

## The History of CIAV

### *The foundation and the first two decades of activity*

The International Committee on Vernacular Architecture (Comité International d'Architecture Vernaculaire – CIAV) was founded in 1976, the Executive Committee of ICOMOS thus accepting the requirement for the creation of an international specialised committee expressed by the resolution of the 1975 International Conference for the Conservation of Vernacular Architecture, held in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The CIAV started working in 1977, the permanent seat being installed in Plovdiv. As the founding President Rachele Anguelova, Bulgaria, made a significant contribution to the successful work of the committee, assisted by George Deltchev as Administrative Secretary. In November 1977 the Executive Committee confirmed the 12 permanent members, completed by 10 associate members following the recommendations of the national committees. The permanent (and founding) members came from Bulgaria, USSR, Switzerland, Finland, CSSR, Belgium, UK, Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary, Turkey and Spain, the associate members from Austria, Denmark, France, the Federal and the Democratic Republic of Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Sweden, Canada and Australia.

The regular annual sessions of the committee have been held in different places and countries: 1977, 1978, 1979, 1985, 1989 in Plovdiv, 1980 in Smoljan, 1981 in Lovetch, 1984 in Sandanski and Melnik – all in Bulgaria, 1982 in Istanbul and Izmir, 1986 in Istanbul and Ankara – Turkey, 1983 in Helsinki and Seinäjoki, Finland, 1987 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 1988 in Petrosavodsk, Karelia, Soviet Union, 1990 in Austria and Switzerland, 1992 in Brauweiler, Germany and 1994 in Sardegna, Italy. There is no doubt that the activities of CIAV would not have been as successful without the very important financial support given by the Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS and the Bulgarian Government until 1992 – for the permanent seat in Plovdiv with administration, secretary and library (founded by the contributions of all the committee members), for the travel expenses of the President and the organisation of seven regular sessions in Bulgaria (including the subsistence expenses for the permanent members). At the same time the regular budget of the Executive Committee of ICOMOS was essentially eased by this indirect contribution made by Bulgaria. It should be mentioned that all the other sessions have been organised and financed by the ICOMOS national committees of the hosting countries.

Besides these sessions, usually combined with scientific colloquiums or conferences, the committee members attended several national or international conferences on topics not necessarily related to vernacular problems (e.g. 1979 in Plovdiv on preservation methods for historic cities, in 1981 in Sofia on the preservation of the cultural heritage of Bulgaria) or made an active contribution to international events, like the symposium on "Vernacular Architecture on the Islands of the Aegean Sea" in 1981 on the island of Santorini, organised by the Technical University of Saloniki and the IBI under the auspices of the Greek Minister of Culture. (Almost 20 years later the restructured CIAV returned to Santorini for the annual meeting 2000.) From

the very beginning among the CIAV activities special attention has been given to an active cooperation with other international scientific organisations inside and also outside ICOMOS: The first joint annual conference of CIAV with the Wood Committee of ICOMOS took place in 1980 in Switzerland, followed in 1983 after the annual session in Finland by a visit of CIAV members to the colleagues of the Wood committee in Norway. In this way active contacts have been established between the two specialised committees, a very remarkable fact considering that wood is the most important building material for both committees. As a consequence the international conference on "Conservation of Wooden Vernacular Architecture", organised by the USSR ICOMOS National Committee in 1988 in Petrozavodsk, Karelia, was at the same time the joint annual session for both committees. One of the main subjects was the preservation philosophy for the "Kishi Pogost", an ensemble of two wooden churches, bell tower and surrounding fence (18th century) in bad condition due to wood alteration and structural problems and on the World Heritage List of UNESCO since 1990.

Contacts to other scientific organisations followed, some of the CIAV delegates working as link members to ICOMOS ISCs, such as Cultural Tourism or Historic Towns and Villages, but also to ICOM, the European Association of Open-Air Museums, ICCROM and the Council of Europe, Cultural Heritage Division. Together with the Committee on Historic Towns the CIAV organised a joint session in Plovdiv, Bulgaria in 1989 under the main topic "Historic Towns and Rural Vernacular Sites and the Process of Urbanisation". Focussing on the rapid ongoing changes within contemporary life and society and within the architectural heritage, the final resolution of the session pointed out on the one hand the necessity to sensitise and involve the communities in the recognition, maintenance and continuance of their cultural values. On the other hand it includes a clearly formulated demand to reorganise, restructure and improve the work of the two committees, studying new methods of assessment, conservation strategies and policies, to establish an international multidisciplinary network including specialists in sociology, ecology, economy, ethnography, town and landscape planning, to coordinate regional and local initiatives, to participate in development projects and to organise educational and training programmes.

In connection with these ideas and tasks the international project "Regional Architecture and Cultural Development in Europe" was drafted by M. Laenen, at that time Secretary General of the CIAV and O. Sevan from the Research Institute for Culture in Moscow. It considered the regional character of vernacular architecture, the preservation and development problems of the historical milieu of cities and villages in contemporary society and the formation of contemporary regional architecture in the context of regional culture in Europe. Presented at the international conference on "Historic Towns and Villages and the Process of Urbanisation", organised by the Union of Architects of the USSR and the Research Institute for Culture in Moscow during a cruise on the Volga river in June 1990, the project was discussed and recommended towards implementation to the

ClAV, which adopted it during the annual meeting in autumn 1990 in Austria and Switzerland. For the implementation of the project an organisation committee was formed, which met in Belgium in March 1991 and adopted an agenda for the future work – international colloquiums on three main topics: conservation *in situ* – open-air museums – new vernacular architecture. The active contribution of the ClAV to the Skansen Centenary organised by the European Association of Open-Air Museums and the Skansen Museum in September 1991 was part of the project implementation.

The conservation *in situ* as part of the project was the main topic of the international conference on "Preservation of the Rural Heritage. Cultural Landscape and Sites in Europe", organised by the ClAV (annual session) and hosted by the German National Committee of ICOMOS in May 1992 at Brauweiler Abbey, Germany in cooperation with the Council of Europe. Part of the Brauweiler conference was a joint session of the ClAV and the group of specialists on "Heritage Landscape and Sites", created in 1991 by the Cultural Heritage Department of the Council of Europe. As a result of the Brauweiler conference the Council of Europe in cooperation with ICCROM, ClAV and different European Universities succeeded in organising a pilot training course on multidisciplinary conservation management for cultural landscape areas, held in November 1993 at the University of Applied Sciences in Cologne, Germany. (Unfortunately an international colloquium on the third main topic – new vernacular architecture – is still missing).

All these ideas, discussions, meetings and projects are in fact the result of the continuous scientific work of the committee members with an agenda including primarily the definition of "vernacular architecture", a dictionary on special vernacular terminology in architecture, a "State of the Art" of vernacular architecture, later the "Charter on Vernacular Architecture" as well as scientific publications or public relations activities. In 1980 a questionnaire on the preservation and evaluation of vernacular architecture was sent to all European National Committees of ICOMOS, and the results were reported at the 7th General Assembly of ICOMOS in Rostock and Dresden in 1984. (Most of the ideas and recommendations included in that report anticipate those of the final resolution of the Plovdiv conference of 1989.) A more recent "State of the Art" worked out by M. Laenen was adopted by the ClAV at the annual session in 1990 in Switzerland. For the long way from the first draft for a "Charter of Vernacular Architecture" prepared by R. Anguelova and presented at the annual meeting in Bulgaria in 1984 up to the final version and the adoption of the "Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage" by the General Assembly of ICOMOS in Mexico in 1999 see the short contribution in this book by Kirsti Kovanen (see page 10).

Since the very beginning the ClAV has given special attention to the educational aspect of its activities – exhibitions, public relations, publications etc – to inform a larger public, especially the communities living in places of vernacular heritage, about the different aspects of preservation work. Most of the papers presented at the first colloquium on "Vernacular Architecture" in Plovdiv in 1976 were published in *Monumentum*, vols. XV-XVI, 1977. A special issue of the Romanian *Revista muzeelor si monumentelor* (Museum and monuments revue, No. 1, Bucharest 1979) was dedicated to the ClAV activities, with most of the committee members contributing with papers.

A first exhibition prepared by the ClAV (M. Gschwend, with H. Hiltbrand) on "Rural Architecture in Switzerland", sponsored

by the foundation Pro Helvetia, was shown in Romania in 1980 (Bucharest, Village Museum and Sibiu), in the same year in the open-air museum of Ballenberg, Switzerland and in 1981 in Sofia, Bulgaria. In exchange, in 1982 the exhibition "Romanian Rural Architecture", organised by G. Stoica, was presented in Zurich (Museum of Ethnology) and Ballenberg and in the year after it was included in the programme of the "Romanian-Romanche Weeks" of the Romanche League in Laax-Flims. Other smaller exhibitions accompanying different sessions or colloquiums followed.

Even if the efforts to publish the most important papers and results of all the ClAV sessions or meetings failed, at least the papers of the Brauweiler conference (1992) were published in 1993: *Historische Kulturlandschaften* (Historic Landscapes, = ICOMOS Journals of the German National Committee XI) and those presented during the international river cruise on the Volga in June 1990 were printed under the title *Historic Towns and Villages in the Process of Urbanisation*, Moscow 1994. Among the books prepared by different national and international scientific committees of ICOMOS, especially for presentation at the 10th General Assembly of ICOMOS in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the ClAV was also represented: *Vernacular Architecture*, Colombo 1993.

Thanks to the efforts made by N. Moutsopoulos (ClAV President between 1989 and 1995) and other committee members from the Balkan countries, UNESCO published the volume *L'architecture vernaculaire dans les Balkans* (Vernacular Architecture in the Balkans, No. 10 in the series *Etudes et documents sur le patrimoine culturel*, CLT-85/WS/48), including contributions on the Greek Popular House and on Vernacular Architecture in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania. In Winter 1992 the volume *Traditional Architecture of the Balkans* was edited by the Melissa Publishing House in Athens, Greece. (In the late 1990s the Melissa Publishing House continued to edit books on the vernacular architecture of the different Balkan countries.)

#### *The work of the committee after 1995*

Since its start the ClAV has achieved important results in the field of study and conservation of vernacular architecture, in collaboration with other ISCs of ICOMOS or other scientific organisations, trying at the same time to improve cooperation with national committees and to coopt specialists from outside ClAV or ICOMOS to the scientific work or to support the creation of national sub-committees on vernacular architecture (e.g. in Turkey).

Considering the results of all the scientific achievements, all the aims and tasks included in the resolution of Plovdiv 1989, the "State of the Art" of Vernacular Architecture adopted in 1990, the "Recommendations for the Conservation and Renovation of Vernacular Architecture" presented at the Brauweiler conference in 1992 or the different versions towards a final and generally accepted text for the "Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage", some committee and Bureau members of the ClAV became conscious of the main tasks for the future work and started to rewrite its content, the working methods, its international coordinating or cooperative task and to think about restructuring its composition in order to become a real worldwide operating committee.

As a consequence after the adoption of the Eger Principles for International Scientific Committees of ICOMOS by the Gener-

al Assembly in Colombo 1993 new statutes were worked out for CIAV in conformity with these principles. Adopted at the annual meeting of the committee in Sardegna, Italy in 1994 and confirmed by the Executive Committee in the same year, the statutes served as a model for a future restructuring of other ISCs. In recognition of the above mentioned contributions by the Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS and the Bulgarian Government to the activities of CIAV until 1992, Plovdiv has been confirmed as official seat of the committee in the new statutes, even if the effective administration work has been linked with the seat of the Secretary General (at the moment Kirsti Kovanen in Mikkeli, Finland) since 1992.

Based on the new CIAV statutes up to the end of 1994 36 national committees had already nominated voting members for the restructured committee and the constitutive meeting could take place in May 1995 thanks to the support given by the ICOMOS National Committee of Guatemala. A detailed plan for future activities of the committee worked out in close cooperation between the new members and the new Bureau of CIAV (elected by postal vote before the meeting) should be mentioned as one of the most important results of this meeting: The committee decided to start operating worldwide by moving from continent to continent with the annual meetings and scientific conferences, enlarging the cooperation with national and international conservation bodies, especially the ISCs, but also with specialists outside ICOMOS, trying to establish an international multidisciplinary network, at the same time continuously trying to increase the number of committee members (at the moment more than 70), to finalise the "Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage", producing a document accepted generally and worldwide, to pay even more attention to educational and public relations work, such as publications, exhibitions, training programmes, to prepare a "Vernacular Newsletter" and a homepage of the committee for internet etc.

Implementing the Guatemala decisions the following annual meetings took place in Jerusalem, Israel in 1996, in Bangkok, Thailand in 1997, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in 1998, in Morelia, Mexico in 1999 as part of the scientific conference during the 12th General Assembly of ICOMOS, and on the island of Santorini, Greece in 2000. The meeting 2001 was hosted by the Canadian National Committee of ICOMOS as part of the international scientific conference on conservation problems of 20th century vernacular architecture. Among these very well organised and successful meetings two are of special interest: At the Jerusalem meeting the committee members succeeded in finalising the doctrinal text for the Charter, prepared by a working group of CIAV members (from all continents) and Spanish specialists during a working session hosted by the Spanish Ministry of Culture in January 1996. For the first time the Bangkok meeting in May 1997 hosted by the Department of Fine Arts of the Thai Minister of Culture offered specialists from the Asian countries (even without ICOMOS committees) the possibility to discuss the topics related to the preservation of vernacular heritage. More than 120 participants from 24 countries contributed to the success of the meeting with very interesting papers, active discussions or poster presentations. The papers printed in the volume *Proceedings of the International Conference on Conservation and Revitalization of Vernacular Architecture and ICOMOS-CIAV Annual Meeting 1997* (Bangkok 1998) include a large number of contributions from CIAV members and also the final "Recommendations for the Preservation of the Vernacular Heritage" worked out by the Bureau of

the CIAV. Other scientific contributions and papers written by members of the committee can be found in the proceedings of the 11th General Assembly in Sofia as well as in those of the 12th General Assembly as part of the papers held at the scientific colloquium in Morelia. The contribution of some CIAV members to the *Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*, edited by Paul Oliver in 1998 (Cambridge University Press) should also be mentioned. Last but not least the present publication is the result of the committee's decision in Santo Domingo in 1998 to publish a book on traditional houses and housing worldwide.

One of the most important results of the committee's work is without any doubt the final version of the "Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage" in English, French and Spanish, adopted by the General Assembly of ICOMOS in Mexico 1999 and published (in English and French) in the first issue of *ICOMOS News* 2000. Besides the long history of preparation the text is a real document of the conservation philosophy of CIAV. Addressed directly to owners, communities but also to specialists, it deliberately avoids any definition of vernacular heritage – which may vary according to the specific cultural traditions in the different regions of the world. For this reason the elaboration of regional guidelines will be a very important task for the future work of the committee. The first step was made as a result of the Santorini meeting in 2000: "Guidelines for Tourism in Vernacular Settlements".

Nevertheless all the important achievements in the field of study and conservation of vernacular architecture or the development of preservation strategies are the result of the ongoing scientific work of the committee since its foundation. Starting from the traditional preservation strategies of conservation *in situ* or in open-air museums (in the first years quite a large number of committee members came from open-air museums) and faced with the rapid changes of contemporary life and society, the committee learned to enlarge its understanding of what vernacular is – from the single farmsteads and traditional village units to urban vernacular areas and settlements, to cultural landscape areas and the links between vernacular heritage and the geomorphological conditions of the landscape. Conscious of the fact that the vernacular is one of the most endangered parts of our heritage, new methods and conservation strategies and policies have been studied and worked out, trying to establish an international multidisciplinary network, to sensitise and involve the communities in the recognition, maintenance and continuance of their cultural values, to coordinate regional and local initiatives, to participate in development projects, such as new vernacular architecture and to organise educational and training programmes. Since 1993 committee members have been involved in international training programmes addressed both to specialists (Cologne, Germany 1993, Tbilissi, Georgia 1998) and administrative bodies (Guatemala 1996) and in teaching activities (architectural conservation courses at universities, ICCROM, post-graduate studies etc.). For a couple of years the CIAV has been much more involved in the evaluation process for nomination of the vernacular heritage to the World Heritage List of UNESCO.

At the moment the CIAV has more than 70 members, 60 of them being voting members, the others associate or coopted members. The committee is headed by Christoph Machat (Germany) as President, Blanca Nino (Guatemala) and Miles Lewis (Australia) as Vice Presidents and Kirsti Kovanen (Finland) as Secretary General.