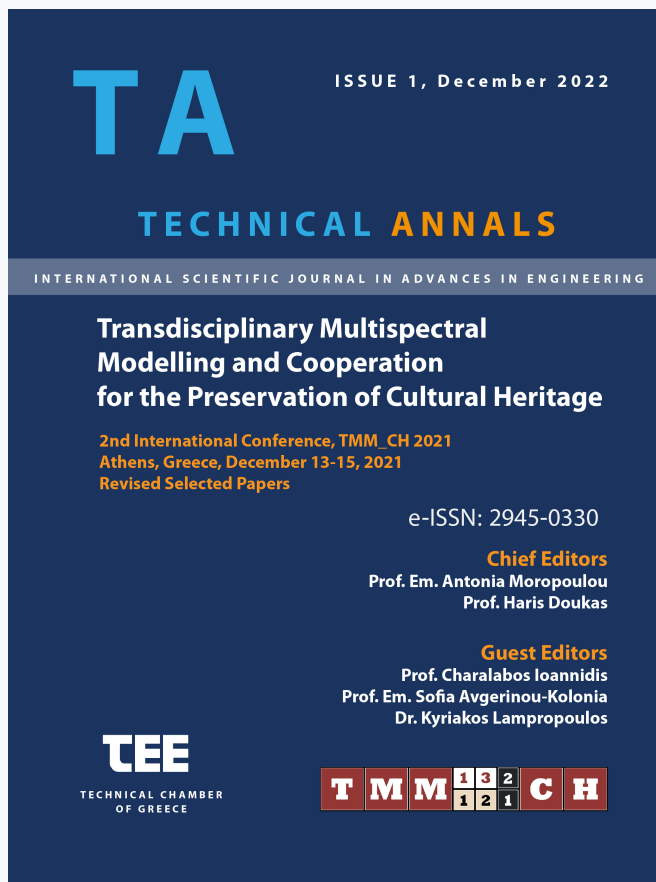


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### Memories of the Orphanage - Prison of Aegina

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## **Memories of the Orphanage - Prison of Aegina. Interpretation of a difficult heritage and proposals on its museology display**

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**Abstract.** In recent decades, there has been a growing worldwide interest in those events that marked the course of world history and that create divisions within a society. In Greece, the 1940s and the threefold Occupation-Resistance-Civil War are such events that give rise to intense controversy. At the same time, the methods of repression that the political dissidents of that period suffered, which were basically persecutions, displacement to distant locations (exile) and internment to maximum-security prisons have been consigned to oblivion.

In Greece, dozens of islands were turned into places of exile and “disciplinary camps”, whilst many prisons were created for the state “enemies”. In their majority, these sites of memory in Greece have been consigned to oblivion since there is no state support for their promotion.

One of the most typical examples is the Prison of Aegina, which is also known as Kapodistrian Orphanage. The building was constructed by order of Ioannis Kapodistrias to house the orphans of the Revolution of 1821. In 1880, it was inaugurated as a prison for criminal inmates at first, while in 1920 it received the first political prisoners. The building operated as a prison for political prisoners up until 1974, during which time the Left was restored to legality in the country and hence, the persecutions ceased.

In this article, we will study the term “difficult cultural heritage” together with the promotion and conversion of sites of memory to museums. The building of the Aegina Prison will be examined as a case study for its significance and historical importance, but also its emblematic architecture.

**Keywords:** Difficult cultural heritage, Museum, Prison of Aegina, Political prisoners, museological proposal.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Memory

Memory is not a static storage space from which we retrieve unaltered past experiences but an active process of constructing meanings [1]. Addressing traumatic and painful aspects of the past, especially recent ones, is a complex process determined by the politics of memory and oblivion [2]. After all, according to psychologists, “*the memory of traumatic events seems to be susceptible to oblivion*” [3]. In each site of memory, there is a multiplicity of interpretations, symbols, historical narratives, represented social and cultural practices (Karagiannidis, 2014). The role of the museum as an institution and a place of collective memory that is directly related to national history and politics is the cause for intense debates and political interventions [4].

It is a given that the different social groups living within the borders of a nation identify with the centre of government and must show obedience to it, whatever its form. This results in a national identity that is in fact imposed by the power of the state [5]. In post-war Europe, collective oblivion was a cornerstone of the structure of stability, especially in the West. In 1989, the overthrow of the socialist system in the USSR had multiple consequences, especially through the crisis of political consciousness; depoliticization and subjectivity prevailed in the interpretation of historical events. For many years, the sites of memory were sites of oblivion.

Based on the events of the last century, Europe could be considered a Memory Land and we are called upon to understand it as such. Every geographical point has its own story to tell. That story is not a result of materials that testify to facts, but oral testimonies that compose the history of the past, that compose identities. Within the context of the aforementioned events, new definitions have been devised, such as fever memory, mania memory, crazy for memory, etc. [6].

Only specific historical projects have been considered sites of memory; mainly those that transform memory in some fundamental way or provide repetition for educational purposes. Memory lands are created by the marriage of history and memory and their goals are many: to stop time, prevent oblivion, represent the intangible and give substance to what belongs to the past [7].

Nora (1989) was the first to introduce the term “sites of memory” (*lieux de mémoire*) and established the study of these sites in the context of examining collective memory [8]. Memory sites, according to Nora, are by nature “outward” and defined areas that were once considered “inward”, whilst today they compose collective memory [9].

The last two decades have been marked by an explosion of interest in modern history not only in Greece but in Europe and other continents as well. It seems that the citizens are trying to learn about those events that for so many years have been forgotten or hidden in secret historical records, wanting to understand and create their own identity. Especially in Europe, because of its heavy heritage, there is a strong interest in the historical events of World War II since many citizens believe that they do not know enough about that period, due to ignorance or concealment of important events that determined the course of the War. This interest is expressed in various ways, such

as the study of relevant publications, watching documentaries, films, etc. [4]. This search, however, hides inside intense controversies, as the rival memories of the different camps of the War come into conflict.

What do we do when the dark traces of the past cannot be buried within a national negotiation but rather constitute an element of forming the world-historical memory? What do we do when the unwanted material presence of the unwanted past is of such a scale that it can be neither ignored nor silenced? [10,11].

## 1.2 Recounting history

Disputes over history cannot be understood without taking into account the specific conditions under which they take place, i.e. without examining their political and social context [12]. Depending on the era and the socioeconomic conditions, the ways in which we perceive the past and transform it into history change. Thus, under the influence of the major political overthrows that took place in the last century, in certain cases, the formation of contemporary identities requires a rupture with the dark contemporary past [10,11].

All around the world, historical issues and sites still creating division within society are part of difficult cultural heritage, and from time to time they have been addressed differently for being factors conveying specific impressions and emotions, but also ideological messages. Thus, various measures have been taken in order to diffuse a situation or form the desired consciousness, such as the partial or complete destruction of buildings, the attempt to neutralize others by dismantling Nazi symbols, the demythification of a location by integrating daily activities and the museumification of some parts of it [10,11].

## 1.3 Worldwide interest in the difficult cultural heritage

From the late 20th century to the early 21st century, there is a growing trend around the world to publicly display those stories and cultural heritage that are difficult and potentially capable of causing ruptures in the established contemporary identities and social relations. During the 1990s – a milestone in the revision of history – a fruitful debate began around the difficult cultural heritage and the historical events that it subsumes. That shift could not have left unaffected the museums and the way they used to address the difficult cultural heritage until then [13].

A museum is linked to the society of which it forms part and operates by promoting its cultural heritage. These sites can play a key role in the cultural life of a place through the activities they offer. The role of a museum should not be limited to collecting, pre-serving, studying and displaying the material evidence of the cultural heritage of a place with the sole purpose of promoting scientific research. Museums are organizations that preserve and present the objects of cultural heritage from one generation to another whilst teaching, educating, and entertaining their audience [14].

Museums are organizations that need to decide which notions of the past, the present and perhaps the future deserve public space [15]. Museums engaging with the topics of difficult cultural heritage and controversial stories often raise important and, at the same time, unpleasant questions about the role they play. *“Should museums deal with*

*controversial stories? Could they do so without entering into troubled, contemporary social and political relations? Could they do so without taking the side of one or the other? And how appropriate is the museum as a means of dealing with a dispute, raising or addressing questions?”*[13].

## 2 The sites of memory in Greece

In Greece, modern history had not been a subject of a museum narrative for a long time. History museums and especially the difficult cultural heritage of contemporary historical events have not been the focus of systematic research and evaluation by historians and museologists. However, there is a shift towards new quests, a shift in the “classic” History Museum [16]. Undoubtedly, the events of the 1940s, and especially of the Greek Civil War, are part of the country’s difficult cultural heritage, the study of which was avoided for decades or only certain fragmentary events of that period were showed, the most glorious and less *shameful* ones. Those are events that do not cause ruptures in the cohesion of society.

A case in point is that the first Conference exclusively dedicated to the Civil War was held in Copenhagen in 1984, with the programmatic statement being that the historical analysis of the Civil War could contribute to the reconciliation that was attempted at that decade in Greece [17]. However, it would take more than ten years to include the issue of the Civil War in a conference in Greece; the year was 1995 [12]. Therefore, it took about half a century after the end of the Civil War to open the case...

The first attempt was the Conference “Greece 1936-1949, ‘30 - Occupation - Civil War: Continuities and Discontinuities”, which was held in Athens, in 1995 [12]. Whilst the first Law “On the recognition of the National Resistance of the Greek people against the troops of the Occupation 1941-1944” was passed in 1982, marking a turning point for the social reality of that time. Seventeen years later, the Law on “Museum display and Archives of the National Resistance 1941-1944” was passed. That Law provided for the issuance of a Presidential Decree that would regulate everything related to the protection of this heritage. Ultimately, that Presidential Decree was never published despite the debate and intense interest from all sides.

In view of that debate on the Occupation, Resistance, Civil War and exiles, a discussion opened up in the country regarding the role of museums and their dynamic in a society that was experiencing rapid changes. *Museums* and *memory* are some of the topics that sparked discussions amongst specialists, and which continue to this day [16]. In recent years in our country, important steps have been taken not only for the study and protection of the traumatic past but also for its promotion since the need for its *management* coincides with the ever-increasing interest of the public, and the flourishing of a new type of tourism from 1990 onwards, the so-called *dark tourism*<sup>49</sup>[6].

### 2.1 Where to focus

This article will present a proposal for the reform and promotion, through a muse-

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<sup>49</sup> *Dark tourism* is defined as visiting sites of historical tragedy or violence and oppression, such as prisons, concentration camps, battlefields and settings of executions

ological proposal, of one of the most emblematic places of detention of political prisoners, the Prison of Aegina. In recent years, the reuse of old monuments in Greece is frequent to the extent that one considers it as a natural and self-evident act without the need for particular concern [18]. The Aegina Prison is a special case since it was built under the rule of Ioannis Kapodistrias to house the orphans of the Revolution and do a virtuous and charitable deed. But very soon these plans were overturned, the uses of the building were many and different in terms of their content. But the one having a profound effect on that memory site was its use as a Prison.

The Aegina Prison operated as a repressive measure mostly against political and secondarily criminal prisoners for over a century! Dozens of souls were detained, tortured and executed in this total institution. Its purpose was to ideologically reform those who were *dangerous* to the proper functioning of the state.

In this article, an attempt will be made to examine this palimpsest of positive and negative memories and multiple uses of the building that compose the history of the Prison of Aegina. Our museological proposal does not seek to eliminate any of the pre-existing uses of the building; on the contrary, it will equally highlight every aspect of its history. It is worth mentioning that even though the memory lands seem still and observable, each era presents them in a different light depending on the respective purpose [4].

The reason why we chose the specific site and the theme of the proposed Museum is, on the one hand, the historical importance of this memory site, and that, on the other hand, after thorough research on the museum mapping of the country, it was found that there is neither a museum focusing on the threefold Occupation-Resistance-Civil War nor a museum housed in former prisons for political prisoners. An important incentive has been the growing research interest recorded in recent years in sites of detention and exile, in repressive policies but also social and ethnic conflicts [19].

The institution of displacement and internment based on the political beliefs of the citizens was a difficult subject to investigate. Until recently, in Greece, the only ones who dared to address it were the exiles themselves and their remaining associations creating some small thematic museums. However, there is a recent dimension to the studies regarding the prisoners and exiles. These studies in the new context of internationalized research have highlighted privileged areas for discussion, such as confinement, discipline, the techniques of subjection and the reaction to them [20].

## **2.2 The protection of residential complexes and buildings**

Regarding the city of Aegina and its protection it was declared a site that needs special protection by the Ministry of Culture, in 1965. In 1977, a Presidential Decree determines special building codes and restrictions and recognizes the traditional way of settlement. This Decree is considered sufficient in terms of quality. However, it does not take into account some peculiarities of the architecture of the settlement, whilst the plot ratio is considered particularly high.

Thus, the city of Aegina is declared a traditional settlement under the new Constitution, in 1978. The decree includes building codes and restrictions but also some general construction principles for these settlements [21].

### 3 Kapodistrias and the Orphanage

Shortly after the arrival of Ioannis Kapodistrias on Aegina, the first capital of the free Greek state, the so-called “*Kapodistrian*” buildings were constructed. One of them was intended to house Greek orphans. Its construction began in October 1828 and was completed in June 1829. That was the first modern Greek public building to be constructed on the island shortly after his arrival because the war had left many children orphaned and unprotected and the Government considered it its duty to take care of, protect and educate them.

The boarders in addition to housing, food and clothing learned reading and writing, music and practical arts, during which lesson students were trained in various technical professions. Thus, apart from the first school, also the first Technical School in Greece operated in the Orphanage. The Orphanage building also included an Experimental School, from which teachers would graduate for mutual instruction (monitorial system). At that time, one would encounter the following [22]:

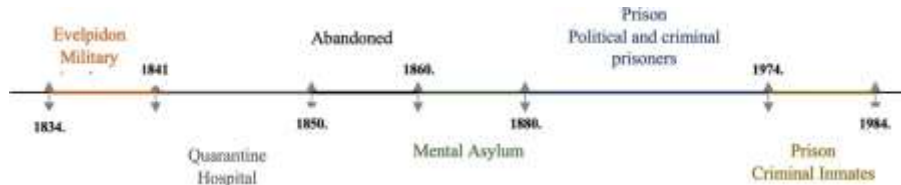
- Mutual instruction school
- Workshops for the orphanages (vocational workshops)
- The first National Library
- The first Archaeological Museum
- The first Minerals and Geological Collection
- The first National Printing House
- School of Byzantine and European Music

It is worth commenting on the founding of the first Archaeological Museum in the country. The new state, recognizing from its first steps the importance of saving ancient heritage, creates the first museum of the Greek state, in 1829, in the Orphanage of Aegina. The Museum is co-located with the Central School, the Library and the National Printing House [23], which means that the Orphanage, in view of the parallel actions that were held in its premises, became the first cultural centre in Greece.

After the assassination of Kapodistrias, the institution followed a decline and when the capital was transferred to Athens, it was deserted. After 1834, the building was consecutively used to cover various ad hoc needs. So, during that time, we can find the “*Evelpidon*” Military Academy, a quarantine hospital and a mental asylum (Fig. 1).

More specifically [24]:

- 1834 - Evelpidon Military Academy
- 1841 - Quarantine Hospital
- 1854 - 1860 the building was left to go to ruin until it reopened
- 1860 - Mental Asylum
- It was then abandoned to its fate until the end of the 19th century when it was repaired and transformed into a Prison.



**Fig. 1.** Chronological use of Kapodistrias' building. Author.

The establishment of the Prison marks a structured organized state; there is now a power of reform. From 1880 until 1984, it operated as a Prison.<sup>50</sup> Whilst since 1974 the prison was used only for criminal inmates. That change is not coincidental since, in the same year, we have the first Government of the Metapolitefsi, i.e., Regime Change, the legalization of the Left, and consequently the cessation of persecutions [22].

### 3.1 The architecture of the building

The Orphanage was a huge structure compared to the respective buildings of that time. It was a vast rectangular building with a paved courtyard in the middle. Its construction provided jobs for many deprived people on the island and refugees. Much of the building material came from the foundations of the temple of Aphrodite, at the site of Kolona, an act of which Kapodistrias was later strongly accused.

The Orphanage was designed by Theodoros Vallianos. The building was described for its time as a “*brilliant construction*”. Even though it was named *Orphanage* and remained with that name, the building was not used exclusively to house the war orphans [25,26].

Unfortunately, there are not many surviving plans of the building from its various phases, but neither are descriptions of architectural content through which we could assume its original form nor plans of the Prison with the necessary additions made. The additions were made gradually, without any complete proposal to convert the building from one use to another. Because of its structure, it was suitable for a prison. Without the need for additional renovation costs, insofar as the inmates should not have had increased needs [27].

At first sight, though, what impresses most is the size of the building. Its façade is one hundred and thirty-four meters, while the side wings are eighty-two meters long. The main gate is located in the middle of the façade and leads to the courtyard. Most of the windows have been bottom-half bricked up to serve the needs of the Prison.

Entering from the main gate we are in a corridor amongst newer structures. There the Prison Administration, the kitchen and other services were. The Prison courtyard was divided into five rays with autonomous yards, either by walls or buildings. The cells were located mainly in the wards of the original building, while inside there were services, auxiliary spaces but also some cells. All cells gave onto the courtyard but they did not communicate with each other. Finally, in the axis of the main gate, there is the

<sup>50</sup> The first twelve prisoners arrived in 1880 and the last one hundred and eighty left in 1985.

church, which was part of the original complex [25].

### 3.2 The dispute over the interventions in the Orphanage-Prison & The Diachronic Museum

In 1985, the Maximum-Security Prison of Aegina closed down. In the same year, the Ministry of Culture declared the building of the Orphanage a protected monument, but only the Kapodistrian building in the part of the large rectangular building and the temple, while the declaration did not include the later buildings of the Prison. Eleven years later, in 1996, the building programme for the creation of a *Diachronic Museum* in the existing building was submitted to the Central Archaeological Council (KAS). The programme provided a study for the restoration and use of the complex as a *Diachronic Museum*, which proposed the elimination of the Prison building [28].

During the museum preparatory study, all preliminary steps were taken to ensure the right choices for the extent and the way of intervention in the building and the way of integrating the museum uses in it. In addition to the building survey, test sections were made to assess the condition of the structures that were under preservation. So, after the abovementioned actions, it was found that the subsequent transverse section was in a very bad building condition, therefore it could not accommodate the exhibits of the temple of Aphaia, as was originally planned.

Hence, it was deemed necessary to disassemble the entire subsequent structure, to build a new one in its place with an addition in order for the sculptures of the temple of Aphaia to be housed there. At the same time, in that way, certain elements from the time of the Prison would be highlighted, such as solitary confinement cells, wall sections, outdoor basins, outposts, etc. However, when that preliminary study was brought to the attention of the KAS in September 1996, disagreements arose and shifts in opinion took place amongst the members of the Council who expressed completely opposite views.

Some members argued that the proposals of the preliminary study degrade the building as a monument since its value was due to its typology, which was based on standards of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, quarantine hospitals or orphanages. Moreover, they considered that all subsequent structures should be removed from the inner courtyard and for its typology to be preserved and restored, i.e. not only the shell but also the interior layout, even if that meant that the building could not be used as a museum. A second group of members disagreed arguing that the historical phases of the building should be mentioned equally. Finally, a third group was in favour of the preliminary study, i.e. it focused on serving the museum uses. In the end, the first view prevailed by a majority, i.e. to highlight the first phase of the building, the Kapodistrian phase [22].

The protest storm in almost the entire press: “*They tear down the prison of Aris*” (*Eleftherotopia* newspaper, 05/09/96), “*They tear down 150 years of memories*” (*Ethnos tis Kiriakis* newspaper, 29/06/96), “*Demolition of history*” (*Avgi* newspaper, 06/09/96) titles of fiery articles that strongly expressed the view of public opinion against the consultation of the KAS. Thus, the demolition of the building complex was avoided mainly thanks to the reactions of the militants who had suffered internment in the purgatory of Aegina.

When the situation was diffused, an attempt was made to find a mutually ac-

ceptable solution. In January 1997, the Directorate of Conduction of Technical Works in Museums of the Ministry of Culture submitted a second study, in which the history of the Prison was further examined and it was concluded that the programme of the Diachronic Museum should include an annexe dedicated to the Prison. Within this framework, it was proposed to preserve the main architectural relics of that period, such as the “Pitharhio” (*Guardhouse*) as a place of torture of prisoners; the “Golgothas” (*Calvary*) as a place where those condemned to death were kept before execution; the “Episkeptirio” (*Visitation Room*) where methods of humiliation were implemented to the detainees in front of relatives and friends; the “kelia Apomonosis” (*Solitary Confinement cells*); the “kelifos tou Anarotiriou” (*Infirmery Shell*) with the original inscription; part of the prison for political prisoners; the metal entrance control cage and the metal doors. The same applies to the dividing wall of the Rays D’ and E’, which forms the corridor between the Rays and the shell of the transverse building that is part of them, where it is planned to house the rooms of the Archaeological and Byzantine Museum. From the structures that will be disassembled, the traces from the wall bases are to be preserved, as well as the floors as elements of memory, whilst some interior buildings, such as the kitchen and the laundry rooms were demolished [28]. These areas were selected with the input of testimonies by people who were incarcerated in the Prison as political prisoners.

The new proposal, in the form of a preliminary museological study, was approved by the KAS in January 1997 by a majority of eight to five and was welcomed by the whole press.

As a diachronic museum, it was envisaged to include the following areas:

- Exhibition sites
- Refreshment room
- Cultural events venue
- Temporary exhibitions hall
- Archaeological conservation laboratory for findings, etc.

For several years now, the works have been stopped under the pretext of the lack of funding of the Ministry of Culture. The sad thing is that the building is not guarded by any government agency, resulting in the entry of passers-by since the violation of the site is feasible.

Moreover, in addition to the significant restoration work, there was also the preservation of the Prison relics. During the conservation work by the Directorate of Conservation of Ancient and Modern Monuments (DCAMM), carvings were found by groping around this so recent history point by point! That first conservation work took place in Solitary Confinement [29]. In two layers dozens of carvings and graffiti, often whole stories, written with charcoal on the wall, a collage with photos, two pigeons, a clock, a diary, a hammer and sickle, all with signatures and dates. Despair on the Confinement walls but also hope: “this too shall pass”. The exact same carved inscription was revealed by the team of the Directorate of Conservation at the Gestapo detention centre on Korai Street, in Athens. The rooms are narrow and dark, except for one, which is exactly twice the size. In that room, they tore down the middle wall when they transported A. Panagoulis there in order to look less like a hell to the journalists who asked to see him [28].

The conservators gradually revealed the inscriptions and then fastened them for posterity since the Solitary Confinement will be maintained as it is, and will be accessible to visitors. According to the study, for the protection of all these findings, the entrance of the visitors should be done with a controlled flow. In the buildings that will be preserved for the exhibition, the works to uncover the older layers on the walls were carried out in the same way. The findings were captured, photographed and taken from the wall for display in the Prison Museum. Today, because of the pause in restoration works, the walled sections that were removed are stacked under unsuitable conditions in the main building of the Directorate of Conservation of Ancient and Modern Monuments.

#### **4 The Museological Proposal**

Monuments and museums have always had a special connection; either because museums have long been housed in monuments or because the housing of a museum often led to the construction of monumental structures. The cases arising from the reuse of a museum in a historic building are the following: I) the repository and the contents are not related at all, ii) the shell and the exhibit have some potential to correlate and coexist, iii) the museums belong to this case based on which the housed exhibition is in a way a natural development of the initial use of the building [18,30].

The Aegina Orphanage-Prison is part of a network of historical sites that today remain unused and almost destroyed due to state indifference. It is not only the palimpsest of the memories of the building but also the palimpsest of the structures that compose it, the additions and the demolitions it suffered during the different phases of its history that require its conversion into a museum. The memory lands need to be restored to life in order for a living relationship to be built with historical memory. With the museumification of this place, we aim at the activation of memory and its integration in our daily life.

Within the framework of this authenticity of both the building and the history of its contents, we decided to highlight all the historical phases of the building, respecting the decision of the Central Archaeological Council and focusing on the Prison. This choice is not coincidental since the use of the building as a Prison was the longest one. The basic aim of the museological proposal is the conversion of the Aegina Orphanage- Prison into an accessible site of memory, education and culture that will express respect for the historical memory of the people who experienced internment on the sole occasion of their political beliefs. Our proposal does not seek to obscure any historical phase or degrade any other; the purpose of the Museum is to highlight all those memories that compose the palimpsest of memories and of the building. Our museological proposal does not seek to erase memories, alternate the country's history or romanticize tragic historical events.

The aim of the proposed Museum is to protect and preserve the objects of its collections, conduct scientific research and develop educational programmes. The Museum will be involved in a wide range of activities. Primarily to obtain, study, preserve and protect the objects of its collection and the building, as well as to provide access

to archives, books and other material evidence of historical value. Authentic Prison Documents – testimonies of survivors, trial documents, microfilms, photographs, photo negatives, studies, dissertations, works of art – creations of the detainees during their incarceration and material from inside the prison such as newspapers.

The potential benefits of information in digital form (access, flexibility, enhanced capabilities for analysis and manipulation) are profound. Nevertheless, selection for digitization is a complicated process integrated with the work of librarians and curators. Nowadays, numerous software is available for easy scanning, correcting and ameliorating of museology exhibits.

Expanding the frontiers of digitization, new GIS services can be used as to obtain interactive 3D objects. A multi-orientated camera could depict even the most discrete points on semisphere bounds. The camera speed is adjusted on the calculated path considering the projected complexity of the texture of the exhibit, by giving to the user the required time to observe the scene. Nowadays, ameliorated algorithms have been developed, that can automatically calculate the optimal camera trajectory around an 3D model, by considering both its semantic and geometric features (REF). Thus, a real time virtual tour into a three-dimensional scene could take place, offering a more enjoyable experience. Furthermore, via such programs, objects can be projected onto 2D scenes, enhancing a visitor's exploration and offering the chance of integrating learning components [31].

It is of interest to understand what does experience exactly means for the public. The emotions that one is filled with during a visit and the gains that one is finally acquiring when leaving the Museum. To understand how a museum exhibition is interpreted [32]. An effort will be made for the museological proposal to meet all those criteria that define a modern museum of our time.

The element that will differentiate this specific exhibition from the usual historical exhibitions is the lack of a permanent collection. In the Orphanage-Prison there is no warehouse of objects, there is no collection. However, within the framework of creating a modern Museum and research centre of that period, objects of former detainees of the Prison or of their relatives should be collected, something that will be done gradually.

To conclude, the proposal will include mild interventions in the site that will not alter it but will make clear its operation and its role as purgatory during the years of the Occupation, Resistance and Civil War. It will include signposting and organization of educational visits, raising awareness to the Greek and foreign public and of course introduction to the site. Certainly, it should be noted that the primary action is to conclude the preservation and restoration work of the building of the Aegina Orphanage-Prison.

#### **4.1 Route**

The aim of the study should be the organization of the exhibition sites in order for the incoming visitor to detach themselves from the modern environment of the island and to travel through time, experiencing the flow of events from the Occupation to the culmination of the Civil War. In an effort to connect the past with the present, the principle of memory activation will play a key role based on which the visitor will

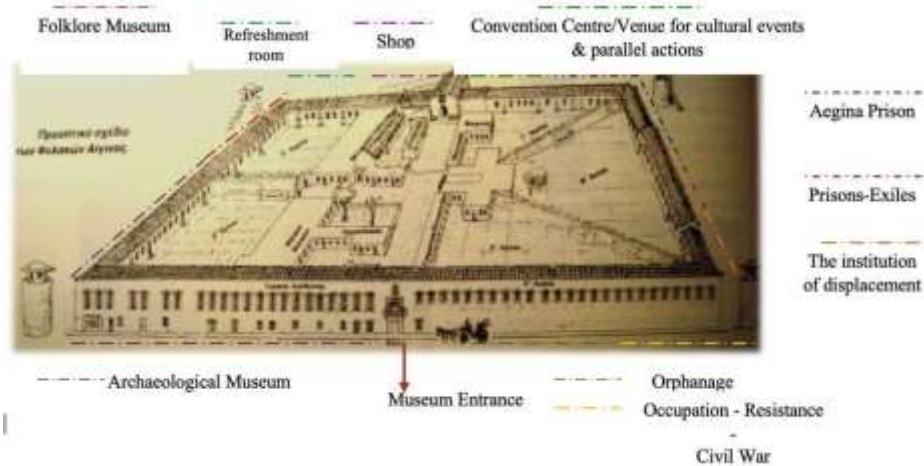
experience the place and the memories linked to it in a decisive way through the very experience of the visit.

Respecting the KAS decision, we would like to propose the Museum to be named as follows: *Diachronic Museum* since the building will house other museums as well, such as the Archaeological and the Folklore Museums. Then, the main memory route will be proposed which will journey through all areas of the Prison. Finally, we decided for the route to consist of five thematic axes. These thematic sections will highlight the palimpsest of the building, starting the narrative from the first operation of the building as an Orphanage and ending with the period of the Metapolitefsi and the conversion of the building into a Maximum-Security Prison for criminal inmates.

The sections of the Museum, as distributed in the halls of the building, are summarized as follows:

- The glorious period - The Kapodistrian Orphanage
- The decade of the 1940s - From Occupation to Civil War
- The institution of displacement in Greece
- Persecutions & internment - Martial Courts - Prisons - Exile
- A history of bloodshed - Aegina Prison

Below follows a plan with the exhibition sections and the site layout. Moreover, the areas of the shop and the refreshment room are proposed, as well as the areas of the Archaeological and Folklore Museums, thus implementing the decision of both the KAS and the permanent residents of the region (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** Museological route of Aegina prisons.

The following is a detailed illustration of the proposed route of the abovementioned sections (Fig. 3):

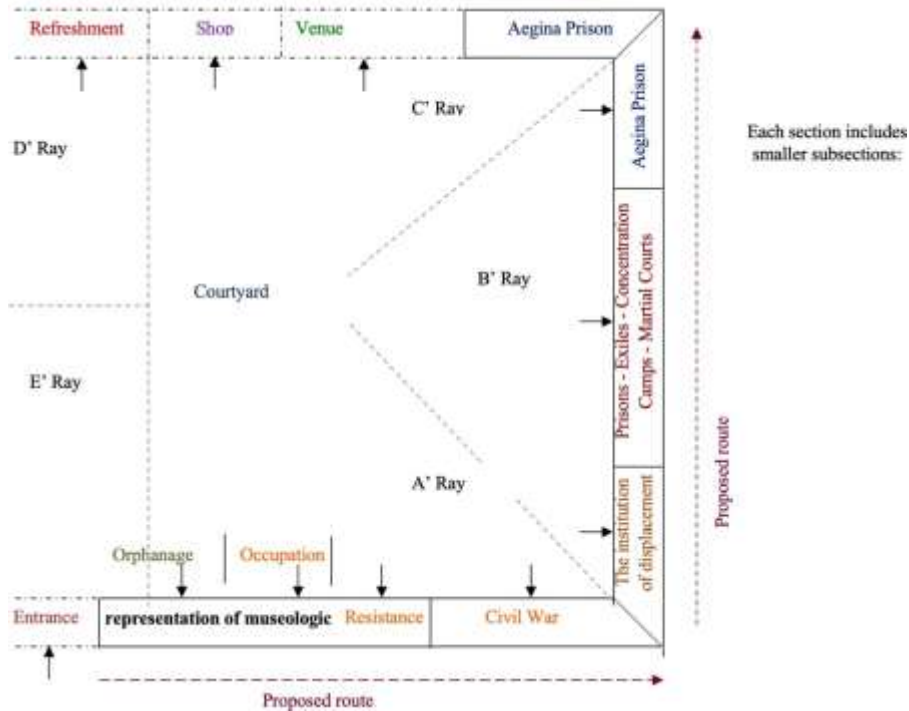


Fig. 3. Plan of the Museological route of Aegina prisons

***1<sup>st</sup> Thematic Section: The glorious period - The Kapodistrian Orphanage***

This section will be dedicated to the Orphanage of Ioannis Kapodistrias. Initially, general information will be given regarding the establishment of the new state, the time when Aegina became the county's capital and the arrival of Ioannis Kapodistrias on the island. Then, there will be information about the initiatives of Kapodistrias and the construction of the so-called Kapodistrian buildings of the island, influenced by the architectural trends of that time in Europe. In addition, there will be texts dedicated exclusively to the Orphanage informing the public about when exactly it was built, who its architects were and the reason why it was created – protection of the orphans of those fighting in the 1821 Revolution. There will be an extensive report of all the activities that took place in the Orphanage. Moreover, other innovative operations of the building will be mentioned, such as the first National Library, the first Archaeological Museum, the first Minerals and Geological Collection, the first National Printing House, the first National Conservatory with byzantine and European Music. At the end of this section, the date of the inglorious closure of the institution will be mentioned, as well as the subsequent temporary operations that took place in the Orphanage of Kapodistrias (Evelpidon Military Academy, Quarantine Hospital, Mental Asylum).

### ***2st Thematic Section: The decade of the 1940s - From Occupation to Civil War***

This section will be dedicated to the modern history of Greece and more specifically to the 1940s. The narrative of the events will start a little earlier than the dictatorship of August 4 as a simple reference so that the visitor can better understand the development of the subsequent events. This will be followed by the German Occupation and a reference on the resistance organizations that operated during that time. In the period after the liberation, there will be a detailed section dedicated to the December events. Then there will be a text that will analyze the period of White Terror and the origin of its name, whilst a mention will be made to the violence, persecutions and executions against militants that had taken part in the Resistance and had joined Resistance Organizations by state and parastatal mechanisms. A reference will be made to the Civil War, from its beginning to its end. Hidden aspects of the War will be revealed in an attempt to cast light on those dark parts that have faded into oblivion for decades. There will be an attempt to tear down those stereotypes that have been created for that period and the distorted perceptions that have been well-established over the years. At the end of this section, there will be a special mention to women and the struggles they have conducted during that period. The struggle of women will be specially promoted since the stance they held was impressive. We are talking about a time when women in their majority had not become independent yet, did not leave their homes and were either engaged in agricultural work and livestock farming or were running the household. Nevertheless, some women found the courage to fight in the mountains, defying danger and resisting the occupier; they stood trial, were imprisoned, exiled raising their children whilst displaced, and executed [33].

### ***3rd Thematic Section: The institution of displacement in Greece***

This section will be short and will present the most notable Legislation and Decrees that enacted the displacement or internment of those deemed “*dangerous*” to the state. These references will be combined with the chronological periods of the previous section for the visitor to combine each Law with the corresponding period and to understand for what it was intended. Finally, there will be the general numbers of the people that were displaced, interned, persecuted and executed, and the number of the people that died as a result of hardship and diseases in the prisons and exiles.

### ***4st Thematic Section: Persecutions & internment - Prisons - Exile***

This section will present the most emblematic sites of exile and internment<sup>51</sup> as well as the disciplinary camps that were established at the beginning of the Civil War. The portrayed sites will be connected with the historical events of that time for the public to understand the reasons why the sites of displacement were gradually increased. Moreover, a reference will be made to the Martial Courts of that period, which determined the lives of thousands of militants and fighters (the court in Thessaly, in Tripoli, etc.). Here, the public will be informed about the conditions of detention and living, the physical and psychological torture that took place in these places, the rampant diseases that afflicted the prisoners. On the other hand, a special mention will

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<sup>51</sup> Akronafplia, Corfu, Yedi Kule, Chaidari, Trikeri, Makronisos, Ai Stratis, Chios, etc.

be made to the camaraderie and solidarity that the prisoners showed for to be perceived how that respect and mutual support had many times played a crucial role in the *unwavering stance* of the detainees. The relations between the prisoners and the resident population will be mentioned but also the relations between the political and the criminal prisoners, revealing the state expediencies to enmesh them in the same places of detention. Moreover, the visitors will be informed about the “Omades Diaviosis” (*Groups on the Living Conditions*) and how they contributed to the organization of the daily life of the prisoners. There will be also a reference to the repressive measures on the part of the state in the places of exile and imprisonment and of course the measure of the *declaration of repentance* and how they extracted it. Finally, the visitors will be also informed about the bright side of those sites and the measures adopted by the prisoners for their ideological and political education, the fight against illiteracy and the organization of higher education lessons (foreign languages, accounting, mathematics, literature, etc.). At the same time, they will learn about the cultural events that were held (choirs, theatrical pieces, poetry and literature evenings, etc.). The message that should permeate the visitor is that those people, even under those circumstances, found the strength to look for a way out to culture, they were experimenting, they were creating. The bright side of the displacement will end with the illegal press in the exile by portraying the most remarkable examples, the main topics presented and sketches.

#### ***5st Thematic Section: A history of bloodshed - Aegina Prison***

In this section, we will examine the case of the Aegina Prison starting from its opening and the first detainees – marking an organized state – until its permanent closure. Here, the narrative permeates all previous sections but this time focusing exclusively on the environment of the Aegina Prison. A reference will be made to the most important personalities per period who were interned in the Prison cells, and their *crime* (Antipas, Ambatielos, Velouchiotis, Mpelogiannis, Sarafis, Glezos, Panagoulis et al.). In addition, a special mention will be made to the mass executions of the political prisoners and the way with which their transfer was taken place to other parts of the island but also Athens. In view of the executions, there will be a link to Aghia Irini and Tourlos, places of execution on the island. In addition, a specific date should be set to hold a ceremony to those sites and to render honour to the executed detainees of the Prison. Moreover, a monument to the fallen, in addition to a votive tablet, is considered necessary to be placed on site.<sup>52</sup> The votive tablet will state the names of the prisoners that were executed or that died of natural causes in the Aegina Prison, their date of death, their age and their place of origin. It would be reasonable to connect the site with other martyred places, to transform it into a research centre of that period. Returning to the Prison site, it is proposed to highlight the buildings that were preserved by the KAS decision with the corresponding information signboards and markings, as well as those that were demolished so that the visitor can recreate a complete picture of the Prison.

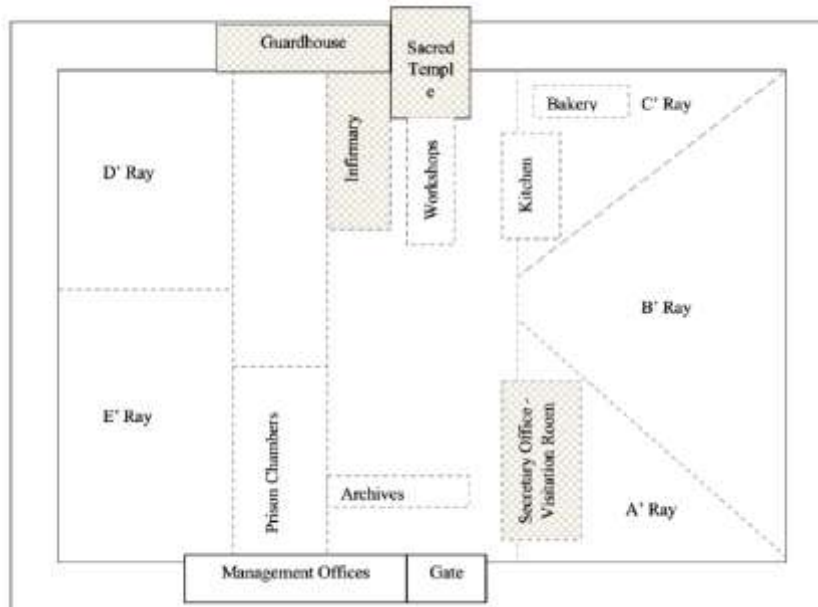
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<sup>52</sup> In the summer of 2003, in the cemetery of Aegina, the unveiling of a monument took place, which included the names of the executed fighters of the National Resistance engraved on four plaques. In the same monument, a sculpture by the artist Giannis Klinakis, assistant and collaborator of Christos Kapralos, symbolizes two bereaved mothers.

Moreover, the cell of Al. Panagoulis should be highlighted, which by decision was deemed preservable and was conserved by the DCAMM. In that cell, it is proposed to add again into the wall the fragments of the graffiti with the prisoners' messages that had been taken off. Lastly, this section will close with the presentation of the subsequent history of the Prison in the years of the Metapolitefsi, the legalization of the Left and the end of persecutions based on political beliefs, and its conversion into Maximum-Security Prison for criminal prisoners. The messages of the political prisoners that were revealed and then destroyed or covered up again during the restoration can also be reproduced in this section.

In all thematic sections, there will be entrances/exits so that each visitor can go to the section they desire or even go to the shop or the refreshment room of the Museum. These entrances/exits will lead to the courtyard of the Museum, the old courtyard of the Prison. Each entrance will have a respective sign informing about its content. It is suggested that each section is designated by a different colour, e.g. in the texts or the entrance/exit signs so that each one is distinct and can be perceived by the public. Moreover, information signboards will be placed on every entrance notifying about the use of each building section during the period that was operating as a Prison.

The last hall, at the end of the section *Aegina Prison* needs to remain a site of historical memory. There, the right combination of aesthetic interventions and exhibits will offer the visitor an emotionally charged experience. The hall will be divided into two sections: a) the screening area, where a newsreel will be shown and b) the memory area, where there will be an exhibition of archival material, lists of those executed in the Aegina Prison, parts of the Prison Archive with the names of political prisoners per period, photos from the turbulent 1940s and especially from places of exile and prisons, etc. Thus, an astounding mosaic will be created that will recreate and personify that period.



**Fig 4:** The Ground Plan of the Prison - The areas with section lining have been kept intact following the KAS decision.

## 5 Conclusion

The Diachronic Museum of Aegina as a case study was an interesting choice. Although the Museum appertains to a difficult period of the modern history of Greece, it will contribute to the materialization of something that would otherwise be a controversial view! The aim of the proposed Museum is to study objectively a period of the modern history of Greece, the 1940s, which still divides society since it is not a distant past and the memories are still fresh.

Our vision is an outward institution that will examine the events in an objective and lucid manner and will be based on both the personal testimonies of the people that experienced internment and the material evidence. A model institution, which in the future will become a modern centre for the study of issues on the difficult heritage of the country for Greek and foreign researchers. A cultural centre at the heart of Aegina, with a variety of actions and activities that will attract the permanent residents and the visitors of the island.

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