

## THE HOUSE AND ITS GENERAL APPEARANCE\*

We consider that the whole appearance of the house, with the general meaning of the structure of the building, i.e. the folk architecture, consists of a part of the history of the group of the people to which it belongs. It is known that folk architecture is one of the most representative kinds of folk art. Its expression depends on the natural phenomena in conjunction with social and economic conditions. The natural, the socio-intellectual, and economic environment are the strong factors which create its general appearance.

Besides those factors mentioned above are first and foremost the psycho-intellectual potential of the group, without which no action is feasible; without it there is no starting point or better yet, there is nothing.

We could say without any hesitation that architecture expresses the native character of a group since it is firmly joined to the land and the climate, factors which determine the general style of the buildings.

The architecture corresponds to the climate of the place and the intellect of the people by means of which they create the architecture on the one hand and religion, metaphysical beliefs, cosmotheory, as well as thoughts and perceptions on the other.

Religion especially is very closely combined with art and with all sectors of the social, political and financial life of a people. We find this to be true the further back we go in history<sup>2</sup>.

All these creative developments (i.e. religion, psychology of the people, etc.) plus the climatic conditions are also factors of historic evolution since the beginning and the end of this hypothesis is based on folk synthesis, i.e. on the people.

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1. Cf. Jeffrey Ellis Aronin, *Climate and Architecture*, New York 1979<sup>3</sup>, pp. 10-16.

2. See Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. XII, *Reconsiderations*, London-New York-Toronto 1961, p. 78 ff. Also vol. I, (1978<sup>4</sup>), p. 183 ff.



History and architecture are regulated by human life or rather both aim at human life. We think that the examination of human life cannot be moulded into or by predetermined laws except for the general conditions that influence it without being able to prescribe the way and the method. Man will use to transcribe and conceive it.

The general frames are known conditions that can be classified in order to give us a clear picture of form and substance as we think of them.

Environment<sup>1</sup> of all kinds: natural, sociological, economic, moral, even, dare say, the conditions involving the struggle for existence, the talent of the people or race that creates them as well as the driving force of the past, exerts influence on both folk art – architecture and on history, as we have mentioned<sup>2</sup>.

The natural environment comes from the climate<sup>3</sup>, the nature of the ground and the geographical location. The sky, the air, wind<sup>4</sup>, precipitation<sup>5</sup>, lighthing<sup>6</sup>, the weather—cold or hot<sup>7</sup>—, the ground—barren or fertile—, the horizon, the sea, humidity<sup>8</sup>, all these directly or indirectly strongly influence building construction, i.e. the building material available, type of building, e.g. the kind of roof or windows, the height, that is to say, one storey or two storeys, as well as the historic development of the society. It is not feasible, for instance, for people who live in the Balkan Peninsula to develop their imagination and intellect in the same way as the people who live in the mountains of Northern Europe or to have the same type of house, etc. Such ideas and principles relative to the above have been already presented and described by Aristoteles<sup>9</sup> and Hippocrates<sup>10</sup>. The socio-cultural factor that regulates

1. See Anna J. Papamichael-Koutroubas, *Τέχνη και Ζωή. Αι ἐπὶ τῶν οἰκοδομημάτων τῆς Σύμης ἀπεικονίσεις*, vol. A1, Athens 1980, p. 11 ff.

2. Cf. William R. Ewald Jr. (ed.) *Environment for Man*, Bloomington Ind. 1967, pp. 11-25.

3. Anna J. Papamichael-Koutroubas, op. cit., p. 16.

4. Cf. Jeffrey Ellis Aronin, op. cit., pp. 179-211.

5. Ibid., pp. 239-270.

6. Ibid., p. 272.

7. Ibid., pp. 135-164.

8. Ibid., pp. 176-278.

9. Pol. 7,6 Also Long. 2, Pr. 14,8.

10. Aër. 24.



the quality of architecture and its style looks towards the history of the people too.

We should include in these factors the struggle for existence which certainly binds people together on the one hand and on the other provokes the struggle that rules the animal kingdom as well as the human domain with its various forms (as is war, commercial competition, etc.; the struggle for existence, which is important for societies, economics, and social systems).

Since a society has been developed, its members constitute social groups and primitive cooperation and mutual assistance evolve mainly into uniform nuclei in order to seek mutual support. Thus, the society is divided into followers of a policy: merchants, workers trade-unions, etc. This creates, among the members of a society, systematic social solidarity.

We also stress that the long-term influence of natural environment and intellectual education, as well as the influence of the historic «destinies», create in the people a definite number of peculiar characteristics that are transferred from the previous generations to the descendants.

Leaving out the physical characteristics (for instance, body build, color, etc.) we come to the characteristics that exercise the greater, or better yet, the more essential influence on the historic life of the people and all in all on their building construction i.e. on the psychological and moral characteristics that relate to their intellectual condition and character. The characteristics of every nation according to its civilization and strength of the past, and we refer here to people who have a past, affixes the general direction in the historic evolution of a nation, which said direction has had an influence on folk architecture<sup>1</sup>, even when this nation or part of it has had a change in its natural environment or is compelled to accept foreign education.

The moral environment has a greater influence than the natural. The strength of ideas (religion, beliefs, superstitions, etc.)<sup>2</sup> causes big changes in the historic evolution of societies (e.g. French revolution). Besides, the more a nation becomes civilized the less that nation submits to the external

1. Cf. Solon P. Kydoniatis, 'Αγροτικά κατασκευαί και εγκαταστάσεις, Athens 1947, p. 30 and Georgios A. Megas, 'Η ελληνική οίκια. 'Ιστορική αὐτῆς ἐξέλιξις καὶ σχέσις πρὸς τὴν οἰκοδομίαν τῶν λαῶν τῆς Βαλκανικῆς, Athens 1949, pp. 2-3 (= *Λαογραφία* 26 (1968-69), pp. 276-277).

2. Cf. Anna J. Papamichael-Koutroubas, op. cit., pp. 47-50.

power of nature. In civilized societies man reacts with his intellectual power<sup>1</sup>, against the obstacles of nature by improving the quality of the land on the one hand and overcoming other natural barriers on the other and thus he puts under his control the powers of nature. There are of course chance events irrespective of man's will, for instance, plague, calamity, scourge of God or from the actions arising from this will that almost certainly have a relation to architecture including colonization, method of establishment, defence, etc.

The dependance of folk architecture and generally folk art on natural phenomena creates a similar rhythm and order in the life of the people who live under the conditions of the phenomena. The similarity of such life develops among them a common psychological condition and a common perception of life which is determined by common conditions and common purpose. This perception of life is widely held among the people and really expresses the general feeling of the social group; it is reflected in the customs which are considered to be for all of them sacred unwritten laws<sup>2</sup>. The established customs were accepted as an inheritance by the peasants who are the guardians of the physiognomy of each nation. They are strictly kept. They bind everybody closely together without effort by means of an inner need which manifests itself consciously by nobody in particular but spontaneously, willingly, and vigorously.

All these bind one individual with another so strictly and to such a degree that one cannot be distinguished from the other. As for the contact of their «souls», he feels him to be the same. He is an individual of a uniform group in which, without doubt he finds himself, his «soul», and the feeling of his own self. These are reasons why there is uniformity in the houses of the group and the reasons point out all kinds of changes.

The classification of the various subjects according to their form which being generally examined by history or history of civilization is mainly summarized as follows: the country and the people, the endeavors which stem from these people, the state, worship, the society, the economic and industrial projects, the customs, the laws, the philosophy, the religion, art, science, the literature, subjects most of which are examined by someone who indeed

1. Ibid., pp. 18-19.

2. Cf. Ang. Hagimichali, 'Ελληνική Λαϊκή Τέχνη, Athens 1931, p. 8, Anna J. Papamichael-Koutroubas, op. cit., pp. 49-50.



is occupied by folk art; these forms of historic life cannot be meant to be separated and independent, but are strongly interlocked in an endless link and mutual influence<sup>1</sup>. The same, of course, is valid for folk art.

Additionally, we may note that the material used by a historian to succeed in his work usually has the traces left by the acts of peoples long gone. Very rarely has the historian been a witness of the events he narrates, usually because the events are mainly past and thus he can only have indirect knowledge of them. We refer to the events, the documents, physical remains, and oral tradition which compose the methodology of history. Every past event has possibly left a material culture, i.e. simple objects produced by man, psychological traces, i.e. various activities which have been conceived by the human mind and, as it appears, are consequently among the proofs in which are also included the monuments of folk art, especially buildings which help, quite adequately, the research of history<sup>2</sup>. Finally, we must mention the moral traces. These last, composed of the remains of the past, survived in language, customs (haunting of foundations, slaying<sup>3</sup> a cock or sheep, etc.), traditions (castles, haunted houses), beliefs of the present (creaking of houses, etc.). Besides all these, the moral remains are studies of folklore and ethnology which are joined directly to folk architecture or better (according to the contents given in this subject) is one of its sectors.

Traces of folk art—physical remains—especially folk architecture signify the periods or better yet, it is the buildings which are among those elements that point out the periods. After the barbaric and primitive situation, plus the long term of emigration, the formation and geographic distribution of the big nations occurred. This era is known not only through other conditions etc., but from the remains of the buildings too.

So, folk architecture contributes a lot to historical inquiry. At this point, we are touching on what has been said about the intimate relation of the auxiliary historic sciences to history among which is art history that together

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1. Cf. Eurwyn Wiliam, *Farm Buildings in the Vale of Clwyd, 1550 - 1880*, *Folk Life* 11(1973), p. 46.

2. See André Leroi-Gourhan, *Évolution et techniques, Milieu et techniques*, Paris 1945, pp. 256, 258 - 259.

3. Cf. Anna J. Papamichael, *The Laying of Sacrifices under the Foundations of Buildings, etc.*, *Folk Narrative Congress, Helsinki 1974*, p. 1 ff. (= Neo - Hellenika, vol. IV (1981), pp. 211 ff.).

with other studies is indispensable to full historical knowledge. After all, history really began only in a relatively recent era, when man after having reached an advanced intellectual level, put in writing, (on stone, wood, metal, and afterwards on papyrus and parchment) the first important incidents of his life, i.e. those which had been considered worthy enough to be recorded.

«History», says the well known German historian Ranke, «begins first there where monuments become understandable, and trustworthy inscriptions lie before us to study. The beginnings of civilization belong to the ages whose mystery we are not able to study. But the development of it is the most habitual phenomenon of ages about which there exist reliable traditions»<sup>1</sup>.

Among all that we have mentioned, we think that we can stress that history is not only limited by time restrictions, a thing which doesn't occur with folk architecture, but for a long time was limited to a small part of humanity, a case which, we think, is not applicable to folk architecture, because that folk architecture was present even in an imperfect form. History, finally, is also limited to its content. The subjects of its research are the events which can be considered as definite and real in the flow of history. On the contrary, folk architecture is not limited, any form of folk architectural subject can be examined. For this reason folk architecture can provide elements in historical research.

We have already touched on the subject of the relationship between history and other sciences. Here we would like to emphasize that whatever place could be given to history, agreeing with those who place history close to literature or with others who regard it as a positive physical science, or again with some, who identify it with sociology or prefer to think of it as an annex of politics, the fact is that without people neither history nor folk architecture can be moulded.

In addition, we particularly note that history is also interested in those positive forms of knowledge which deal with the natural part of folk knowledge, i.e. anthropology as far as it considers man as a species of the animal kingdom and examines the characteristics and the differences of human races; anthropogeography as it examines the influence of natural environment on the relations and destinies of people as well as the reactions of man in comparison to natural obstacles which are of interest to folk architecture. And the

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1. Leopold Von Ranke, *Weltgeschichte, Erster Theil*, Leipzig 1881, p. VI.



so called political géography which stands very close to history, as well as ethnography or ethnology and folklore.

The historian must know the natural presuppositions in which man is acting. Also, he must know the general typical forms and actions which are examined by psychology, and, in a more general way, sociology<sup>1</sup> which has for a subject of study the life of social groups. Of course, the researcher of folk art must be aware of these limits, too. Since folk art represents popular concepts, it is interwoven with the natural and socio-cultural presuppositions which surround man, and consequently follows in the same way.

We would like to especially stress that folk architecture revives ages long gone for historians, because it reveals the life of the past in the present. Folk architecture gives tangible patterns of the way of development followed by the elements of civilization in its evolutionary process, and it helps to trace the general laws of history.

Folk architecture and, in a general sense, folk art as well as folklore, generally discover and study the elements of communication among nations, the exchange of the goods of civilization and the mingling of nations remaining in the people's life. Indeed, this is due to the fact that people in their secular lives haven't been isolated from each other but remained in contact.

The need which created folk architecture should be sought, as we have already mentioned, in the natural and the psycho-intellectual, as well as the psychological conditions from which religion and cult sprang. These are the more main creative causes and all the others are their branches. Man in his quest for safety, as he felt haunted by fearful and strange powers as well as by other people, found the feeling of safety in defending his place, and enclosing it by building walls; then, creating buildings of various forms and kinds in which nothing could harm him or at least he could defend himself. So he was protected by barring out all the evil forces. We have thus the sense of property. This appears very strongly and covers all the phasma of the house on earth and extends to domestic items, agricultural tools, etc., i.e. generally to items which help his struggle to survive. The house, his guardian, i.e. his safety need permanent protection. The question is who and how does he imagine himself to be. Thus his psycho-intellect created a view of cult.

1. Cf. Crysanthos Christou, *Θεωρία και 'Ιστορία της Νεώτερης Τέχνης*, Thessaloniki (1970), p. 50 ff; *Πολιτισμός και 'Ιστορία*, Thessaloniki (1973), p. 33.

From the conflict of these concepts, we have an aspect of a cult, we believe the domestic one, but we cannot speak about it here. We will only mention at this point Zeus Ktesios<sup>1</sup>, the protector of house and property; Erkeios, the protector of the front court or household god; Kataibates<sup>2</sup>, the guard; the Dioscouri;<sup>3</sup> Heracles; Patroos Apollo, the tutelary god of a family or a people; the stone pillar<sup>4</sup>, placed in front of the door of a house, his own house, etc.

The development of this great religious system, the worship of which moulded different forms, we believe is based on the idea of the protection given by the house and then the formation of the family by the person who contributed to their creation, the founder. The sense of protection and the necessity caused by this, created the house, and generally, architecture. At this point, we think it very important what prevailed in ancient Athens where for the election of their leaders it was taken into consideration whether the candidates had Patroos Apollo<sup>5</sup>, Zeus Erkeios as ancestors and had family tombs and their location. Therefore, it was thus proven whether their leaders were genuine Athenians or not. If the candidates had a house and land, they were citizens of Athens. That was the way to prove their origins (roots). We think that this example gives us a good approach to our view that through architecture, nations can be defined, boundaries can be set and that the need for the creation of architecture also brought forth a kind of cult.

Let's not forget that in ancient Greece the head of the family was also the family priest. We think that similar customs will be discovered by research in every nation which has a long past. The house is the soul, the spirit, and the economy of its people. The house renders colors and revives the socio-cultural and natural environment and explains long gone generations. The psychological, religious, natural, and social feeling of the people have formed and form architecture: houses, churches, community buildings, etc. i.e. folk architecture; and we think that all these sprang from the feeling of the need for security and the feeling which generated from it, i.e. the feeling of pro-

1. Cf. Anna J. Papamichael-Koutroubas, op. cit., pp. 159, 197, 241, 246, 259, 317-318.

2. Ibid., pp. 247-248.

3. Ibid., pp. 246, 271, 318.

4. Ibid., p. 318.

5. Ibid., p. 249.



perty. Then, these senses were formed into systems. Finally, we conclude with the expressive proverb which people say, «if you have a house, you have a faith», which is indicative of the meaning of the house.

## ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

### Τὸ σπίτι καὶ ἡ φυσιογνωμία του

Περιέχονται ὀρισμένες ἀρχές σχετικὲς μὲ τὴ φυσιογνωμία τοῦ σπιτιοῦ — μὲ τὴ γενικὴ ἔννοια τοῦ οἰκοδομήματος — τὸ ὁποῖο ἀνήκει στὰ ἀντιπροσωπευτικώτερα δημιουργήματα τῆς τέχνης τοῦ λαοῦ, ἔχει ἄμεση σχέση πρὸς τὸ φυσικὸ καὶ κοινωνικοπολιτισμικὸ περιβάλλον τοῦ δημιουργοῦ καὶ ἀποτελεῖ οὐσιῶδες μέρος τῆς ἱστορίας του.

Ἡ γεωγραφικὴ θέση, τὸ ἔδαφος, τὸ κλίμα, οἱ οἰκονομικὲς συνθῆκες, οἱ ψυχοπνευματικὲς δυνάμεις, οἱ πίστεις καὶ δοξαστεῖς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἡ θρησκεία, τῆς ὁποίας ἡ ἐπίδραση εἶναι τόσο ἰσχυρότερη, ὅσο περισσότερο ἀπομακρυνόμαστε μέσα στὸ παρελθόν, συνθέτουν τὸν κύκλο τῶν παραγόντων ποὺ ἐπιδροῦν πάνω στὴν τελικὴ διαμόρφωση τῆς φυσιογνωμίας τοῦ ἀρχιτεκτονήματος καὶ καθορίζουν τὸ εἶδος, τὸν τρόπο καὶ τὴν ποιότητά του. Ἡ ὁμοιοτροπὴ ἐπίδραση τῶν ἀνωτέρω παραγόντων καθὼς καὶ ἡ ἔνταξη καὶ ὀργάνωση τῶν ἀτόμων σὲ εὐρύτερες κοινωνικὲς ομάδες δημιουργοῦν κοινὰ χαρακτηριστικὰ καὶ διαμορφώνουν τύπο-παράδοση, ποὺ μεταβιβάζεται ἀπὸ γενιὰ σὲ γενιὰ.

Ἡ ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ λόγω τῆς μεγάλης διάρκειας τῶν μνημείων της καὶ τῆς ἀντοχῆς της στὸ φθοροποιὸ χρόνο ἀποτελεῖ πολὺ εὐρύτερο, εὐκολώτερο καὶ παλαιότερο ἀπὸ ἄλλα μέσα τρόπο ἀνιχνεύσεως τῆς ἱστορίας καὶ τοῦ πολιτισμοῦ τῶν λαῶν καθὼς καὶ τῶν σχέσεων μεταξὺ τους, εἶναι πρωταρχικὸ κριτήριο ὀριοθετήσεως τῶν ἐποχῶν καὶ χαρακτηρίζει σαφέστατα ὅχι μόνο τὸν ὕλικό, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν κοινωνικοπνευματικὸ βίو τῆς ομάδας, μὲ τὸν ὁποῖο συνδέεται ἀναπόσπαστα.

Πιστεύεται ὅτι ἡ λαϊκὴ ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ ἐπήγαγε ἀπὸ τὴν ἀνάγκη ἐξασφαλίσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἀπὸ τὴν ὁποία γεννήθηκε τὸ αἶσθημα τῆς ιδιοκτησίας, ἡ ἐπιδίωξη δὲ ἐξασφαλίσεως τῆς τελευταίας ἐδημιούργησε εἶδος θρησκείας. Κατόπιν οἱ ἔννοιες αὐτὲς διαμορφώθηκαν σὲ συστήματα, τὰ ὁποῖα νομίζομε ὅτι πρέπει νὰ τοποθετηθοῦν στὸ διακλαδικὸ μέρος.

Ἐπισημαίνονται κοινὰ στοιχεῖα μεταξὺ ἱστορίας καὶ λαϊκῆς τέχνης-ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς, γενικὰ δὲ τίθενται προβληματισμοὶ ποὺ βοηθοῦν στὴν ἀνίχνευση τῆς φυσιογνωμίας τοῦ ἀρχιτεκτονήματος.