner, becomes the sole arbiter of "Greekness."

35. On the work of Dimitris Pikionis, see the essays and bibliography in *Dimitris Pikionis, Architect 1887-1968: A Sentimental Topography* (London: Architectural Association, 1989).

36. Cited in Anastasia Demetrakopoulou, "Dimitri Pikionis: Pioneer Greek Modernist," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 13, no. 2/3 (1982): 62.

37. Pikionis, "He laike mas techne k'emeis," 134, cited in Philippides, *Neoellenike architektonike*, 158.

38. Philippides, *Neoellenike architektonike*, 187-88.

39. Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 271-84.

40. Ibid. 277.

41. Nora Skouteri-Didaskalou, "He paradose tes 'paradoses'. Apo ton kathemerino ston epistemoniko logo" (The transmission of "tradition." From colloquial to scientific language), in *Architektonike kai paradose*, ed. Chadjogogas, 17-44.

42. Ibid, 22-23.

43. Ibid, 38.

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