

C H A M B R E T E C H N I Q U E D E G R È C E
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES

COLLOQUE DE THESSALONIQUE 3-10 OCTOBRE 1973

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CYPRUS

THE PROBLEMS OF THE REANIMATION OF
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The historic villages of Cyprus are decaying or changing character rapidly. We can see this decline in examining closely these villages.

Owing to the natural geography of Cyprus we can distinguish two groups of historic villages. Those in the plain and those on the mountains. These two groups have different character and present different problems.

1. The villages in the plain consisted usually of houses surrounded by a large yard. The houses are constructed with mud bricks and are covered with flat terrace roofs. They are more spacious than the houses of the mountain villages, and are, usually, preceded by an opened verandah supported on stone arches or (rarely) on beams supported on wooden poles. This verandah is usually attached on the south part of the house in order to provide shade in summer and give shelter in sunny days in winter. The houses are consisted of several rooms (dormitory, workshop, store, kitchen) provided with rather large door and windows to provide fresh air during the long hot summer days, and light during winter. Sometimes the yard is preceding the house. In that case the privacy of the house is achieved by a high wall provided with a large door, large enough to allow the entrance to a carriage driven by animals. In most plain villages the houses are aligned on both sides of rather narrow dusty roads, forming a continuous high wall, with the spacing yards on the rear side of the houses. In the past

The sanitary facilities were primitive. The water was provided by wells dug in the yard. By the house the stables and barns were constructed. In poorer houses men and animals were sharing the same roof during winter.

No general plan existed and the construction of houses and roads guided by the necessity. This is the reason for the lack of any rational street plan. The mountain villages are different. Density and accumulation of the houses in narrow spaces usually on a slope or a ravine characterise the mountain villages. The area of the houses is smaller than those in the plain, but the houses consist of several storeys (sometimes four). The houses are constructed of local stone and mud or lime mortar. They are provided with steep pitched roofs covered with tiles (in old times with flat tiles, in more recent times with round tiles) or corrugated iron sheets. They have a few small openings and are provided with chimenys. The lower storeys are used as stables or stores. Each storey consists of one or two rooms. Owing to declivity of the ground some of the storeys are under ground. Yards are usually lacking, but where they exist, they are but a narrow space of a few square meters. The roads are narrow and winding on the cliff. They are usually paved with stones. In most of the cases the mountain villages are smaller than the plain villages. The houses are constructed on either side of one or two parallel roads forming a real wall in the periphery allowing only one entrance to the whole village. As in

the case of the plain villages, sanitary accommodation was lacking. Water was provided by nearby springs or brooks. Although the mountain villages are more picturesque they are usually poorer than the plain villages. The inhabitants in both cases were mostly farmers or shepherds. But the space available for cultivation and animal feeding is rather limited on mountains. This became more limited since restriction of grazing flocks of goats in forests. On the other hand the soil is less productive on mountains and until recently only vines were cultivated, although on small plots other agricultural products were cultivated, mainly for domestic use. The economy of the mountain villages was as closed as it was in the medieval period.

In these characteristics stated above the reasons of the decline of the historic villages of Cyprus can be traced. The traditional materials, mud-bricks for the construction of the walls and clay for covering of the terrace roofs of the houses in the plain are no more in use. The appearance of new and more lasting materials (bricks cement) and new methods of construction displaced the traditional materials and methods of construction. The influence of the international style of architecture in the neighbouring towns exercised a great influence in the plain villages. This influence was accelerated by the amelioration of the economic and educational level of the population. And although a decre-

ase of population of the plain villages is rather rare, the need for a better and cheaper accomodation was realised. The close contact of the villagers with the town led to the imitation of the manner of life of town. This in turn influenced the village residence. Before the house was used only as a dormitory, as the whole family was working out in the fields between dawn and dusk. The use of modern equipment for the cultivation of the land and the harvest of the crops has limited the time of occupation in the fields. The small land-owners are now free to work in the towns for a few hours a day.

The house is no more a dormitory only but also provided with modern comfort a place for rest (especially as the television is the most popular recreation). The old houses, lacking of comfort and sanitary accommodation are no more suitable to live in. Therefore the old houses are for the most pulled down and new "modern" houses are built instead of. This is the reason for the destruction of most of the historic villages of the plain.

The mountain villages suffered from other reasons. The poverty of the soil and consequently the low income obliged the inhabitants of some of the smaller villages to abandon their villages and come down to the towns search for a better way of life.

As a result some of the mountain villages were abandoned and ruined. But in the most cases the population of the mountain villages decreased owing to emigration to the towns or to foreign countries (especially in the decade 1950-1960). Several houses in these villages were abandoned and became ruinous.

The reason for this movement of population from the mountain villages to the towns is not only the low income. It is also the not yet improved road system connecting most of the mountain villages with the towns. As a result, although these villages are not more than 20 to 40 miles from the towns, travelling between the mountain villages and the towns by coach means the loss of 4 hours daily, (two on each way). Therefore those willing to come in the morning to the towns for work and return home in the afternoon they are confronted with the difficulties of the trip. On the other hand modern comfort is lacking in the villages although electricity and running water is provided to every village to day.

The decrease of population of the mountain villages created other problems which may affect their future. The number of school-children diminished seriously (there are villages with 3-5 schoolchildren only). This had as a result the regrouping of elementary schools and the transport of pupils by cars to the neighbouring school. The uneconomic supply of services to these small

villages creates a tendency for regrouping several neighbouring villages in one. This will have as a result the abandon of the small villages and their destruction.

It is true that to day the income of the mountain villages has increased owing to the construction of dams and the introduction, with the aid of Government, of new method of cultivations and new plantations of fruit trees. Nevertheless this can affect only a part of the population of the historic villages of the mountains. Most of the population will continue to work outside the villages in the towns. As in the case of the population of historic villages in the plain the influence of the manner of life in the towns is exercising an increase influence on the life in the mountain villages. The results are usually disastrous on the traditional architecture.

Measures of protection. The Antiquities Law (Cap. 31) as amended by the Law No. 32 of 1973 protect buildings groups of buildings erected before 1900 A.D. Moreover by the Section 11 of the same Law the areas around an Ancient Monument can be declared as controlled areas in order to ensure that buildings can not be erected unless they are in keeping with the monument, as regards height and style. On the other hand the Town Planning Law, recently introduced protect building areas of buildings or whole villages and quarters of towns which represent an interest from architectural or planning point of view. Therefore exist legal measures for the protection of the historical point

of view. But owing to constitutional restrictions the legal protection implies a heavy economic burden for the Government. Therefore, beside the legal protection, other measures can be taken for the protection of the historic villages.

The population of the historic villages must be enlightened on the importance of the preservation of the character of their villages and houses. The people must be persuaded that the old houses can be supplied with modern amenities without losing their character and therefore can offer reasonable comfort comparing with the modern standards of life. This can be achieved if Government helps the owners of the old houses to preserve and supply them with necessary sanitary accommodations, as is the case with the preservation of the Ancient Monuments.

New roads on modern standards must be constructed between the mountain villages and the towns in order to facilitate the travelling and limit the time spent for the trip between mountain villages and towns. This will result the stop of bleeding of the population of the mountain villages and limit the influx of the villagers to the towns. Because if the town is within an easy reach the population of the historic villages they will prefer to come in the morning to the towns for work and return in the afternoon, where they have their house already supplied with electricity and running water.