

The campanile
of St. George
of the Greeks
in Venice

The church of St. George and the campanile

On the 28th of November 1498 the Venetian authorities accepted the request from the Greeks of Venice to found a society, the so called Scuola or Nazione, which would support the poor refugees. The Brotherhood's headquarters was the church of St. Vlassios in the district of Castello, while its patron Saint was St. Nicholas. In 1511, the Greek "stradioti" –as they are called in Venetian sources- warriors who served the Venetian state as mercenaries, asked and obtained permission from the Council of Ten to build at their own expense a church dedicated to their patron saint, St. George. The liberty of religion of the Greeks in Venice was established by the humanist Pope, Leo X. In order to construct the church in 1526, the Brotherhood bought land in the parish of St. Antonine, where a small wooden church was temporarily built in order to meet people's needs.

The erection of the beautiful and big church of St. George began in 1539 and was completed by 1577, due to generous offerings and sacrifices of the Greeks of Venice. The total cost was 15.000 gold ducats. After its completion, the church was decorated according to the orthodox tradition and was endowed with icons, mosaics and valuable holy vessels. In 1574 the Brotherhood invited the great artist Michail Damaskinos, from Crete, to decorate part of the iconostasis and the sanctuary. In 1578, the erection of the tall campanile began with a donation from Iakovos Samariaris from the island of Zakynthos. The project was completed after various intervals in 1592. The campanile of St. George along with the whole monumental complex of the so-called "Square of the Greeks" (Campo dei Greci), belongs to the Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post Byzantine Studies to which it was donated by the historic Greek community of Venice.

The history of the restoration

Following a series of rescue interventions on the later extension at the base of the campanile and a year-long series of electronic calculations of the stability and stresses experienced by the building, the A.G. Leventis foundation decided in 2003 to accept the proposal of ELLINIKI ETAIRIA and fund the restoration works of the campanile which was in immediate need of conservation. Due to the height of the building and the consequent difficulty to make at hand close observation a great number of its elements were initially evaluated approximately. Work began during the summer of 2004 and was completed by July 2006.

Conservation works

The conservation study was carried out in collaboration with the office of the City of Venice responsible for the city's monuments, after it had been established that



the degree of the campanile slop had not changed and that there was no danger of collapse due to strong winds. Initially, the preparation of a special study for the installation of self-supported scaffolding was required, so that the building would remain unaffected by it. After the grounding of the scaffolding in the church's square and the adjacent canal and its complete placement, it was possible to make a detailed study of specific problems. The initial mortar had been preserved in certain surfaces of the body of the campanile. Analysis and specification of the surfaces' components was performed and it was decided for the body of the

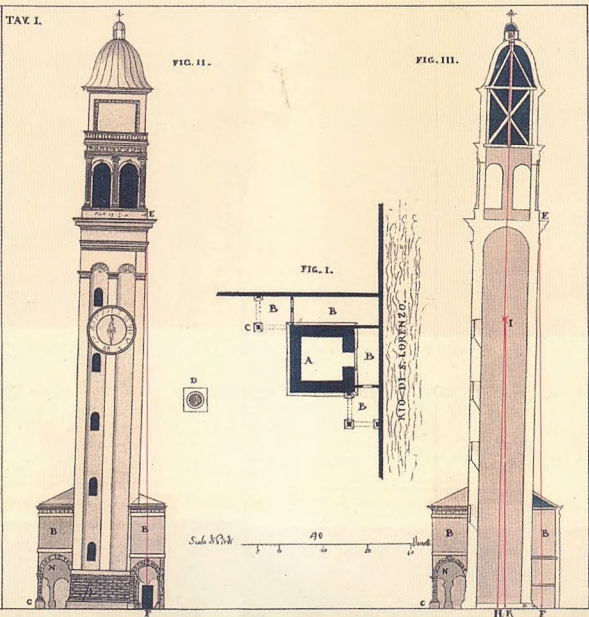


campanile to be covered with this type of mortar again, while any newer mortar should be removed. In the highest compartment and at the base of the building, where there was construction in fine stone from Istria, specific work followed involving the cleaning of debris, plants and fungi, the conservation of the stone sections, bolections and other details. The conservation and replacement of part of the wooden dome at the top of the campanile was carried out, as well as conservation and replacement of the metal parts with stainless steel ones, specifically at the foothold of the bells, but also of the balustrades, the wind-vane, the metal hatch and other fixings. Finally, the conservation and restoration of the clock was realized.

Contributors

The restoration has been completed with a generous sponsorship of the **A.G. Leventis Foundation**. The Committee for the Architectural Heritage of **ELLINIKI ETAIRIA** (Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage) oversaw the work. The architects Alexander G. Kalligas and Chari A. Kalligas have organized and coordinated the project. The technical surveillance with computer systems was assigned to the engineering company Tecniter from Milan which has wide experience in such works in Venice, with the engineer Giorgio Brunetti being the chief responsible. The architectural study was assigned to the team of the architectural office of Professor Alberto Torsello, who

E Perpendicolare del viso del Conicione
cio in terra, la quale marca la pendenza del
Campanile nel punto F. Si once 129.
B. Fabbrie della cella
C. Pilastro piantato sopra le spalle del Pozzo



The A. G. Leventis Foundation was founded in 1979 one year after the death of the leading Cypriot businessman Anastasios G. Leventis. Its goal was to support cultural, educational, charitable and environmental programmes in Greece, Cyprus, West Africa and other countries all over the world. One of the principal aims of the foundation is the conservation and promotion of the Greek Cultural Heritage through the funding of archaeological excavations, restorations of historic monuments and places, various publications mainly of historical and archaeological content and also through the support of educational and scientific programmes. The A.G. Leventis Foundation aims at promoting the Greek Culture not only in Greece and Cyprus, but also worldwide, having as a principle the belief that the Culture is the most valuable expression of the Greek spirit.



Fragoklissias 9, Marousi, 15121, Athens, Greece, tel. 210 6165207
www.leventisfoundation.org

ELLINIKI ETAIRIA (Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage) has been working since 1972 for the protection of the environment and the cultural heritage. Its main objectives are the proposal and promotion of environmental policies, the conservation of habitats and landscapes of natural beauty, the protection of monuments, traditional settlements and historical sites and the raising of public awareness. Its Council for the Architectural Heritage plays a leading role in the protection and promotion of the Greek monumental wealth. Its main activities include proposals for the rescue of monuments, the pursuit of sponsorships for restorations, the organization of lectures and seminars, the provision of annual scholarships etc.

Tripodon 28, Athens, 10558 Greece, tel. 210 3225 245, www.ellet.gr

Redaction: I. Gratsia

Texts: A.G. Kalligas & C.A. Kalligas, I. Gratsia

Translation: N. Kapetsoni • Photos: A. & Ch. Kalligas

Design: E. Kassapis



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑ
Περιβάλλοντος & Πολιτισμού