

THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF OTTOMAN HERITAGE AT MYTILENE/LESVOS

The lands are inviting people to inhabit them and since humanity is mainly driven from the urge for creation, peoples' passing and presence results in accumulative anthropogenic interventions. The Ottoman presence on the island dates from 1st September 1462, until the 8th of September 1912. The archaeologists are called to preserve all the historical/archaeological phases in an attempt to promote the continuum of the inhabitancy on Lesvos Island.

The 14th Directorate of Byzantine and Post-byzantine antiquities, which is centred in Mytilene, over the 15th years of its function has prioritised the protection of the monuments; since, their high number in countries with such a long history, like Greece and Turkey, prevents us from restoring their full amount.

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Besides, inhabitancy is officially protected under the stipulations of the Archaeological Law 3028/2002, according to which: archaeological protection aims to the preservation of the historical memory for the sake of the people and the future generations. Law defines the cultural goods as testimonies of people's existence and activities, of individual or collective character. Moreover, by the term cultural goods are also signified the historical monuments until 1830 ex-

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amined within a multicultural framework of conceptualization which allows their dual function as landmarks of space and time.

Therefore, the archaeologists are called to protect and illuminate such historical continuities and discontinuities; since these are start-points of our existence and decisive features of our evolution. Per example next to the position of the ancient temple of Demeter and Persephone it was erected in 14th century a church under double dedication and then, over it the Kule or Kale mosque and over the ancient temple of Messa was erected a middle-byzantine church.

(Kule or Kale Camii at Mytilene)



At plenty positions all over Greece we attest the diachronic use of the space, the value of which has been pinpointed by Hasluk since the end of 19th century. In our secular culture, the shrine can be discerned into historical monuments and emotional points of reference which allow us to connect with the broader universe. The shrines have their own identity and constitute the space through which we can transcend through past and future and thus through diachronic existence. The sacredness of the space, as related to the evolution of the religious sentiment of people, is indisputable. The archaeological Law gives the context of the two lines Staff duties, which can be encapsulated in protection and enhancement.

Law 3028/2002 prescribes the protection of our country's cultural heritage, which constitutes of the identification, research, recording, justification and study of its monuments and historical sites; it is further stipulated the advertence of any destruction, weathering, directly or indirectly inflicted damage, any illegal excavation, theft and illegal export of its cultural goods. Additionally, it is prescribed the protection of the monuments and the education of the public on its cultural heritage. According to the Law 2002, we are obliged to conduct restoration works on the historic remains based on the compilation and approval of comprehensive restoration reports in collaboration with the Central Services. These reports are comprised of the following sections, drawing and photography attesting to the present state of the monument, examination of its pathology and research proposal for its restoration.

The criteria upon which a restoration proposal is compiled are based on a fine balance between the severity of dilapidation and/or damage in which the monument in question is to be found and its aesthetic value irrespectively of its cultural identity or historicity. This is a decisive development in the heritage legislation which strongly opposes to practices and mentalities of other times, such as the elitist approach of European Neoclassicism; under the spirit of which, a great bulk of historical monuments from later eras were destroyed. Under Neoclassicism, it was only acknowledged Greek history and its artistic counterparts as historically valued. Victim of this biased approach has been the Lower Castle of Mytilene, which was sacrificed in the search for the classical strata of the port.

With regards to the enhancement policies applied nowadays in Greece their legal basis can be summarised as such: the Archaeological Law 2038/2002, the Venice Charter 1964, the Declaration of Amsterdam 1975, the European Convention on the protection of Archaeological heritage 1969 and the Convention for the protection of Architectural heritage of Europe 1985.

The pivotal principles of restoration, which derive from the aforementioned legislation can summarised in: a) the interdisciplinary approach of restoration, b) the maintenance of the traditional techniques and materials, c) the preservation of all historical phases of the monument, wherever this is possible and since it does not cause any disfigurement to the monument, d) the justification of the conservation procedures. Restoration aims to the rehabilitation and unveiling of the monument's aesthetic and historical value with respect to the entirety of its historical phases. Of primary importance is the quality of discernibility of the interventions, so as (them) to be intelligible and thus reversible.

According to the aforementioned principles, we conducted a series of repair works on the Ottoman monuments of historical centre of Mytilene. At all monuments, we reconstructed their derelict parts, repaired their vaults, applied metal clamps or ties of non-corrosive metals, we removed the failed mortar joints, we carried out extensive re-pointing and we used lime reinforcements in order to ensure adhesion to the stonework.

High standards of restoration were applied to the Varelzēdaina Mansion at Petra, an excellent sample of secular Balkan architecture from 1791, which was repaired in its entirety along with its frescoes and wooden ceilings.

(The Varelzidenas mansion house at Petra, Lesbos)

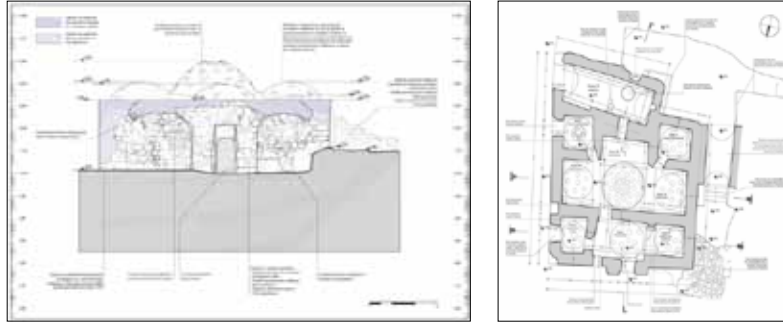


The dervish lodge (tekke) is a single-unit, domed building with semi-circular openings. The dome is supported on four arches by the means of spherical triangles, and it has been exteriorly defined by a prismatic moulding.

(Tekye at Mytilene)



The little bath is a pericentric building, which used to be at a severe state of disrepair. Repair works are in process.



(Small Hamam at Mytilene, Plans Giannis Pittakidis, architect)

The New mosque (*Yeni camii*) is to be found at the centre of the market's north section. Its patron was Nazir Mustafa Aga Koulaksiz and it was erected in 19th c. The mosque was destroyed by an earthquake in 1867. It is of a square shape with a long balcony occupying its north side and a micrographic relief representing the mosque laid over the main entrance at the *revak*. From the *minaret* it only survives part of the *pabuc*. The domes of the four-tiered portico are overlaid with coating and remnants of their fresco painting can still be visible.

(*Yeni Camii at Mytilene*)



The mosque along with the **Carşı Hammam** constituted parts of the *kulliye*, that is, of the architectural complex. The monumental character of *Carşı Hammam* is instantly appraised due to its conceptualized and highly linear lay-out.

(*Carşı Hammam at Mytilene*)



The proposal for the new use of the monument as an exhibition centre, where it will be hosted a permanent exhibition on thermalism, in the way we see happening in Scopia, is revocable; in this way, it is possible the conversion of the monument to its prior use.

The repair works carried out at the bath contained: a) the identification of fresco fragments, b) inspection of the coating strata, c) numbering and removal of the floor plates d) preservation of the furnaces (külhan) and of all the marble features (faucets, tubs). Overall, it needs to be stated that a large budget were invested on the restoration of the Ottoman monuments of Mytilene.

To summarize, an active preservation of our cultural environment through an interdisciplinary approach is absolutely needed. But this goal can be only achieved if we raise public awareness along with the responsibility of the specialist. The monuments and the landscape constitute sources of “cultural” oxygen, which improve the living standards of the residents.

To conclude, the Directorate of Antiquities is currently working towards the enhancement of all the monuments of Lesvos. In this way, we contribute to the promotion of archaeology as social practice towards the preservation of collective memory and historical identity. Besides, the search of utopia mobilizes those who want to improve their society, surpassing the known and familiar and those who insists on the reconstruction of the well known. I aspire that gradually we will comprehend *de profundis* our shared history and all the unknown will turn into famous and familiar, since it is only to be “understood”.