

Santorini is a magical island,

its simplicity overpowering. Modesty of means and limited resources worked for it rather than against it. What made for such a unique place? The first attribute of a sense of place is the evident humaneness of the total townscape, the human scale. In the narrow alley-ways and meandering streets one cannot help coming across all sorts of unexpected social encounters. The close proximity of the little rounded houses promotes neighbourliness. Each family built its own house. There was no dividing line between builder and user, as is commonplace today.

The settlements blend into the overall landscape. This harmony with the natural setting is an enchanting quality of all littoral architecture on the island. It has taken many generations and a prolonged process of trial and error to reach this stage. Especially striking about the total visual effect of the settlements is the incessant presence of basic shapes and forms, the punctuating repetition that creates a comprehensive composition. Another positive aspect of these settlements is their flexibility and apparent open-endedness. Additions and improvisations are easily achieved within the social and physical constraints.

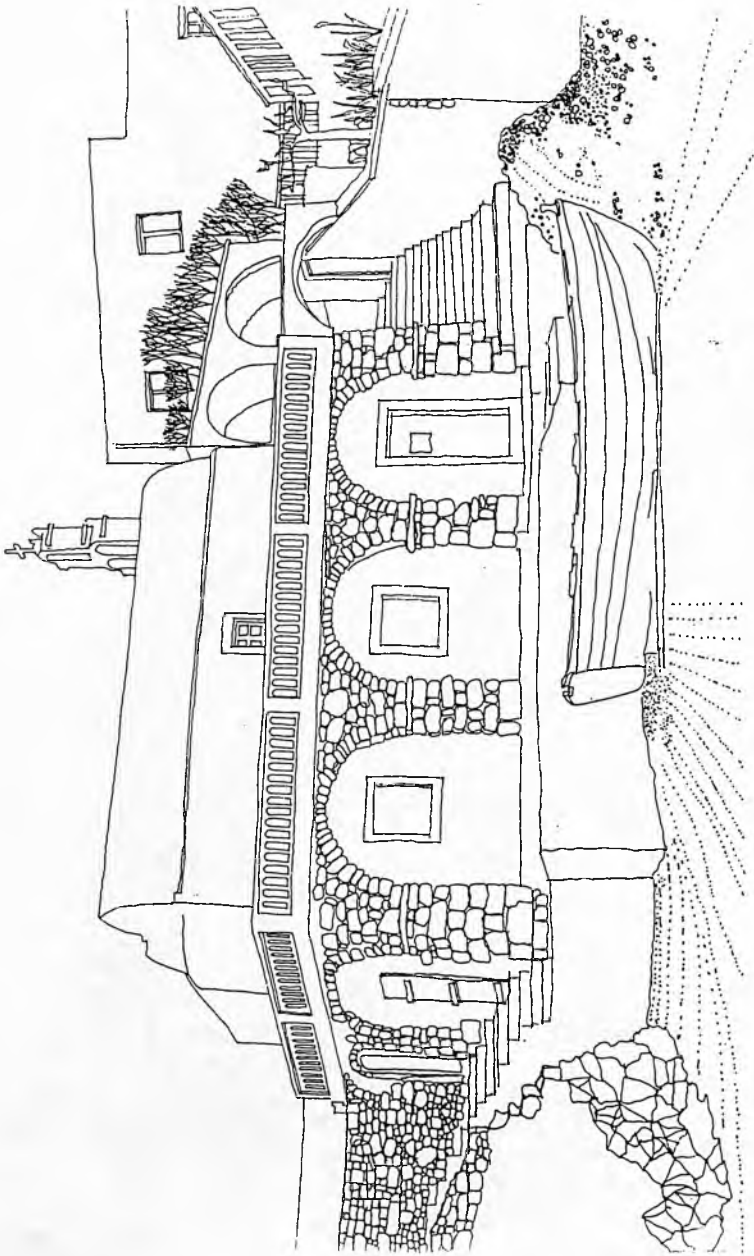
Finally — a blessing in disguise — the complete by-passing of the Industrial Revolution and its concomitant developments. It is ironic that the very beauty of the place is bringing about its destruction by the well-meaning tourists who spoil the very place they are there to admire.

Here astute Phoenicians decided to settle. Here the Greek language, written in the form of the Phoenician alphabet, was immortalised. Perhaps here, too, the imaginations of countless visitors from every corner of the earth, having glimpsed settlements as they ought to be — humane — were captivated.



Basil CONSTANTATOS

Santorini

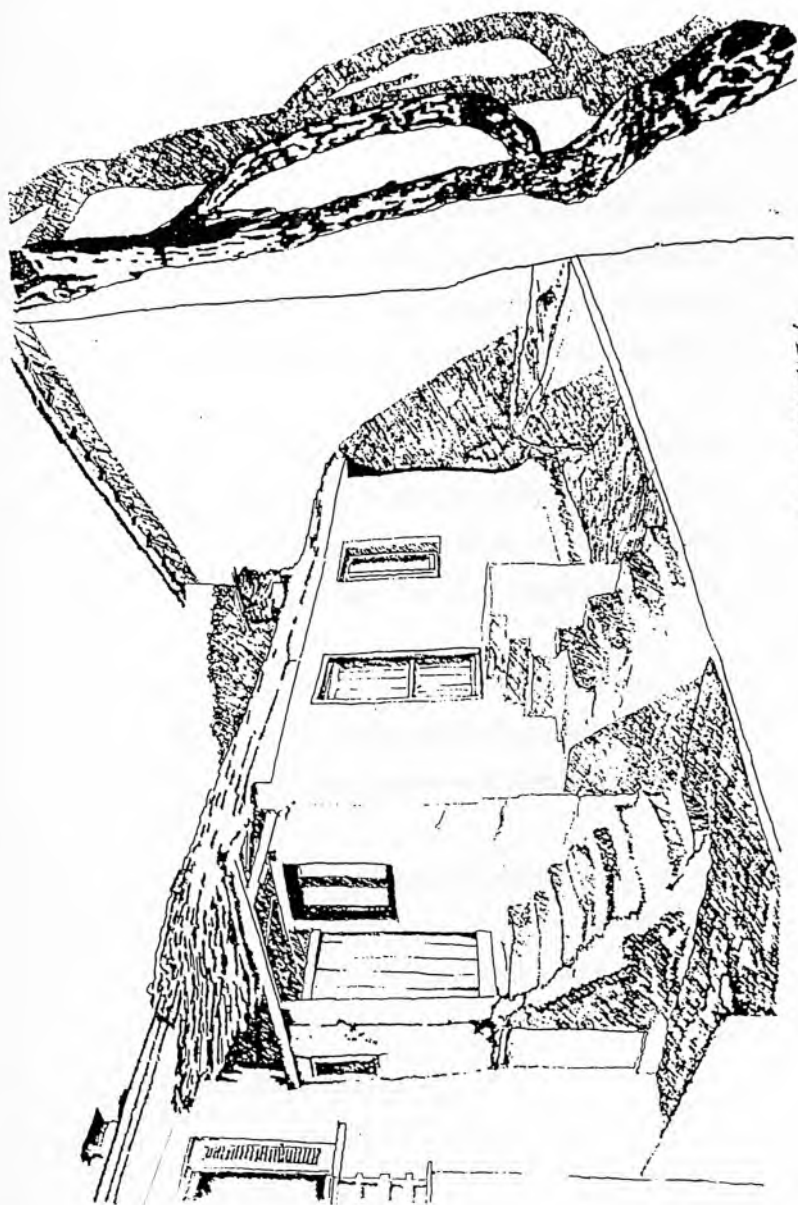


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HOUSE IN THASOS