

Cevat E r d e r (Turkey)

CONSERVATION OF SMALLER HISTORIC TOWNS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA

To address you on the whole Mediterranean requires almost foolhardy courage. The area is so extensive and complex that any effort at generalities must be condemned from the start. This is an important consideration because we are concerned, in fact, with the integrity and individuality of single structures as they are related to the small town and its larger social context.

I am foolhardy enough to undertake this task because the "Mediterranean" classification, and particularly the inclusion of the eastern shores, is one that is generally omitted. To look at the Mediterranean as an indivisible ecological unit is a challenge in creating solutions today.

Mediterranean Unity

Rather than draw a traditional north-south line separating Rome from Byzantium or Christendom from Islam, we shall examine the port cities and their hinterland along the shores of the Mediterranean as the coast winds from the Balkans to the east and south, ending at the straits of Gibraltar.

For the treatment and conservation of historic areas, natural elements as well as cultural ones determine the kind of problems which confront intervention. The mapping of variations in these elements can be used to define broad regions where similar ecological patterns occur. In fact, this natural environment also channels daily activities and sets limits on the way men will build shelter and organize space in general. Social organization, language and religion as used by nationalists of the nineteenth century impose artificial limits which are not particularly useful and even worse are misleading today.

Braudel in his pathbreaking work on the Mediterranean world in the sixteenth century proposed what then seemed a revolutionary thesis that the whole Mediterranean region could be defined as a single socio-economic unit.<sup>1)</sup> For a period when the Turks had taken Constantinople and established in the eyes of the West a Muslim threat in the former eastern Roman world and at Europe's very doorstep, Braudel's proposal was indeed surprising. Since the late 1940's his continued research as well as that of his colleagues in Europe and scholars in Turkey have shown that this Mediterranean unity existed beyond a doubt; trade, prices, population changes all followed similar patterns throughout the region.<sup>2)</sup> The Turkish sea captain, navigator and cartographer, Piri Reis, who sailed and charted the Mediterranean at the time of Christopher Columbus, carefully noted these similarities whether for Italy or Greece and Turkey in his book of portolan charts and descriptions, Kitab-i Bahriye. Certainly this unity prevailed earlier during the Hellenistic and Roman periods as well.

Today, all of us who live on this sea's coast know that factories in some distant Mediterranean Port affect our own waters, the fish we eat, our health and our recreation. The Club of Rome awakened concern and international organizations involved with the natural environment in the Mediterranean have been holding emergency meetings to determine immediate steps to counter the negative effects of modern urban growth - oil tanker waste in Turkey, Syria and Lebanon, industrial pollution in Spain, France and Yugoslavia, untreated sewage in Italy's south and other port areas. The Barcelona Conference, assembled by the United Nations Environmental Program, represented the first genuine effort of the Mediterranean states to develop a common plan of action. Representatives at the ICOMOS General Assembly here must do the same for the conservation of historic port towns. Time is running out.

First, let us examine a set of natural limits to define this region. Then we shall review examples of the way different societies in this region have responded with their architecture, building around and in rhythm with these natural elements. Finally, we must define intervention problems and avenues of solution that Mediterranean countries share in common.

#### Architecture and Ecological Limits of Towns on the Mediterranean Littoral

Surrounding the Mediterranean shore is a nearly continuous band where the olive tree grows, defying rocky soil and steep slopes. Along the eastern Adriatic, the Aegean and Turkey's southern coast as well as much of the eastern Mediterranean many inlets allow harbors and a microclimate where citrus fruit and vegetables may be cultivated. Behind this band mountains often rise sharply making a barrier against the interior and confining this type of agriculture to the coast. Human settlement links with the interior may take the form of summer pastures; part of a community may move to the mountains with livestock during the hot dry summer months while its sailors go to sea and others keep the port open.

This natural geography shaped the settlement distribution in antiquity. Points of land allowed seagoing peoples to build a port town and defend themselves against the interior. Everywhere the sea provided an avenue of communication between these ports. In even the most ancient times coastwise sailing made the people of these small cities cosmopolitan - they were in contact with other Mediterranean people, knew other ways of living, and exchanged luxury goods. At the same time each community was aware of its precarious existence and dependence on the sea. Thus granaries, for instance, had to be large in case siege from the interior or threat from the sea would keep boats from delivering wheat.

These towns show architectural forms attesting to self-sufficiency. Life along the seafront and the mild climate also made shops at the port and outdoor living a common feature. Arcades developed in response to the need for summer shade and protection from the winter rains. The town square provided a center for communication

and leisure which was not necessarily formalized by structural confines. Houses appear to have maintained a similar plan for centuries, changing only in the extent to which their walls provided protection against danger as the times grew more uncertain.

In the eastern Mediterranean and north Africa these ports reached a peak in both size and number during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Later overland routes gained importance, drawing trade away to swell a few metropolitan connection points such as Istanbul and Alexandria.<sup>3)</sup> Until the nineteenth century when the trading interest of European countries brought large-scale changes in both port activity and architecture these small port cities languished, often shrinking into small towns or even villages. As a consequence, many of these small towns have fallen heir to the architectural and archaeological remains of what were once proud cities.

Suddenly changes are taking place at a pace that leaves the planner far behind. Tourism, land speculation, highway investments and industrial development have altered the scale of living. Proceeding from the sea's northwestern coast, Greece, for example, experienced ten years ago many of the problems faced by Lebanon and Turkey today while Italy had entered this phase perhaps twenty years earlier. Libya, on the other hand, is just on the threshold of these new developments. In Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia the effect of direct rule by European colonial powers created a somewhat different set of architectural phenomena because of the coexistence of two separate cultures during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since independence all these countries have faced the task of preserving their own architectural heritage while modernizing along their own lines.<sup>4)</sup>

#### Typology of Conservation Problems Facing Small Port Towns

Along the Mediterranean littoral small towns share an ecological problem - sea pollution, beyond that created by the town itself. This not only damages the town's economic resources, fishing and tourism, but also affects the town's daily harbor environment; ancient Greek moles still in use become coated with tar deposits from oil tankers. This is at a scale where only international cooperation can bring a solution.

They also are part of a tide of international tourism. This has affected them to a greater degree than national industrial development which tends to concentrate itself at already large port cities. Ancient ports like Halicarnassus (Bodrum) in Turkey, Kyrenia in Cyprus, Ruad in Syria, Byblos in Lebanon, Tyre and Sidon can be entered today by small ships much as in the time of Strabo or the Crusaders. New ports for large tankers or commercial vessels have drawn away industrial traffic to ports like Tartous in southern Syria, leaving these small towns much as they were for centuries.

When modern tourism enters uncontrolled today a series of violent shocks hit these towns:

1. large areas of land are bought for speculation and development by outsiders;
2. the local townspeople lose control over decision making;
3. seacoast park development is prevented;
4. traditional town structures are sacrificed for wide roads and parking areas;
5. motel and villa architecture is imported and constructed on a broad scale by large companies with little or no attention to preserving and imitating local forms;
6. many antique monuments of historic importance are sacrificed to roads, reused as building material, or inadvertently ploughed under by bulldozers.

This process has not taken place yet throughout the entire Mediterranean littoral, but it is on the way; only a few strips of the Mediterranean can be looked upon as virgin coast. Tourism cannot and should not be prevented, but it must be channelled and controlled to preserve the benefits of a way of living that has remained, so stable for centuries, both for local people and for visitors. Turkey is taking innovative steps in conserving what remains of its Mediterranean coastal forests, old port towns and virgin beaches. This experience suggests a variety of recommendations at different scales.

#### Suggestions

- I. At the small town scale measures must take the form of public education and participation. Some may argue that the relatively higher levels of illiteracy in these towns would make this impractical. In fact, the graduates of the present educational system, and even of institutions of higher learning, have proved at least as difficult to inform.

As an example, take this single structure on the Turkish coast near the port of Marmaris opposite Rhodes. The house is new, but carefully constructed using local craftsman, materials, traditional building tools and local forms. Directly nextdoor is another house, built at the same time using concrete and foreign forms, the owner and builder an engineer. The first is a delight to behold and pleasant to live in; it was also inexpensive to build and is easy to maintain. The second is an eyesore, resembling more a small railway station, hot in summer and dank in winter; it was costly to construct and difficult to maintain, a net loss to both the community and the owner.

As you have now observed, there is no easy correlation between culture in the present educational system, literacy and technical skill. Townspeople are usually quite aware of their

problems and are eager for advice on measures to take and how to obtain assistance. Since change is occurring so rapidly, adult education must be stressed - these are the local decision makers of today and the next ten to twenty years.

Ways must be developed to present the notion of "social cost" to townspeople in a simple, convincing manner. They will be choosing between alternatives - to tear down their old house and build a new one on non-indigenous lines or repair their present house; to bulldoze old coffeeshops and town buildings for a parking lot or to rechannel traffic. Their exposure to the negative impact of these decisions elsewhere is limited. Conservators need to come together with social scientists and public officials to prepare this kind of program. Low cost, but effective techniques for preserving wooden structures, repairing stone houses and building new ones on traditional lines can be taught; this would help ensure that a centuries-old building style continues both for the benefit of the inhabitants and for the region at large.

Involvement of children through the primary schools should actively introduce the historical environment into the classroom. These children live among archaeological wonders, playing about ancient walls and digging their forts perhaps in an ancient burial ground. They can easily be taught to recognize antique forms and, more importantly, to take pride in them. Local museums initiated in a primary school classroom by a devoted teacher have proved in Turkey the spearhead for important discoveries and preservation activities.

- II. The small coastal town cannot be treated as a unit divorced from its national region. Each town must be viewed in its regional context. In countries practicing regional planning, the historical town scale should be incorporated explicitly in both plan preparation and implementation. Elsewhere, coordination between those ministries which set tourism policies and infrastructure investments, national conservation and restoration agencies, as well as the town's municipal organs must be achieved. In Mediterranean countries where the rapid growth of large cities makes serious planning dilemmas, there is an unfortunate tendency to forget the small town.
- II. But national measures alone are not sufficient. More than anywhere else, small towns of many nations are bound together by a common environment and a common fate - the Mediterranean Sea. The future of all these towns - whether in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Israel, Syria, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, France or Spain - depends on whether the Mediterranean will remain a living sea or become a stinking monstrous tub of modern waste. ICOMOS needs to declare the Mediterranean an "historic sea" and cooperate with other international groups from the Barcelona Conference to determine emergency measures for recording and conserving these shores.

Footnotes

- 1) F. Braudel. La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen. (Paris, 1966), second enlarged edition of the original published in 1949. Also available in English.
- 2) Supporting evidence for the eastern Mediterranean has been produced by the pioneering efforts of Ord.Prof.Dr.Ömer Lütfi Barkan as referred to in Braudel's second edition cited above, p. 299 and in the following selected works in European languages:
 

Ö.L. Barkan. "Essai sur les données statistiques des registres de recensement dans l'Empire Ottoman aux XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles." Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol.I, 1, 1957.

Ö.L. Barkan. "Research on the Ottoman Fiscal Surveys." in M.A. Cook (ed.). Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East. (London, 1970), pp. 168-169.

M.A. Cook. Population Pressure in Rural Anatolia, 1450-1600. (London, 1971).
- 3) J.H.G. Lebon. "The Islamic City in the Near East, Comparative Study of the Cities Alexandria and Istanbul." Ekistics 182, January 1971, pp. 64-71.
- 4) C. Erder. "The Care of Historic Monuments and Sites in Turkey." From Medina to Metropolis. L. Carl Brown, editor, The Darwin Press (Princeton, New Jersey, 1973), pp. 277-288.

Vibeke F i s c h e r T h o m s e n (Denmark)

AERØSKØBING - THE DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION PLAN

1. Map of Denmark

This series of slides illustrates the combined development and conservation plan for the town of AERØSKØBING in Denmark. The plan was prepared by the local authorities with the assistance of the Foundation for Building and Landscape Culture, and was completed in 1971. Vibeke Fischer Thomsen, architect and townplanner, was responsible for the plan.

2. AERØ and AERØSKØBING

AERØSKØBING is one of Denmark's oldest market towns. It is situated on the island of AERØ, one of a group of islands south of Funen. The town dates from the 12th century, and its plan resembles that of contemporary towns in North Germany. It was granted a municipal charter in about 1500 and since then it has served as a centre for trade, crafts and local administration. In former times shipping played an important part in the town's daily life. There has been no recent industrial development of any significance.

3. Illustrative plan of AERØSKØBING today

Today AERØSKØBING has 1100 inhabitants. Most of the working population is occupied in trades connected with tourism. AERØSKØBING's fame as a tourist attraction is due to its