

THE MULTICULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE PLACES OF ANO SYROS AND HERMOUPOLIS

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Abstract

The presentation will focus on the presentation of a typical case of two adjacent sites of Syros, which are the traditional settlement of Ano Syros and the Historical city center of Hermoupolis. Both these sites have their own distinct physiognomy, and are areas with special characteristics. The cultural landscape of each region is unique and has become perhaps the most important element of their profile configuration. This place is an important example of harmonious coexistence of two regions with strong differentiation at every level. These differences relate almost every action level of residents and development. They concern social structure, religion, ancestry, architecture, economy, aesthetic landscapes.

Perhaps the only common element is the Greek language, national consciousness and the place. This place finally eased any differences so that the dipole is now functioning optimally integrated, while maintaining each pole individually, the elements that make it unique and gives it a special physiognomy. On the one hand the Medieval Catholic Syros, being protected from the West, served as a bridge for the transfer of Western Civilization throughout Frankish and Ottoman conquered Archipelago and from the other the Neoclassical Hermoupolis, which born and nurtured in Modern Greek Culture. These two sites, although so close, it separates them a strip of 20 meter land, have no artificial differences, a result of political circumstances. In contrast, their differences are substantial and with a large extent of visibility and legibility of their identity. The visitor immediately perceives this special place and that's what makes it very attractive.

The different character of the two regions and the multiculturalism of the place was not a hindrance, contrary it was the starting point for a meaningful, creative coexistence and cooperation in cultural economic, political and social level. The particular historical and cultural heritage of this place are so numerous and distinct that today the specific dipole could be pole of attraction, lighthouse of culture but also a bridge between the East and West oriented by the multi-cultural character that distinguishes it.

Keywords

Physiognomy, cultural landscape, aesthetic landscapes, cultural heritage, multiculturalism.

1. Introduction

As mentioned above, the lecture shall focus on the presentation of the traditional settlement of Ano Syros and the Historical urban center of Hermoupolis. Two sites sharing a distinct physiognomy and particular characteristics. However what do we mean when we say physiognomy and which are those elements that modulate the diversity of these two neighboring sites of Syros and therefore the different cultural landscape?

Human himself and his presence is what gives value to a space and transforms it into site. Through his activities the man specifies the space and fulfills it with man-made forms with features, with dreams, with expectations, with emotions, with significances (Stefanou, 2000).

Each place, that of Ano Syros and that of Ermoupolis has its own individual character that is composed by all the specific characteristic forms of any kind, practical, ideological and psychological concerning it and by the time that is now an entity, we can talk about the particular physiognomy of Ano Syros and the particular physiognomy of Ermoupolis (Stefanou,2000), (Stefanou, 2001). Because physiognomy, is about uniqueness, identity, even the personality of a site, as that is expressed and displayed through the characteristics of its landscape. The physiognomy refers exclusively to the uniqueness of the entity of a site, in the opinion we have of the nature of this entity.



2. Elements that compose the different physiognomy

2.1 Settlement – City

Ano Syros is a traditional settlement. It is a place where the habitation of population groups takes place, namely a gathering place of appropriate housing and of all those associated cores that serve functions. It has historic character, rich and proven cultural tradition, which records on its own particular way the continuity and progress of its inhabitants.



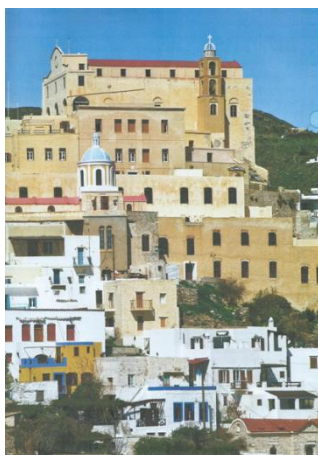
On the other hand Ermoupolis, is a city. That indicates location containing a total of ideological functions, emotional and practical that allows its residents and participants in the town citizens, to develop a collective consciousness and to produce culture as an expression of this collective consciousness. However it is also an urban center since it possesses a set of economic and productive activities, mainly of secondary or tertiary sector and of equivalent scale cores and infrastructures. Ermoupolis is also a historical city since it possesses recorded history, it has urban design, branded architecture and a set of functions, economic-social and ideological rich in cultural tradition while it represented the first example of urbanization in Greece.



2.2 Historical evidence

The defining presence of the Catholics

As early as 8th-9th century, but mainly in the 13th century in the tall conical hill above the harbor, the settlement of Ano Syros was created, for protection against the pirates who were raging the coasts. The foundation and life of the medieval settlement is connected for many with the Frankish rule in Greece and the Duchy of Naxos. In the 17th century Capuchins monks and later Jesuits helped the residents of the island of Syros to a more direct communication with Europe (Stefanou, 2014), (Agriantoni,Fenerli,1999). At the same time the port was also developed since it had highly concessional conditions and had secured a relative autonomy. So, in this favorable climate, a very special great culture developed, mixture of the Cycladic island lifestyle with its own customs and traditions with the religious expressions (and habits), that was supplied by the Western Europe through numerous Catholic clergy and the great for their religious, cultural, educational and privileged offer, monasteries of various Catholic orders.



The presence of various Western, Catholic religious orders in Ano Syros, contributed to the promotion and development of the culture of the residents of Ano Chora. As early as the 17th century education for girls already existed while the rest of Greece was under Turkish rule, and also the Jesuits of the 18th century, operated a High School in the standards of the French Lycee and a century later in Ermoupolis, this time, the first High School of free Greece was created (Stefanou, 2014).

This neutrality and protection by the French over the island created the conditions for the settlement of refugees and the creation of Ermoupolis and also the development of the New Greek Culture. Thus, in 1822 and 1824, after the massacre in Chios and Psara, the first refugees settled in Syros. Later, until 1850 refugees keep arriving from all parts of Greece so as to seek protection for starters and then to contribute themselves in a stable industrial and commercial growth of the new city (Agriantoni,Fenerli,1999), (Abelas, 1998).



Thus the " miracle "was created, the first city" in commercial and industrial importance", as is mentioned in the historical sources. Its name, Ermoupoli, was given by the settlers themselves after an assembly in honor of Hermes Kerdoou.

2.3 The toponyme

While Ano Syros with its name reflects its geographical position and relationship of the island with the son of the god Apollo god of light, Ermoupolis dedicates its name to the scholar god Hermes, god of commerce. Thus, the name for both locations becomes a condenser of history, tradition, of both diachronic and modern nature, mythology, territorial specificities, or of a particular social, urban, architectural expression and creates conditions of ownership. The resident gets emotionally or ideologically attached to the name and evolves based on that.

2.4 Psychological distance

This specific religious and social structure of Ano Syros along with the intense presence of Catholic orders and the religious character that those have imposed on the indigenous inhabitants of the island and on the other hand the cosmopolitan urban air of the refugees-residents who financially developed, raised the distance between the two sites, with the psychological and emotional distance to be much greater than the actual. This consolidation of the structure of each site resulted in the preservation of their particular physiognomy. It was a characteristic practice, until the mid-20th century, for the residents of Ermopolis to even supply themselves with water during their infrequent visits to Ano Syros, since they considered that they go somewhere far away and isolated, where they should be able to deal with the need of thirst (Stefanou, 2014) .

This major psychological distance between the two neighboring sites eventually is due to all those elements that initially formed their physiognomy and their vision as entities. Those, up to the

early 20th century .Cause since the late 20th this diversity blunted. Maintaining the elements of the physiognomy of the sites, the inhabitants came closer and as a result today this different physiognomy of the two regions and the multiculturalism of the place not to be a barrier, on the contrary to be the starting point for a meaningful, creative coexistence and cooperation in cultural economic, political and social level. The historical and cultural heritages of this place are so numerous and discrete that this dipole today a pole of attraction, a beacon of culture but also a bridge between the East and the West guided by the multi-cultural character that distinguishes it (Kardasis, 1857).

The same elements that once isolated the two places today unite them overlapping each other and are means of promotion through a special role that Syros can be play in eastern Mediterranean.

2.5 Social elements

The decisive influence of the Catholic Church in the formation of the physiognomy of the settlement of Ano Syros, it is not only shown by the great ecclesiastical and monastic complexes but also by the control they exercised across the social life, entertainment, cultural events, even the customary law of the settlement. The clergy was at the top of the social pyramid and then the rest of the people. The social stratification followed the ethical guidelines rather than the financial differences (Stefanou, 2014). Professional outlets were predefined, some were incorporated in the clergy, most people who inherited land became farmers while the remaining craftsmen and sailors.

The social organization is also apparent through architectural elements. The houses are so close the one to the other almost stuck together, the private space is limited in the bedroom of the house, while the daily space, the living room is open to the street. The small outdoor is always open, open to communication. The road is semi-public and taking care of it belongs to the housewife. The sense of safety and communication of the residents of the settlement is unique. On the other hand, the gathering of people on the benches creates conditions of strict control (Stefanou, 2014).



On the other hand, the rapid development of Syros was not merely on population and housing development. Along with the economic prosperity a European press lifestyle flourished that had no relation with the rest of Greece. Naturally also in this case the social structure was expressed again through architecture. Great European architects were recruited for the creation of mansions and public buildings illustrating the economic prosperity. The Town Hall is a symbol of the city, the Theatre expresses the cultural development, the high school, the imposing church is the largest in the Balkans, the public buildings and even the well cared industrial witness the prosperity, the economic growth and generally the European way of life, with opportunities of action which are characterized by freedom as is expressed through urbanization in the sense it was expressed by the massive population movements towards the cities, in 19th century Europe and their

industrialization the development of the secondary and tertiary production, but also the corresponding architectural expression that with the scale and morphological expression characterized the urban centers of that era.



2.6 Spatial elements Architecture-Urban Planning

The settlement of Ano Syros constitutes a typical example of medieval settlement with the perimetrical houses constituting the walls and following the traditional Cycladic architecture in both architectural as well as urban forms with the defensive layout and the closed rings of residential zones. The houses do not stick around a wall but are organized around a path arranged next to each other so guarding themselves and the rest of the village, revealing their social organization. The artistic elements are those that form the main character of the settlement. Narrow, winding alleys, small scale white houses, terraces, the half-open small outdoors, the floors, the narrow front facades of the houses, the small openings, the arched sheds, and the external stairs. Elements suggesting their surroundings, social structure and financial status. The residents themselves are the folk architects, craftsmen and designers of the settlement and their houses.



In contrast lays Hermoupolis. Since 1826, is formed to be the first European city in the Balkans and the Ottoman eastern Mediterranean. Its creation was based on a street plan design of 1837 authorized in the first Weiler's draft.



Hermoupolis was born, developed, declined over less than a century. The period of prosperity of Hermoupolis coincides with the period of neoclassical architecture. The architectural style of

Hermoupolis is special and is considered to comply with the principles of the Romantic Classicism (Abelas, 1998). Romanticism in the neoclassical architecture is more eclectic allowing free expression by the creators who are using in their architectural structures elements of older or Renaissance style, without being bound by strict rules. In Ermoupolis many European architects worked, while its architecture that differs of other neoclassical towns is characterized as monumental due to the variety of public and private buildings but also of the use of carved marble in the all-marble facades and architectural decoration. Greater signs of the prosperity of Ermoupolis, besides the houses and mansions, are the buildings used as shops, warehouses and factories with very meticulous architecture, usually ground floors with semicircular lintels with small domes as relief arches, particularly well designed doors, ornately railings on the windows.



2.7 The aesthetic qualities

However the site is not only characterized by its morphological elements and is not only recognized by them. Man who creates and lives in a place recognizes it not only by sight but with all his senses. In particular, given the fact that the landscape is the overall perception, the real, emotional and ideological image that a place offers in a given time, and based on the fact that the man with each of the five senses but also with the culture that he has, he realizes a part of the space and gives to each a separate conceptual content and emotion, we conclude that a place displays through its landscape various dimensions. These dimensions enrich that place and give special value. Thus we can talk beyond the visual landscape also for acoustic, tasty, odorant but also a landscape of touch, because the way we now perceive the space is not only visual (Vasilara, 2013).

All the sensory perceptual data concerning it along with the social and cultural data play a significant role. Thus rebetika and folk songs for the ordinary people, the Latin chants, and the particular dialect of the inhabitants compose a unique soundscape feature of Ano Syros. The same applies to the tangible landscape as that is perceived through the golden coatings or the dew under the shed or even the strong blow of the wind. Equally important are also the odorant as well as the flavoring landscape in the formation of the particular physiognomy of the settlement. The smell of basil in the pots retained by the housewives, of jasmine or of foods that they cook are spread in the alleys are different of the smells that one finds in Hermoupolis.

3. Today keeping an eye to the future

As we have seen, Ano Syros and Hermoupolis are two sites with different physiognomies. In the past the 20 meters road that separated them had psychologically much bigger dimensions. Nevertheless today the reality is much more different. The two historical sites harmoniously coexist and constitute not only for the island of Syros or for the complex of Cyclades, but also for Greece as a whole and for the Eastern Mediterranean region in general a birthplace of multiculturalism.

The coexistence of these two sites regards all levels. There are two communities with different religious and social structure, with a different history, different traditions, different faiths, different heritage, and diverse cultural expressions. The result is the creation of a single dipole with vast multicultural reserves.

The perceptual structure of the city totally operates for the two sites. The sky line of the city being built on top of two hills and stretching amphitheatrically towards the sea is highly characteristic and recognizable. The crowning of the hills of churches of both Christian faiths gives this image of love and harmonious coexistence. The existence of Catholic churches in Ermoupolis and of Orthodox in Ano Syros, the joint actions, rituals, religious celebrations, the encounters, illustrate once more that harmonious coexistence.

4. Conclusion

We are living at a time that values are in crisis. That humanity seems to turn back tens or hundreds of years back and is threatened with a new form of obscurantism. We live in an era where people are afraid of difference, are afraid and reject other ideologies and opinions, that the European ideal seems to lose its essence that wars do not resemble with the previous ones in the means used both in the West and in the terrifying ferocity handled in the East. Who could expect that in the 21st century world heritage monuments would be destroyed and mankind would remain awkwardly dumbfounded, people being humiliated and ideals that spawned great civilizations being declined.

The case of Syros is perhaps unique and could represent a global example in an era that the differences seem irreconcilable, conflicts inevitable and globalization seems to flatten the specific characteristics of sites. It can be an example that differences are not flattened, residents respect these differences and incorporate them into a creative development and protection of the cultural resources of the island. In such a world, this small island that on the world map looks like a small dot, it can teach morals and dignity. Syros with its example over the principles that comply with the harmonious coexistence of the two different sites as well as its geographical location can play a salutary role in the risks knocking on our door. The multicultural landscape of Syros shows that no difference is unbridgeable and that it can be a beacon of hope for the modern world and the communication between East and West.

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