

VISUALIZING THE PHYSICAL CHANGES IN THE HISTORIC TISSUE OF SAMOS VILLAGE BETWEEN 1889 AND 1931*

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INTRODUCTION

In the late 19th century, a new road was built over the centre of the village called Samos, which is located in the northwest of Spain, next to the monastery of San Julián de Samos. The idea of building a new road had its origin in a national plan for the improvement of the state road network¹, and particularly, it was made to connect Sarria and Pedrafita do Cebreiro, which are two well-known stops in the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela (Fig. 1). When the road arrived at Samos, the engineers decided to cross the village centre as well as an important area of the land that belonged to the former enclosed space of the monastery of San Julián de Samos². The following study aims to understand to what extent the village of Samos was changed due to the road. In other words, we try to recover the memory of a historic village that was partially erased due to a civil work of which an analysis is essential to understand the present urban plan.

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¹ That fact was recorded by the memory of the following project: AHPLu — *Carretera de 3.^{er} orden de Sarria a Pedrafita do Cebreiro...* 1889. Catalogue number: 32935/2, 1r.

² The only reference to the building of a new road in Samos in the existing bibliography was made by: ARIAS ARIAS, 1950: 405-406.

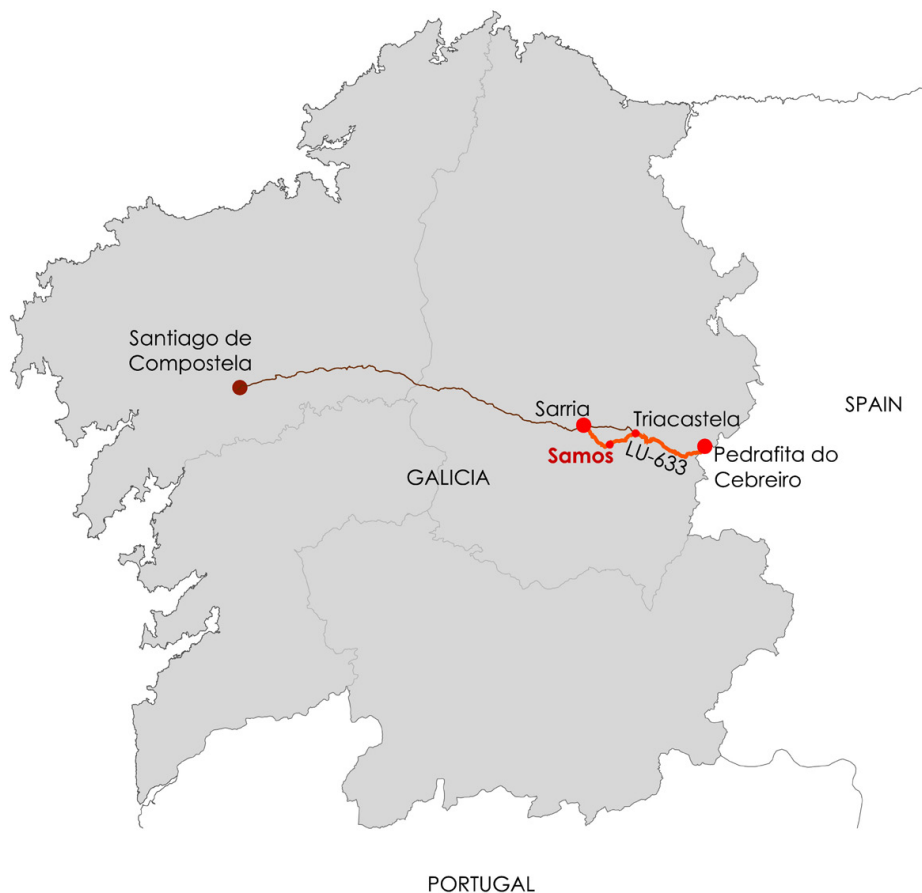


Fig. 1. Map of Galicia with the location of Samos, Pedrafita do Cebreiro, Triacastela and Sarria in the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. The new road between Sarria and Pedrafita do Cebreiro is highlighted in orange. Source: Author

THE FIRST PHASE: THE PROJECT AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE SECTION ROAD BETWEEN SARRIA AND SAMOS

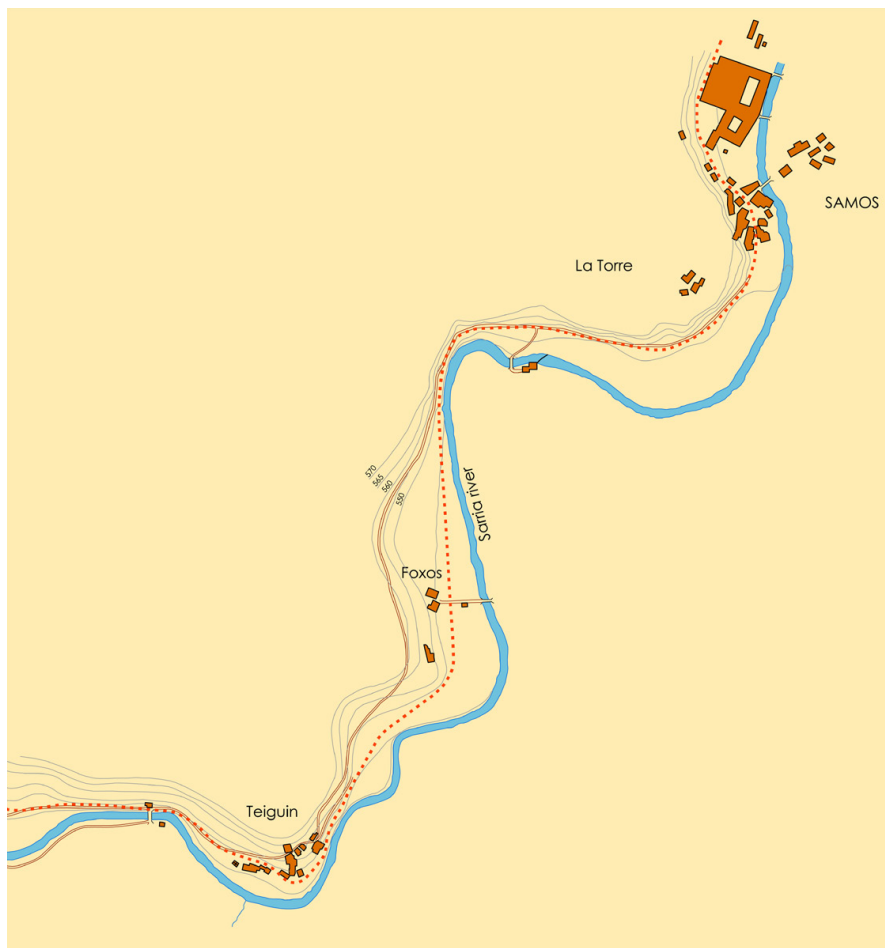
The great length of the new road compelled the engineers to divide it into several sections whose design and construction was undertaken in different phases. Each one of them was solved with an individual project. Among all of them, the most important ones for the present research are those that pass through Samos village. That is, the road section that goes from Sarria to Samos, and the other one that connects Samos and Triacastela.

The first dated project that is preserved of the road section between Sarria and Pedrafita del Cebreiro is from January 1889³. It was made by the civil engineer Godofredo Álvarez Cascos with the final target of designing the first section road that begins in Sarria village and ends in the east corner of the northern facade of the monastery of San Julián de Samos, after passing through the village with the same name.

³ AHPLu — *Carretera de 3.ª orden de Sarria a Pedrafita do Cebreiro...* 1889. Catalogue number: 32935/2. One previous project is extant at the present. However, it is undated: AHPLu — *Anteproyecto de la carretera de Sarria a Seoane por Samos*. Catalogue number: 32850/6.

In the memory of the project we find a detailed description of the general features of the territory that was necessary to cross, that is the lowest area of the valley where the Sarria River runs through⁴. In addition to this, each of the two road stretches in which this first road section was divided were described as well as some of the most important villages or towns that connects.

In particular, the engineer explained that the village called Samos, which is the capital of the municipality with the same name, was formed by seventy buildings when this project was made⁵. Fifty of these buildings were sketched in the large scale maps that accompanied the memory of the project. The other twenty ones were spread over a nearby area that was located at the other side of Sarria River, where the new road was not planned. As a result of that fact, these twenty buildings were drawn in the small scale maps of the project (Fig. 2).



Moreover, the engineer explained in the memory the reason for the construction of the new road through the centre of Samos village⁶. He based the decision on geographic and economic matters, although it seems that he did not realize the serious consequences that these works would cause in the historic tissue. In fact, in a second project he made in April 1890 to study individually the fragment of the road that crosses the village on request of the applicable law⁷, the same engineer pointed out that the location of Samos village between steep slopes and the river led to the construction of the new road through the village centre (Fig. 3). However, in this project he also recognized that some expropriations would be necessary, but he said that «nothing would be lost due to the road»⁸.



Fig. 3. Project of the road that passes through Samos village, scale 1:1,000, 1890. The new road is a red dashed line
Source: Drawing by the author from the original map, which is preserved at AHPLu

After the approval of the two above-referred projects, the process to carry out the expropriations of some rural and urban properties began. Firstly, the list of affected properties was done⁹. Each of them was assigned an identification number, followed by a set of data such as the name of the owner, tenant, municipality, and location, as well as the type of property. The next step of the process was the valuation of the pieces of land and buildings that would be expropriated by a surveyor. The valuation depended on the previous knowledge of the estate to be expropriated, and, as a result of that fact, a

⁶ AHPLu — *Carretera de 3.ª orden de Sarria a Pedrafita do Cebreiro...* 1889. Catalogue number: 32935/2, 56r.

⁷ AHPLu — *Proyecto de travesía de Samos...*, 1890, catalogue number: 32853/1.

⁸ AHPLu — *Proyecto de travesía de Samos...*, 1890, catalogue number: 32853/1.

⁹ For the list of affected properties see: AHPLu — *Expropiaciones en los términos municipales de Sarria y Samos...*, Signatura: 32851/2.

description card was done for each of them¹⁰. All these documents are part of the thick expropriation records that are extant at the present. Their study is essential to understand the transformations that this village suffered as a consequence of the new road, as we will see from this point on.

The description of each expropriated property contains in writing all the following data: the name of the owner, the neighbourhood, the type of land, the purpose of the property, the enclosing walls if they existed, and their features (material, height and thickness), the name of the place, the area, the property boundaries by the four cardinal points and the valuation made by the state. Moreover, the description cards were accompanied by the so-called plot maps where the expropriated properties were sketched in detail.

The high number of expropriated properties led to their valuation in different records. At the present, the extant expropriation records are the ones corresponding to 1892-1893¹¹, and 1895-1896¹², in the case of the first section road. The expropriation record from 1892-1893 dealt with the valuation of the rural properties, and the second one contains the valuation of the urban estate, because some buildings must be completely or partially demolished.

In addition to these exhaustive descriptions, in the present research other documents of the expropriation records are even more important than the previous ones to achieve our final goal. I refer to the plot plans that belong to the 1892-1893 expropriation record¹³. These maps were made after dividing the whole road into several small parts of roughly 400 meters length. Each part was sketched in a detailed plot map, where we see the existing past urban and rural structure on a 1:100 scale, that is in a detailed way.

Dated to November 1892, these plot maps were made by Manuel Carballido, who was the state surveyor; Avelino Navia, who was the surveyor of the owners, and José López de Rego, who was the site manager on behalf of the state engineer. Each map contains the drawing of the existing plot tissue, not only in the case of the areas that the new road crosses, but also of those ones located immediately (Fig. 4).

¹⁰ AHPLu — *Expropiación forzosa del Ayuntamiento de Samos 1891...* Catalogue number: 32855/1.

¹¹ AGA — *Expediente de expropiación forzosa... de los años 1892 y 1893*. Catalogue number: 46/01436.

¹² AHPLu — *Expediente de expropiación forzosa de fincas urbanas... (1895-1896)*. Catalogue number: 32855/2.

¹³ AGA — *Expediente de expropiación forzosa... de los años 1892 y 1893*. Catalogue number: 46/01436.

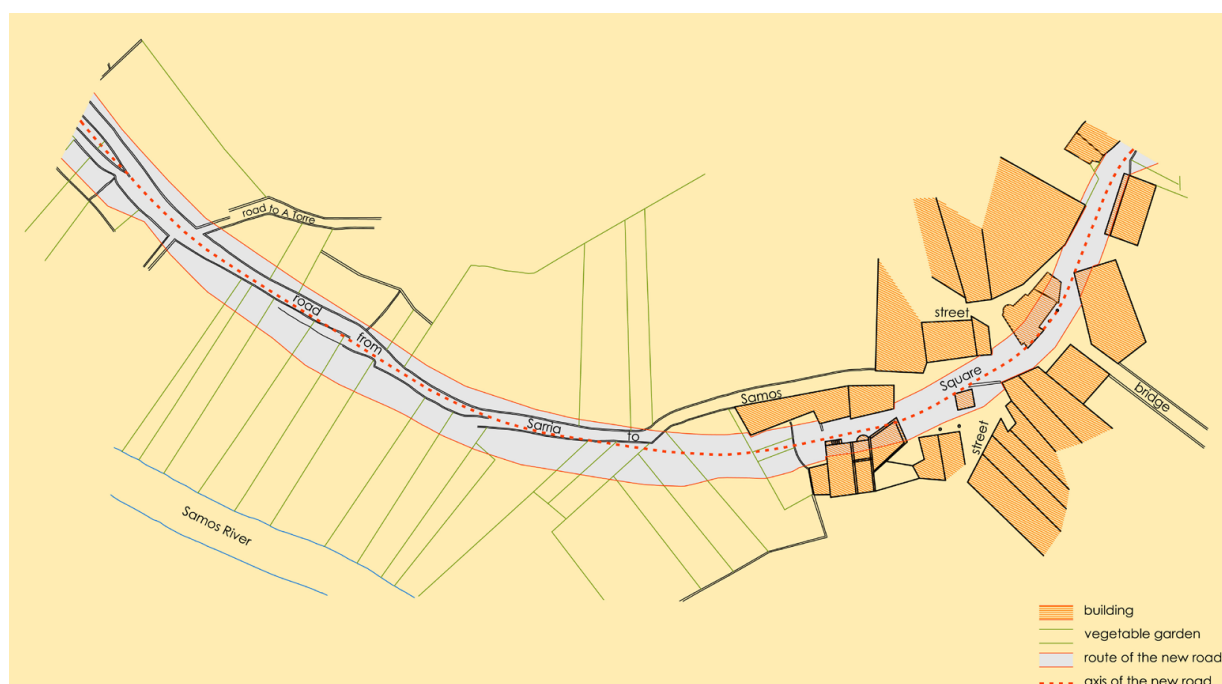


Fig. 4. The plot map of the village centre, scale 1:100, 1892

Source: Drawing by the author from the original map, which is preserved at AGA

In addition to that, the urban tissue of some villages and towns that were affected by the new road was sketched in these maps from 1892, as it happened in the case of Samos village. These documents are unique to know the appearance of the village centre in the late 19th century, just before the construction of the new road. The rural properties located in the south of the village are drawn in these maps, as well as the ones situated between the village centre and the monastery. Moreover, we see the buildings of the village centre that would be completely or partially demolished due to the road works, and the buildings that adjoined the previous ones. Besides, through these maps we know the former streets: the alley that connected the central square of the village to the river, the street that went from the village centre to the monastery, the alley that went up to the place of A Torre and a part of the former Royal road between Sarria and Samos, the one that defined a main street when it passed through the village.

The valuation and description of each and one of the existing buildings in Samos village that were expropriated and sketched in the previous plot maps was developed in a second expropriation record that dates from 1895-1896¹⁴. As a complement to the written study, a series of floor plans, principal plans, elevations and cross sections of each urban property was done on a 1:100 scale between 1894 and 1896. These graphic documents let us garner an understanding of the traditional, disappeared dwellings that defined the historic tissue of this settlement (Fig. 5).

¹⁴ AHPLu — *Expediente de expropiación forzosa de fincas urbanas...* (1895-1896). Catalogue number: 32855/2.

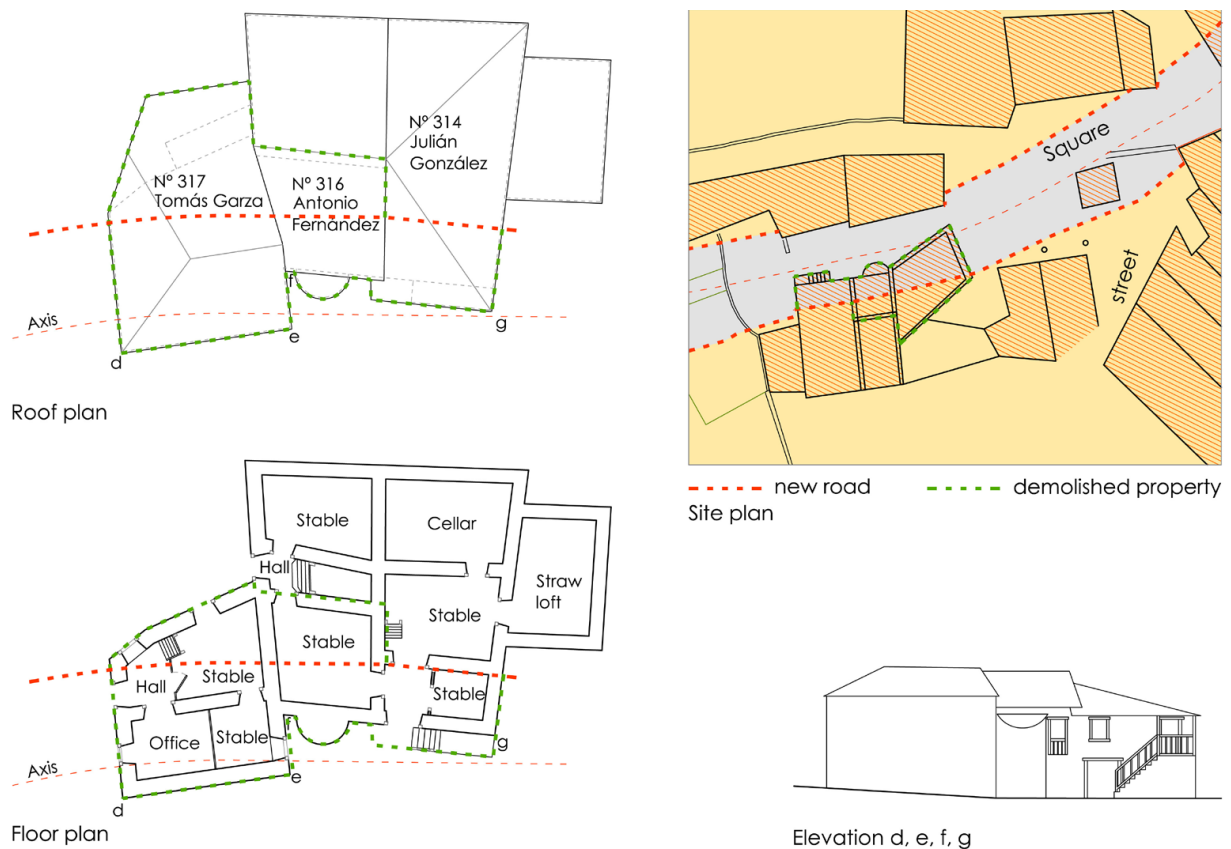


Fig. 5. One example of the houses that were expropriated and partially demolished due to the new road
Source: Drawing by the author from the original maps, which are preserved at AHPLu

All these maps that derive from the design and construction of a new road are an essential tool to know the appearance of this village in two main stages of its development. The first one is the village of the late 19th century and its inherited tissue. This was formed over the course of several centuries of monastic domain, and it was only slightly transformed during the Spanish religious confiscation (Fig. 6). The second stage is the village after the construction of the new road over the historic tissue; that is the village of the early 20th century (Fig. 7).

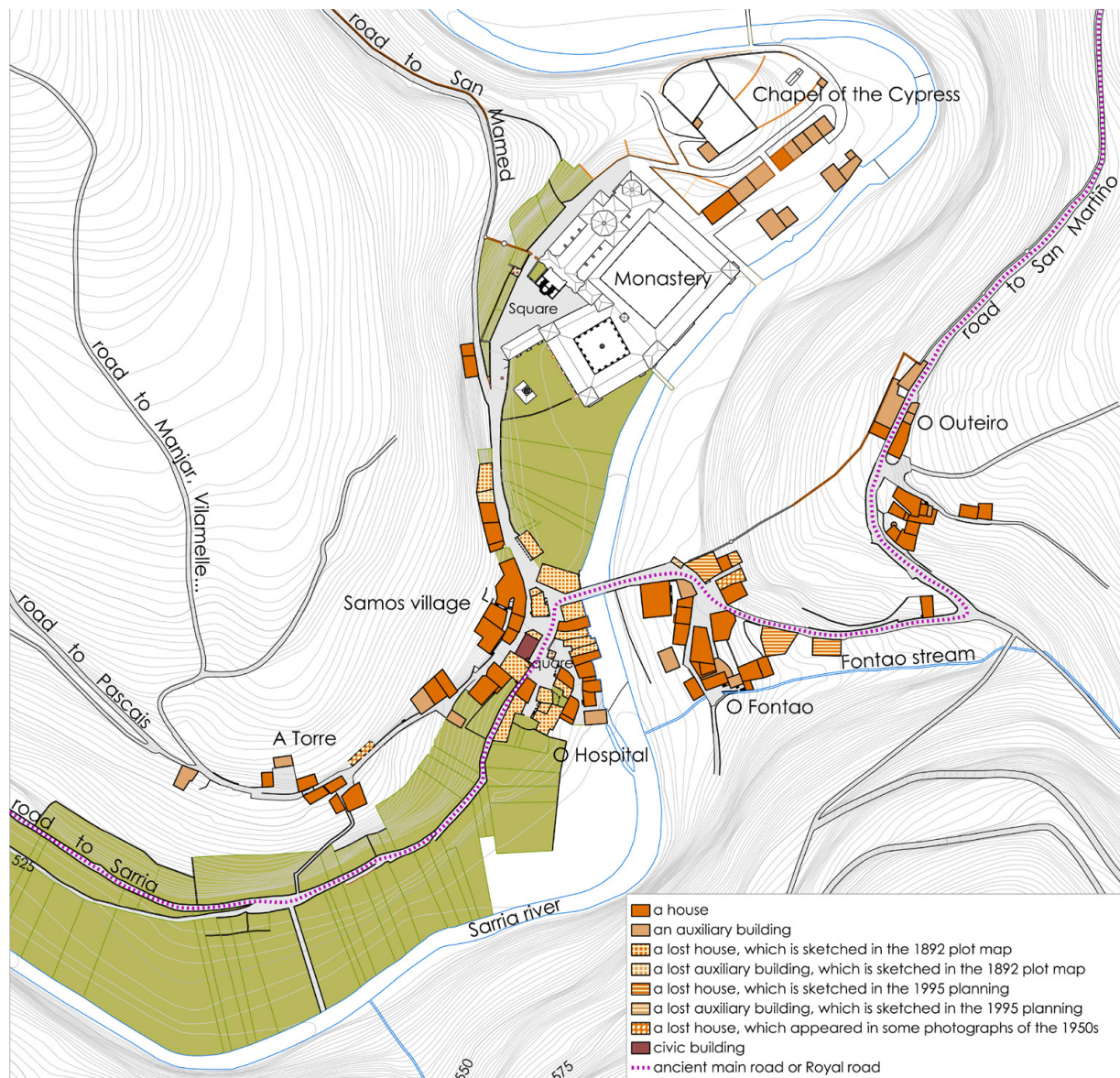


Fig. 6. Samos village before the building of the first road section, 1892.

Source: Author

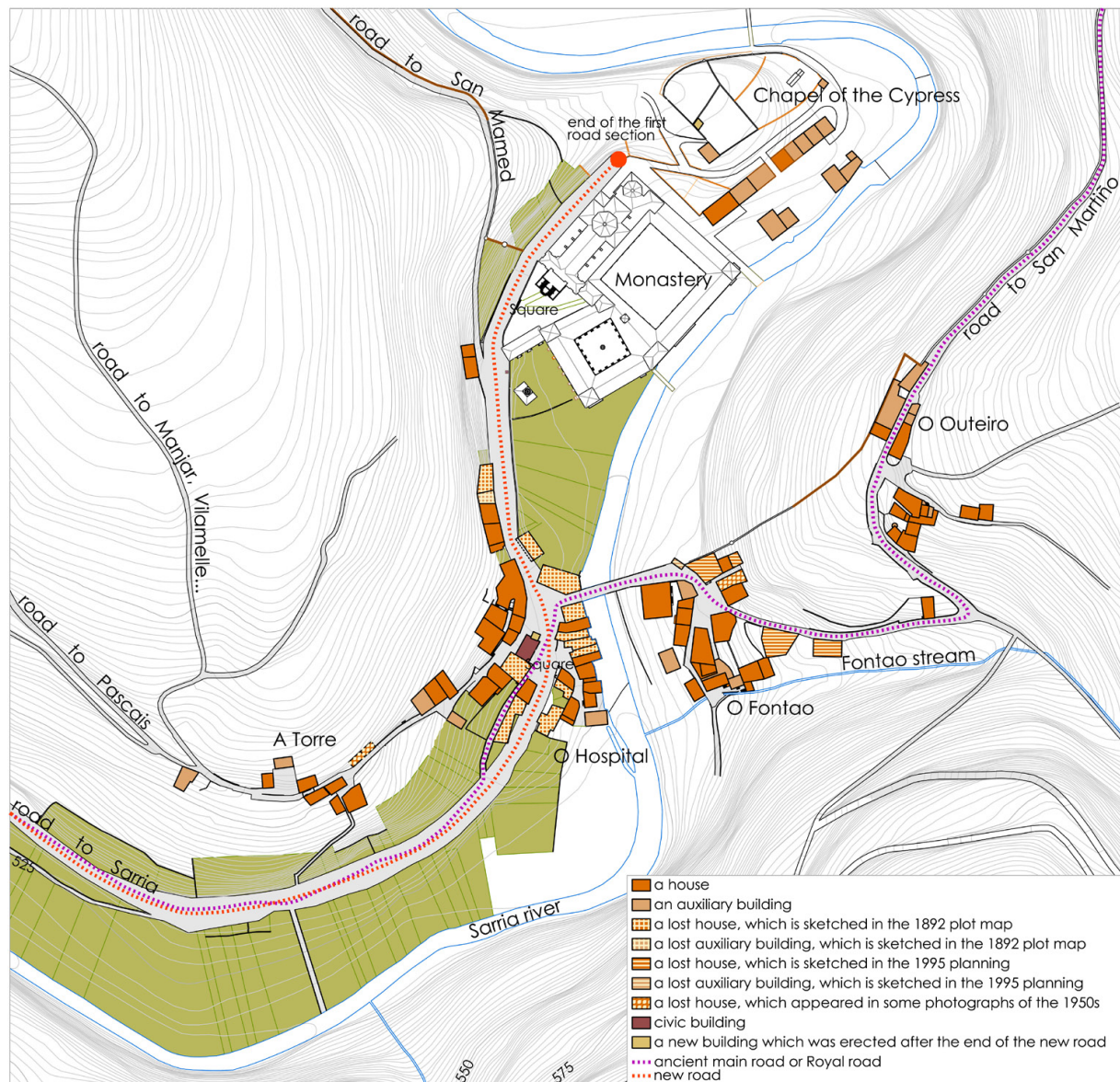


Fig. 7. Samos village at the end of the building of the first road section, 1901. Source: Author

THE SECOND PHASE: THE PROJECT AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE SECTION ROAD BETWEEN SAMOS AND TRIACASTELA

Shortly after the end of the first road section, the works to go on the construction of the road between Sarria and Pedrafita do Cebreiro began through the design of the second road section; that is the one that connects the villages of Samos and Triacastela.

The final project of this second section dated to March 1908, and it was made by the engineer Julio Murúa Valerdi¹⁵. It contains a descriptive memory where the reasons of the chosen route were explained, as well as a general map on a 1:5,000 scale, where the proposal to the section road was drawn over the topography of the area (Fig. 8).

¹⁵ AHPLu — *Carretera de Sarria a Pedrafita; sección de Samos a Pedrafita...* 1908. Catalogue number: 32861/4.

In addition to that, in this map we see the watercourses, the former road network and the existing towns and villages, although the drawing is simplified due to the scale. Unlike the first road section, this second one does not follow the route of the former Royal road or the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela due to different reasons such as geographic features and economic matters.

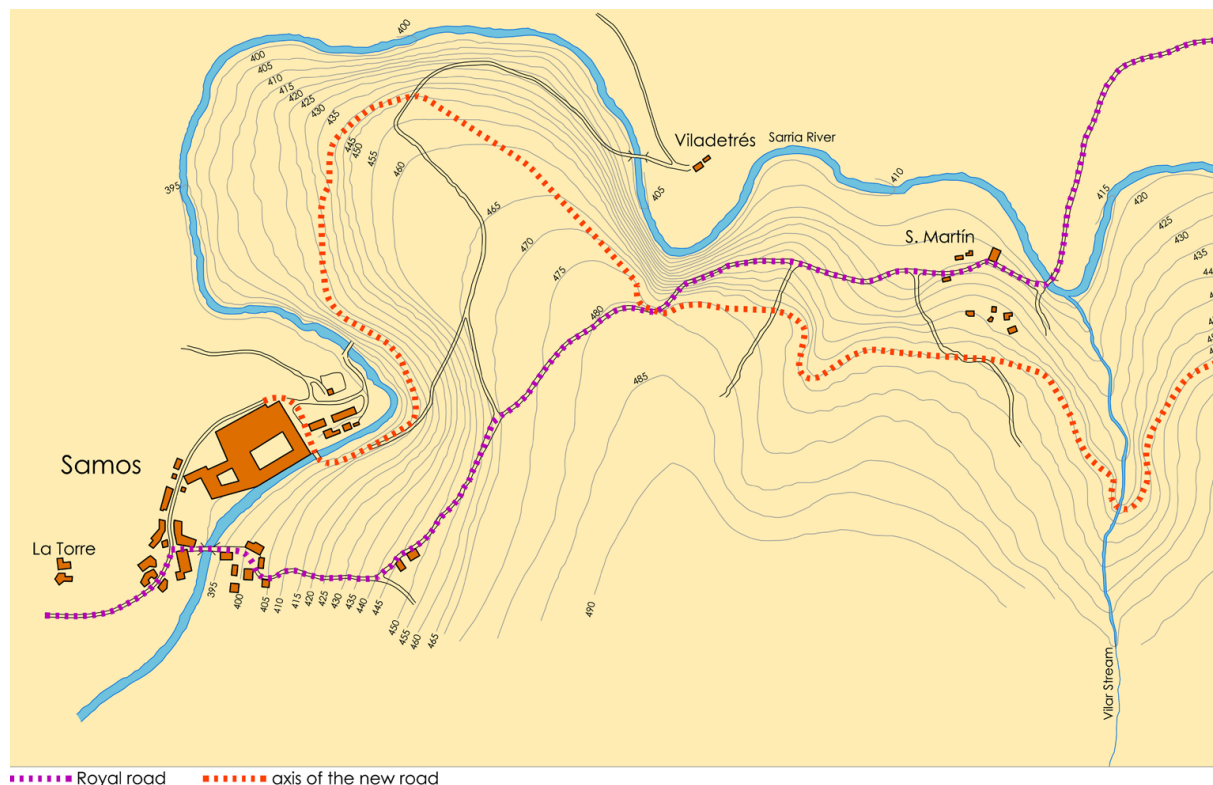


Fig. 8. Project of the road section between Samos and Triacastela: a fragment of the general map, scale 1:5,000, 1908. Source: Drawing by the author from the original map, which is preserved at AHPLu

Once the project was defined, the next steps were the same as in the previous road section, although in this case the works of expropriation lasted several years. In fact, the first, extant expropriation record was not presented until 1929¹⁶, despite the works related to it had already begun in 1920.

Among all the properties that were expropriated in this second stage, we are especially interested in those ones that were located at the north of the monastery, where the first road section ended, as well as in the pieces of land over which the second road section goes through during the first meters of its route, but still within the sphere of influence of the village. These pieces of land were a part of the ancient enclosed space of the monastery in the past. In other words, they belonged to the sacred area where the religious community developed its day-to-day life. This is also the reason to understand

¹⁶ AHPLu — *Expediente de expropiación dentro del...* Catalogue number: 32865/1.

why this area was not still occupied or developed in the early 20th century despite its proximity to the village, because this land came from the hands of the monks, from whom these properties were seized due to the Spanish religious confiscation in 1836¹⁷.

In fact, the expropriation record from 1929 shows that only one building of the village was affected in the first meters of the second road section. It was one of the former monastic stables, although in the maps we can see that some more buildings existed in this area towards the north. Therefore, the majority of the expropriated properties for the construction of the second road section were pieces of land.

In this expropriation record of 1929 we also find one descriptive card for each expropriated property, as well as a set of plot maps that complete the knowledge of those ones. Every plot map was drawn on a 1:400 scale. They dated back to March 1923 and they were made by Enrique Gómez Giménez, who was the state engineer, and Navarro, who was the head engineer¹⁸.

All the data the descriptive cards gather together with the plot maps let us garner the understanding of the appearance that a part of the village area had at the north of the monastery. At the same time, the reading and analysis of this expropriation record show the deep change that the construction of the new road caused in this territory. In addition to that, the consequences of the works on the monastery were several, because the road goes right around the west and east facades of the monument, and in a higher level than the original dirt roads. All these changes and their consequences are still recognizable at the present.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW ROAD OVER THE HISTORIC TISSUE

If we compare the present plan of Samos village with the resulting one from the construction of the last meters of the first road section between Sarria and Pedrafit del Cebreiro, and the first meters of its second road section, we see that the contemporary image of the village centre is a direct consequence of the road works that were made between the late 19th and the early 20th century (Fig. 9).

¹⁷ Regarding the secularization of the monastery of San Julián de Samos see: ARIAS ARIAS, 1950: 330-336; ARIAS CUENLLAS, 1976; ARIAS CUENLLAS, 1992: 371-385; PORTILLA COSTA, 2003: 19-21.

¹⁸ AHPLu — *Expediente de expropiación dentro del...* Catalogue number: 32865/1.

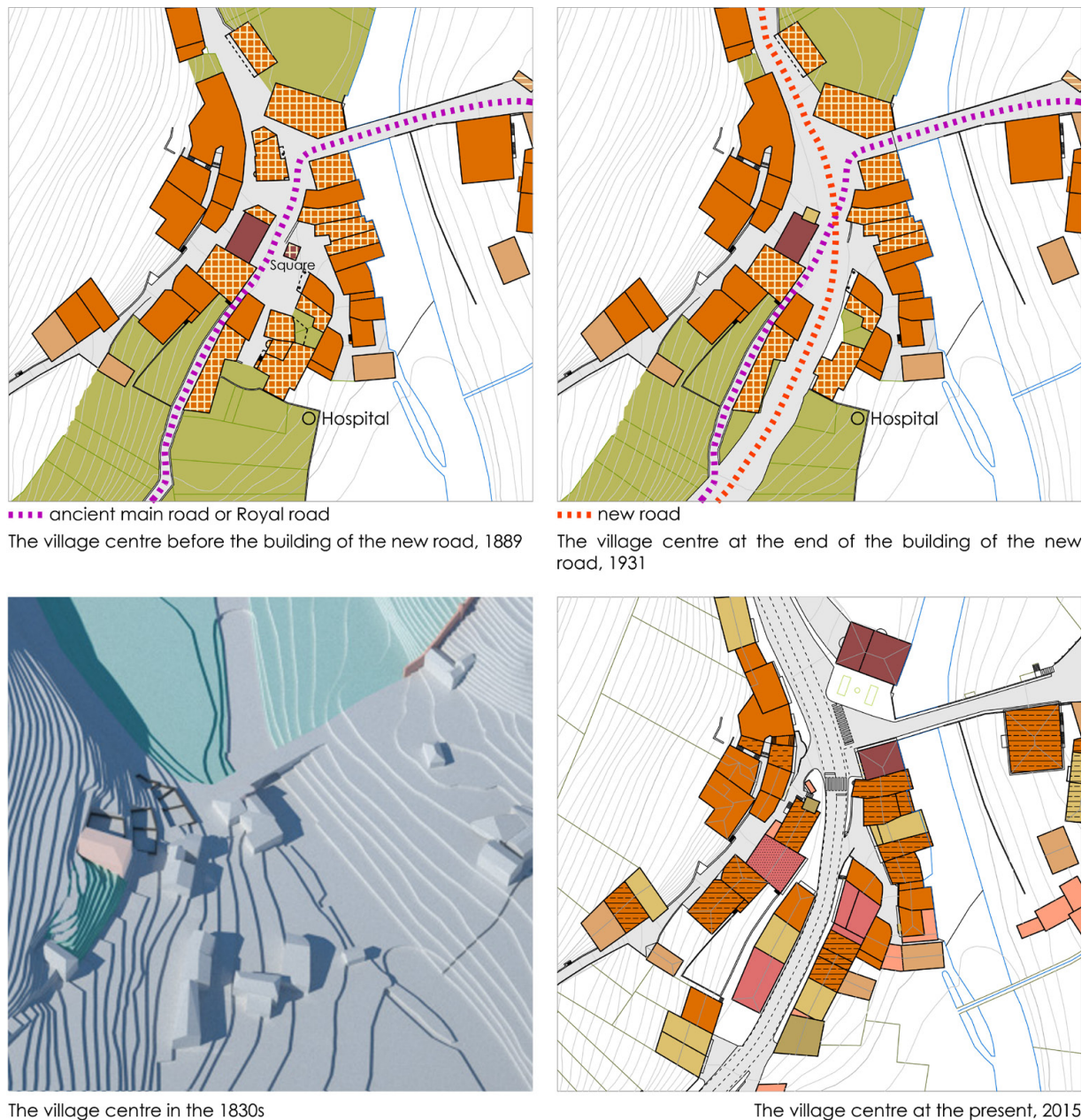


Fig. 9. The changes in the village centre between the 1830s and the present, as a consequence of the building of a new road. Source: Author

The different written and graphic documents we analyzed previously show that the route of this new road transformed the traditional tissue of the village forever as well as some buildings, streets and public spaces in the most significant area from a historic point of view, and it partially erased the former memory of the village.

Although the new road follows approximately the route of the ancient Royal road between Sarria and Samos, the need of a bigger width to meet a foreseeable traffic growth, and the unfavourable geographic features that did not allow another option to build the road without an increase of the cost, were the key factors that led to the break with the inherited tissue.

In regard to the buildings of the historic centre, the most affected area of the village was the place called Hospital. In this place the new road did not follow the route of the ancient Royal road, and the nineteenth-century engineers decided to build the new road by crossing the most developed zone. This way, they avoided the slight detour towards the north that the ancient road followed in order to go to the square of the village.

Although the former Royal road crossed the bridge of the village to arrive at the place of Fontao, from this point it went up to the place of O Outeiro, and then it went on towards the nearest town called San Martiño del Real; the new road was extended from the village centre to the monastery, taking as a base the route of an ancient, dirt road to the monastery, and going on beyond the entrance door of the former enclosed monastic property. The construction of this stretch caused mainly the loss of some buildings located right in the village centre, the disappearance of the parish cemetery, and the demolition of the entrance door to the remote monastic space as well as a part of the enclosing wall.

In regard to the second road section between Samos and Triacastela, it was designed distant from the routes of the historic roads, unlike the previous one. Therefore, these former routes are extant at the present. However, the construction of this second road section caused the final break with the historic boundaries between the sacred area and the secular village that the monks had protected zealously over the course of their centuries-old monastic domain. Moreover, an important part of the historic plot tissue was erased on the east bank of the river. Nevertheless, we also have to say that the transformation of this last area had previously begun due to the Spanish religious confiscation in 1836 onwards, though not so dramatically, but gradually.

When the road works ended, a new phase started in the evolution of Samos village. Firstly, the affected or partially demolished buildings were restored, and a new site for the lost public spaces was sought. Then, the village began an urban growth towards the north and the south of the existing settlement, and the new road was used as the main axis to support this contemporary development.

Verifying this process is possible through the applications for construction permits that the local administration of Samos accepted in the early 20th century¹⁹. Twelve of these documents are extant from the period between 1899 and 1907, that is from the end of works of the first road section to the beginning of the design of the second one. Four records contain the application for the reform or extension of some existing buildings, especially among those ones that were damaged by the new road. The remaining applications asked for the necessary license to build a new dwelling at one side of the new road, in most cases. The number of construction permits in the same area was maintained until the 1930s. In fact, seven new applications were accepted between 1908

¹⁹ AMS — *Obras mayores (1885-1910)*. Catalogue number: 471.

and 1931²⁰. With these documents we verify that the new road became the main axis for the urban growth of this village since its ending up to now (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Samos village in the 1970s. Source: PORTILLA COSTA, 1984: 4-5

THE FINAL REFLECTIONS

To sum up, we can affirm that Samos village is a clear example of how time erases historic urban memory. In this case, the process took place in a radical way through a development work, which was the construction of a new road. On the other hand, the research we present shows that the graphic reconstruction of a remote physical reality that is deeply transformed or even completely lost at the present is possible through an interdisciplinary approach. The method we use is based on the intersection of diverse documentary sources with the study of the present urban reality as well as using digital tools for the creation of analytic maps that show the results we achieve.

²⁰ AMS — *Obras mayores (1885-1910)*. Catalogue number: 471; AMS — *Obras mayores (1912-1972)*. Catalogue number: 472.

In addition to that, we want to highlight that this research is based on one type of documentary source, among others, that is scarcely used in the study of the urban or rural present reality. We refer to the nineteenth-century projects of civil works. However, these historic sources are full of written data, but the most important thing is they contain the first maps of some towns, villages and cities that maintained their traditional appearance up to that moment, or, at least, an image that was closer to their most immediate past reality. Finally, we just want to point out that this work reveals how valuable the analysis of these documentary sources is to trace the history of some contemporary cities, villages and towns and, for this reason, we extremely believe they should not be rejected.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Archivo General de la Administración

AGA — *Expediente de expropiación forzosa en los términos de Sarria y Samos con motivo de las obras de dicha carretera de los años 1892 y 1893*. General Direction of Roads Collection. Catalogue number: 46/01436.

Archivo del Monasterio de Samos

AMS — *Obras mayores (1885-1910)*. Catalogue number: 471.

AMS — *Obras mayores (1912-1972)*. Catalogue number: 472.

Archivo Histórico Provincial de Lugo

AHPLu — *Anteproyecto de la carretera de Sarria a Seoane por Samos*. Undated. Public Works Collection. Catalogue number: 32850/6.

AHPLu — *Carretera de Sarria a Pedrafita; sección de Samos a Pedrafita. Proyecto de los trozos 1.º y 2.º (ingeniero: Julio Murúa y Valerdi) 1908*. Public Works Collection. Catalogue number: 32861/4.

AHPLu — *Carretera de 3.ª orden de Sarria a Pedrafita do Cebreiro, con ramal a las aguas de O Incio, sección de Sarria a Samos. Proyecto de esta Sección (ingeniero Godofredo Álvarez Cascos) 1889*. Public Works Collection. Catalogue number: 32935/2.

AHPLu — *Expediente de expropiación dentro del término de Samos trozo 1º*. Public Works Collection. Catalogue number: 32865/1.

AHPLu — *Expediente de expropiación forzosa de fincas urbanas del término municipal de Samos (1895-1896)*. Public Works Collection. Catalogue number: 32855/2.

AHPLu — *Expropiaciones en los términos municipales de Sarria y Samos, trozos 1.º y 2.º (1891-1900)*. Public Works Collection. Catalogue number: 32851/2.

AHPLu — *Expropiación forzosa del Ayuntamiento de Samos 1891-1893-1894*. Public Works Collection. Catalogue number: 32855/1.

AHPLu — *Proyecto de travesía de Samos (ingeniero Godofredo Álvarez Cascos) 1890*. Public Works Collection. Catalogue number: 32853/1.

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