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CARE OF MONUMENTS IN CYPRUS

Care of ancient monuments in Cyprus has had a favourable development over the past half century or so (i.e. since the foundation of the Department of Antiquities in 1935), and it is of interest to outline some of the relevant circumstances.

Cyprus is a small island. With good motor roads more or less any location can be reached in two to three hours at the most. Next there are numerous stone monuments (Byzantine to Ottoman) of modest size, constructed in a manner which remained familiar to local builders and craftsmen. Finally when the concept of care for antiquities became an accepted government responsibility, the first two men appointed to bear this charge (in the prior part of this century) were architects. Government funds were very meagre, but labour and skilled labour was cheap and efficient. Thus without any theorising began the practice of dealing with urgent cases of damage, dereliction, threatened collapse etc. of monuments by maintenance and repair work confined strictly to the most essential structural measures. In this way there grew up a small scale but routine service where the technical means were greatly in excess of the financial resources available. Thus, which is to say a great deal, very little damage was done. It was on this firm foundation that more recent developments were based.

Since the days of independence (1960) greater financial resources became available, and this is particularly so since the division of the island (1974) when the southern part under government control has achieved solid prosperity. Nonetheless the consequent expansion in scope and scale of care for ancient monuments has never outrun the capacities for carrying them into effect. Only it might be said, now at the end of the century is a possible limitation in the offing, viz. the total decline in traditional building crafts.

Some attempt is now made to illustrate the ordered expansion in the conservation and restoration of monuments practised in Cyprus, whereby the successful experience of the Antiquities Service in maintaining the fabric of standing mediaeval monuments by routine maintenance automatically became the basis of other work programmes.

During the Thirties archaeological work got under way in each of the three periods which appear best represented in Cyprus:

- (1) The very ancient round house culture of Neolithic and Chalcolithic times.
- (2) The urban development of the Late Cypriot Period (13th-12th centuries BC).
- (3) The Graeco-Roman period following on the Ptolemaic conquest (3rd century BC).

Fortunately in each of these ages stone construction of one sort or another is prominent. Thus in Cyprus care for monuments could proceed with practical issues and was not faced with the impractical task of attempting to conserve mud building.

As archaeological work redeveloped after the World War, very significant remains indeed were exposed - e.g. the round house site at Khirokitia (approaching half a hectare of exposed remains) and the extensive building town plan at Enkomi (with 1.5 to 2 hectares of exposed ruins). The conservation policy was to inspect the structures after each winter's rains and for a team of masons and assistants to replace, re-erect and repoint all displaced stone masonry. In this way the archaeological ruins continued to exhibit their characteristics clearly to the visitor.

The Graeco-Roman ruins introduced further considerations. Here some of the fallen blocks (capitals, bases, drums, door frames etc.) could be recognised according to their architectural «order». The reassembling and repositioning of such moulded elements is in many instances certain and it is sometimes referred to compendiously as «anastylosis». The advantages are obvious: it clears up and opens out the site to reveal the plan, it preserves the elements from suffering mechanical damage at ground level and it gives a specimen visual impression of the original aspect in elevation of the masonry. Important work of this nature was carried out in Cyprus by the American Expedition at the Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates near Kourion. And when departmental excavations were extended (in the Fifties) to classical sites (above all Salamis) anastylosis became a recognised part of the works (e.g. at the Gymnasium).

From this experience proceeded substantive reconstruction of ancient monuments based on data obtained by excavation. The essential difference here is that the addition of quite considerable amounts of new material may be required in the reconstruction. The way into this work was via a special case, that of theatres. A Greek theatre remains potentially as much of a cultural amenity today as when it was built. There is thus a sanction for reconstructing such monuments even when the surviving remains would not normally warrant reconstruction in a monument of another genre. And it was based on the experience of reconstructing ancient theatres (at Salamis, Kourion and Soloi during the Sixties and Seventies) that the Temple of Apollo at the Kourion sanctuary was reconstructed in part (during the Eighties) so as to give both a visual impression of its original form and also to recreate the ancient focal point of the beautiful sanctuary area.

During these years another special instance of classical antiquities came to the fore; and the care required here leads on to quite revolutionary future prospects. At certain sites, above all New Paphos, extensive mosaics of the highest quality (ca. 3rd century AD) were revealed. In these circumstances only three alternative measures are available: to bury the mosaics again and thus preserve them in situ by concealing them; to lift the mosaics and preserve and exhibit them in a museum (thus diminishing the virtue of the site); to enclose the mosaics within a new building and thus exhibit and preserve them in situ. Thus the Department of Antiquities were led to the further and critical development of building new structures on antiquities sites to protect ancient ruins.

Because of the introduction of roofing or total enclosure of mosaics at New Paphos, the measure is demanded for an increasing variety of other fragile features. Thus «roofing» has been used for protecting e.g. prehistoric mud structures (at Tenta). This development in fact marks a watershed between the natural ways of the past and an entirely unknown future where only finances limit activities which have more in common with the cinema (or science fiction) than present concepts of antiquities.

Leaving the ominous problems of conserving excavated remains, it is better to conclude this account by reverting to the standing «ancient monuments» category. With an increase in financial resources, work on the mediaeval monuments of Cyprus took on a totally new dimension. Not only were essential weather-proofing measures carried out, but the monuments were totally restored (including the cleaning and preservation of e.g. wall mosaics and frescoes). In certain instances this work was combined with the revivification of the monument in a new avatar - e.g. the Lusignan Manor House at Old Paphos (a superb site museum), Kolossi Castle of the Knights of St. John near Limassol (as a mediaeval museum), and the Ottoman Gate House at Nicosia, the Famagusta Gate, (as a cultural centre). Parallel with this the Antiquities Service has reached into another field in which it has excelled itself. The restoration and conservation of «folk» or traditional building of the last centuries. Here not

only has the service acquired and restored many striking examples of this pleasing building tradition, now totally extinct, but it has also encouraged private owners to restore such buildings by providing them with all requisite technical direction and assistance.

For more than fifty years the Cypriot Department of Antiquities, proceeding on pragmatic lines, has been markedly successful in caring for ancient monuments in a way which so far has not been damaging or destructive. The earliest directors were architects and there were masons and builders familiar with traditional construction. In this way beginning with structural maintenance of mediaeval stone monuments, the service was able to develop a program of due inspection and maintenance of excavated archaeological ruins (fortunately also of stone construction). During the fifties this maintenance was extended to anastylosis. Then after the greatly increased wealth of the Island following on independence, more extensive restoration programs were undertaken based on the experience gained in the functional reconstruction of classical theatres. Eventually, the necessity of providing for optimum viewing of fine mosaics led the Department into building new structures to protect archaeological ruins. This development abuts on a truly direful future. On the other hand excellent results have been achieved in restoring (or arranging for owner restoration of) traditional modern buildings.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Για περισσότερο από πενήντα χρόνια το Τμήμα Αρχαιοτήτων Κύπρου κατάφερε με επιτυχία να συντηρήσει τα αρχαία μνημεία του νησιού. Οι πρώτοι διευθυντές του ήταν αρχιτέκτονες, ενώ υπήρχαν και τεχνίτες που γνώριζαν τον παραδοσιακό τρόπο κτισίματος. Κατ' αυτό τον τρόπο η Υπηρεσία άρχισε εργασία με τη συντήρηση μεσαιωνικών πετρόκτιστων οικοδομημάτων και επεκτάθηκε στη συντήρηση ερειπίων που αποκαλύπτονταν σε ανασκαφές (ευτυχώς ήταν και αυτά πετρόκτιστα). Κατά τη δεκαετία του 1950 η συντήρηση επεκτάθηκε και σε αναστυλώσεις. Μετά την ανεξαρτησία και τον πλούτο που άρχισε να μαζεύεται, αναλήφθηκαν πιο φιλόδοξα προγράμματα αποκατάστασης μνημείων βασισμένα στην πείρα που αποκτήθηκε από την αναστύλωση κλασικών θεάτρων. Τελικά, η αναγκαιότητα καλύτερης θέας σημαντικών ψηφιδωτών οδήγησε το Τμήμα Αρχαιοτήτων στην ανέγερση καινούριων κτισμάτων, για να προφυλαχθούν τα αρχαιολογικά κατάλοιπα. Όμως, έξοχα ήταν και τα αποτελέσματα της προσπάθειας αποκατάστασης παραδοσιακών κτιρίων νεότερων χρόνων είτε από το Τμήμα Αρχαιοτήτων είτε από τους ιδιοκτήτες τους με τη βοήθεια του πρώτου.