

## A STUDY OF STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS THROUGH URBAN SPACE: IZMİR KONAK SQUARE (1922-1970)

Sezen KARABULUT\*

### Abstract

The aim of this study, entitled “Analyzing the State-Society Relationships through the Development of an Urban Space: Izmir Konak Square”, is to examine public buildings, which were constructed in Konak Square from 1922 to 1970 to represent state power and state- society relationship. In this context, the period from the beginning of the Great Fire of Izmir in 1922 to the fire of 1970 in Izmir is to be examined.

The main questions of this study are to track all of these developments, what were the public buildings in the Konak Square at the beginning of 1922 and the transformations they underwent the process? What were the public buildings that were constructed, their function in the representation of the state power, their roles in the state-society relationships? Which of these buildings went through a change and what were the relationship between this change and the transformation of the state.

**Keywords:** *State-Society Relationships, Konak Square, Izmir, Great Fire of Izmir, Sarı Kışla.*

## DEVLET - TOPLUM İLİŞKİLERİNİ KENTSEL MEKÂN ÜZERİNDEN OKUMAK: İZMİR KONAK MEYDANI (1922-1970)

### Öz

“Devlet-Toplum İlişkilerini Kentsel Mekân Üzerinden Okumak: Izmir Konak Meydanı (1922-1970)” başlıklı çalışmanın amacı; 1922-1970 tarihleri arasında Konak Meydanında devlet erkinin temsili için inşa edilen kamusal binaları tespit edip, bunlar üzerinden devlet toplum ilişkilerini incelemektir. Bu bağlamda 1922 Izmir yangınından başlayarak 1970 yangınına dek geçen süreç değerlendirilecektir.

Bu gelişmeleri izleyebilmek adına çalışmamız içerisinde yanıt aranacak sorular şunlar olacaktır: 1922 yılı başlarında Konak Meydanı’ndaki kamusal yapıların hangileri olduğu ve süreç içerisinde bunların geçirdiği değişimler, inşa edilen kamusal yapıların neler olduğu ve bunların devlet erkini temsili görevi ile devlet-toplum ilişkilerindeki rolleri ve bu yapılar içerisinde hangilerinin değişime uğradığı ve bu değişimin devletin geçirdiği dönüşümle ilişkisi.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Devlet Toplum İlişkileri, Konak Meydanı, Izmir, Izmir Yangını, Sarı Kışla.*

\* Dr., Pamukkale University, The Centre for Research on Atatürk Principles and Revolutions. (skarabulut@pau.edu.tr).

## Introduction

Public spaces are the areas that reflect state-society relations most significantly. Every open or closed places where people gather, such as squares, streets, and parks, is generally defined as “*public space*”. Not only is every urban inhabitant equally entitled to use these areas, but also they are responsible for their use. One of the most significant examples of public spaces is squares. Functionally speaking, squares serve as platforms for social (demonstrations, rallies, entertainment, sports, etc.), ceremonial (celebrations, spring festivals), commercial (marketplace) or military gatherings. At the same time, these are places frequented by individuals on their own and there is the high participation of pedestrians.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it can be stated that city squares are among the areas that constitute a basis for mutual experiences of urban people and the formation of urban identity. Throughout history, public spaces in the Turkish city have taken a certain form and exhibited development over time that aligns with the economic, religious and cultural structure of the society in question. Taking on different forms and dimensions depending upon intended purposes, squares can acquire different meanings with different functional buildings, sometimes as a front of a religious structure (church or mosque), sometimes of a government house. Due to the socio-cultural structure with a low level of social interaction, public life in the traditional Turkish cities was experienced in the form of communities in *kulliyes* (mosque complexes) and bazaars. In the context of Turkish cities, squares are often small-scale open spaces, forming as a partial development of a street or a spontaneous intersection of a series of roads.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, when a square is defined as “*an urban open space definitely bordered by buildings from at least three directions or as an architectural phenomenon in line with the principles of geometrical order*”, it becomes quite difficult to speak of squares in the traditional Turkish city.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, it was the Westernization movement of the Tanzimat period that revealed the concept of square more clearly. In this period, the exterior public spaces in the Ottoman city underwent a qualitative transformation; the centrist approach and the goal of manifesting the state power in every corner of the required the construction of numerous public buildings and government squares as part of the modern urban arrangements. These squares were constructed, whenever feasible, within the old fabric of the city, as an arrangement of the current square, or outside of the old fabric of the city through the arrangement of a new space for the purpose of establishing a large functional square. The

1 Özen Eyüce, “Meydanlar”, *Ege Mimarlık*, No:34 (2000/2), p. 11.

2 Ziya Gencel “Geleneksel Türk Kentinde Meydan Kavramı” *Ege Mimarlık*, No:34 (2000/2), p. 23.

3 Ziya Gencel, “Geleneksel Türk Kentinde Meydan Kavramı”, p. 23.

most significant element of the government square was the building of the government house (*hükümet konağı*), the long facade of which overlooked the square, and units of the state administration, such as the judiciary, gendarmerie, commercial and agricultural office, educational office, and financial office, were all located within this complex; and as for a prison, they were constructed either beneath or in the vicinity of the government house complex.<sup>4</sup>

With the promulgation of the Second Constitutional Era in 1908, the mass politics previously based on passive participation began to be replaced by mass mobilization in the form of demonstrations, rallies, direct action and strikes, in which crowds of people expressed their opinions in streets and squares. The spatial reflection of this replacement was an increased significance in the function of squares. Developing through the nineteenth century, the civil society and public space paved the way for the prospective milieu of mass politics, not only that of the Committee of Union and Progress but also the assertion of demands by various social groups, enabling the masses to gather in public spaces and form meaningful collectivities.<sup>5</sup> Demonstrations organized in the squares during elections and meetings organized in coffeehouses;<sup>6</sup> workers' vociferous advocacy of their demands in squares during the strike wave of 1908, festivals organized by the Committee of Union and Progress in public spaces, national celebrations, and commemorations are all examples of this novel politics in the Ottoman Empire as manifestations of active mass participation. Squares were the stage of this new politics and one of the most primary spaces where different sections of society could express their own opinions.<sup>7</sup>

With the promulgation of the Republican Regime, a new understanding of modernization was put into practice. The Republican reforms in the fields of administration, education and culture brought new spatial needs in their wake. The urban center, which had been crystallized around the government

---

4 Sibel Polat, *Kamusal Dış Mekânlarda Mimari Kimliği Değerlendirmek İçin Bir Yöntem Önerisi: Bursa Cumhuriyet Alanı Örneği*, Bursa, 2013, p. 117.

5 The most dramatic expression of mass politics in İzmir of the Second Constitutional Era was boycott movements and protest demonstrations. For example, between 1908 and 1912, boycotts and protests were organized against Austria due to its annexation of Bosnia Herzegovina; against Bulgaria due to its claim to independence; against Greece due to the demands by Cretan Greeks to unite with Greece; and against Italy due to its occupation of Tripoli. Most of these demonstrations organized to announce such actions and to garner a social motivation took place in the Barracks Square (Konak) of İzmir. Regarding some of these demonstrations, see "Girit Meselesi ve Miting", *Ahenk*, 8 Kânun-ı sani (January) 1909, "Girit İçin Nümayiş", *İttihad*, 8 Kânunusani (January) 1909, "Dünkü Girit Mitingi", *Köylü*, 14 May 1910 and Umut Karabulut, *İzmir Kentinde Siyasi Protesto Kültürü (1908-1912)*, Yeditepe Yayınları, İstanbul, 2014, p. 128.

6 Cengiz Kırılı defines coffeehouses as the most paramount public space of the social and daily life in the Ottoman state. For detailed information, see Cengiz Kırılı, "Kahvehaneler ve Hafiyeler: 19. Yüzyıl Ortalarında Osmanlı'da Sosyal Kontrol", *Toplum ve Bilim*, No:83 (Winter, 1999/2000), pp. 58-79.

7 Doğan Çetinkaya, "1908 Devrimi ve Meydan Adlarının Değişimi", *Toplumsal Tarih*, No: 120 (December/2003), p. 35.

house in the *Tanzimat* Period, became richer with other public structures, such as bank, hotel, monument and statue, all of which were representative of modern developments as carried out by the new regime. The squares of the Republican Period were the stage of the new symbols and ceremonies (such as raising and lowering a flag and official celebrations) of the new regime and places whereby the existence of state power was impressed on the minds of people. The promulgation of the Republic was also a very momentous breaking point with regard to the spatial and symbolic value of public administrative structures. During the first years of the Republican era, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the war years, critical steps were taken in the establishment of the new State and the building of a new nation.

With the application of “new concepts” in urban planning in the early Republican period, the number of planned public spaces increased by leaps and bounds, and especially in the big cities, a large number of squares and parks were constructed for public use. Again in the same period, there was also an increase in the number of theaters, cinemas, and concert halls, all of which were envisioned as spaces where a new public would be molded. Improvement and construction activities together with the movement of restructuring cities also constituted the most visible fields of a “new state order” and a “concept of citizenship”. In this context, by virtue of their symbolization of a new administrative style and of being spaces in which the framework of State-citizen relations had been re-drawn, each of the public buildings of the early Republican period is a prominent indicator in terms of the reconstruction of the nation.<sup>8</sup>

### 1. Konak Square As a Reflection of the Republican Ideal of a Modern City

The new public life model of the Republican period was implemented not only in Ankara, which was chosen as the capital of the new Turkish State but also in many other cities. The city of Izmir was a particularly outstanding for the implementation of this change. Izmir had been one of the cities in which the urban reforms of the *Tanzimat* were successfully put into practice. The need for taking effective measures against the ever-increasing fires in the *Tanzimat* period brought urban planning into question, and in 1851 Luigi Storari was assigned the task of preparing a plan for Izmir. Hence, from the second part of the nineteenth century, Izmir started to be reconstructed in accordance with the models of western cities. During this period, the “Konak Square” first came into view as a new administrative center.

At the outset, this square was the exterior space forming around the government house as a result of the fact that the *Kâtipzade* House, which

8 İnci Uzun, “Kamu İdari Yapıları Mimarisi”, *Izmir Kent Ansiklopedisi*, Architecture, Vol. I, Izmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kent Kitaplığı, Izmir, 2013, p. 342.

was situated in the inner port area that had been completely filled in during the *Tanzimat* Era, had come to be regarded as the administrative center of the region.<sup>9</sup> Since the square was thought to have been formed as a result of the filling of the inner port in the course of time, it came to be called as the “*dolma*”, meaning a filled plot of land.<sup>10</sup> The building of new administrative structures had transformed the area into a space that consolidated the identity of the square.

The first structure built in the square was the *Yalı Camii* mosque, whose foundations had been laid in the eighteenth century. And the other standout structure as the *Sarı Kışla* (Yellow Barracks). Construction on this military building began in 1826 on land acquired as a result of the demolition of a group of buildings opposite the Government House; its construction was finished in 1829. Completion of the Yellow Barracks right next to space where the Government House would eventually emerge as the administrative building marks the end of the first phase of the formation of the public center of İzmir.<sup>11</sup> The *Kâtipzade* House was demolished in 1867 and the İzmir Government House (*Hükümet Konağı*) was built in its place in 1872. The İzmir Vocational High School was then built in 1886, and construction of the Province Prisonhouse began in 1883. Thus all of these structures had consolidated “Konak Square” as the public center of İzmir. As an extension of the Westernization movements in the country and as part of the twenty-fifth-anniversary celebrations in 1901 of Abdulhamid II’s ascension to the throne, the Clock Tower was constructed. With the construction of also the Clock Tower, an important structure representative of the Ottoman power had been added to the first public center of İzmir.

Changes taking place throughout history in the administrative sphere have also involved physical changes in the square. The first change in this direction occurred in 1913 as a result of the 1905 Insurance Plan. In accordance with this plan, a decision was taken to remove the exterior wall of the Barrack’s garden and construct a park in the new area, uniting it with the government building garden, but this decision could not be implemented. This was the period in which Rahmi Bey served as the governor of İzmir and was influential in the circles of the Committee for Union and Progress. Important projects were prepared for İzmir during Rahmi Bey’s term of office, including a series of important projects in the vicinity of Konak, such as the removal of cemeteries that had come to be situated within the city as a result of urban growth, and the opening of parks and cultural places in their stead. One example is the removal of the cemeteries extending from the hospital to Bahribaba and their transformation into a park. During Rahmi Bey’s term, there was an effort to implement all of

9 Rengin Zengel, “Dönüştürülmüş Bir Meydan: Konak Meydanına Analitik Bir Yaklaşım”, *Mimarlık*, No: 334 (2007/3), p. 3.

10 Rauf Beyru, *19. Yüzyılda İzmir Kenti*, Literatür Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, p. 50.

11 Fikret Yılmaz, *Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Konak Meydanı*, İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kent Kitaplığı, İzmir, 2003, pp. 14-15.

these projects.<sup>12</sup> The planned installation of the National Library, which later held great importance for the cultural life of Izmir, also started in this period and it was opened in 1912 in the Selamlık<sup>13</sup> section of the Salepçizade House situated on İkinci Beyler Street. In the early Republican period, the library was re-opened on the land assigned for the National Library.<sup>14</sup> These developments were crucial consequences of the modernization effort brought about by the idea of constitutional monarchy. The underlying reason for this situation was the establishment of “public gardens, government gardens, and parks” in line with the attempt to add a social quality to official public spaces, for the purpose of providing a modern outlook to cities after the promulgation of constitutional monarchy.

The modernization process that began with the *Tanzimat* passed onto an advanced phase with the establishment of the Turkish Republic envisaged as a nation-state. On the one hand, there was an attempt to increase the number of spaces that would enable the organization of social mechanisms on the basis of the ‘nation’ and lead toward a more intense and vivid interaction within the country; on the other hand, there was a desire for cities to gain a contemporary quality that would spread in the nation. The first step taken in this regard was thus to add new types of structures in and around Konak Square. In 1926, the cinema building named the Elhamra Palace began operating. And in 1933, the National Library began offering services in its new building.<sup>15</sup> With the Bahribaba Park, the National Library, the National Cinema, and the Turkish Hearth (cultural association), all established around Konak Square in the early Republican period, the official public center of Izmir gained a social aspect. Hence, Konak Square continued to be a public center by way of integrating with the urban conception of the Republic.

Following the War of Independence, the most critical question encountered by the new Turkish State as it sought to realize its project of modern city was the re-planning and re-constructing of Western Anatolian cities set on fire by the Greek army while in retreat. The most dramatic expression of this problem was found to be in Izmir. On 13 September 1922, i.e., four days after the emancipation of the city,<sup>16</sup> a big fire broke out in Izmir. Due to this fire, a great part of the European and Greek neighborhoods was destroyed. Not only did the buildings fall into ruin, but also the whole infrastructure network of the city was

12 Uğur Tanyeli, “Çağdaş İzmir’in Mimarlık Serüveni”, *Üç İzmir*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul, 1992, pp. 138-139.

13 “The portion of an Ottoman palace or house reserved for men”. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selamlık> (access date 25 November 2014).

14 Yaşar Aksoy, *Bir Kent, Bir İnsan: İzmir’in Son Yüzyılı*, S. Ferit Eczacıbaşı’nın Yaşamı ve Anıları, Eczacıbaşı Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul, 1986, pp. 117, 231.

15 Yaşar Aksoy, *Bir Kent, Bir İnsan: İzmir’in Son Yüzyılı*, S. Ferit Eczacıbaşı’nın Yaşamı ve Anıları, p. 231.

16 On 9 September 1922, a Turkish flag was hoisted in the Government House with the reclamation of Izmir and this led the house and the square to gain importance as a public site in the national memory. İnci Uzun, “Kamu İdari Yapıları Mimarisi”, p. 347.

damaged as well.<sup>17</sup> Although Konak Square and vicinity did not sustain a direct damage on account of the fire, it was nevertheless affected by the reconstruction activities initiated after the projects competition for reconstructing the city.

The first attempt towards reconstructing İzmir after the fire was at a meeting in Paris between the İzmir Mayor and Şükrü Bey (Kaya), who was then a member of the committee for the Lausanne Peace Talks. The “Company for the Investigation of the Development and Reconstruction of İzmir” was established there. For the preparation of an urban plan, this company contacted the French urban planner Henri Prost who proposed his colleagues Rene and Raymond Danger for this work. In 1924, a contract was signed between the İzmir Municipality and the Dangers; the Prost firm served as the consultant-urbanist in the preparation of this plan. The İzmir plan was drawn up in 1924-1925 by Dangers and Prost aimed at rearranging the city as a whole.<sup>18</sup>

A survey of this plan will suffice to grasp that squares emerge at the intersection of boulevards and streets. With its semi-circular form, the “Republic Square” constitutes one of the focal points of the composition of the plan. The Municipal Palace was positioned at the symmetry axis of the square and it was planned to add a green zone extending from here to the railroad station complex. The buildings of the university proposed to be established in İzmir, a library, and museums were all installed around this area.<sup>19</sup>

After a survey of this plan, it would not be wrong to say that the “Republic Square” was taken as a center and structures such as the municipality, library and museum were proposed to be installed around it, thus aiming at forming the new public site of the new regime.<sup>20</sup> According to the Dangers-Prost plan, Konak Square had had public administrative characteristics in the Ottoman era but had since lost its previous importance and undertaken a secondary function. The most salient point stated in the plan regarding Konak Square was the idea of moving the barracks, prisonhouse and gendarmerie units from the city center to the mountainous terrain of the city.<sup>21</sup> This plan was also accepted by the municipality. Some years later a decision was taken to demolish the barracks, which remained a symbol of the Ottoman Empire.

The Dangers Plan is a dramatic example of the modernization concepts of the new Republican administration. This is because the system of “boulevard-square-state structures” embodying the state authority in this period constituted

17 Tülay Alim Baran, *Bir Kentin Yeniden Yapılanması: İzmir 1923-1938*, Arma Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003, p. 49.

18 Cana Bilsel, “İzmir’de Cumhuriyet Dönemi Planlaması (1923-1965): 20. Yüzyıl Kentsel Mirası”, *Ege Mimarlık*, October/2009, p. 12.

19 Cana Bilsel, “İzmir’de Cumhuriyet Dönemi Planlaması (1923-1965): 20. Yüzyıl Kentsel Mirası”, p. 13.

20 With the construction of the Ghazi Statue, the square gained a special outlook. “Gazi Heykeli Bugün Saat (18)de Açılıyor”, *Anadolu*, 27 July 1932.

21 Kami Refet, “İzmir’in İmarı Hakkında”, *Mimar*, 1/7, (1931), p. 229-230.

a new model of public life – with the administrative, cultural and educational structures situated around the square and overlooking the main boulevard that was again made a part of the system.<sup>22</sup> Republic squares were also a salient symbol of this new model of public life. Just as squares in the Ottoman Empire were associated with several physical characteristics and named, for example, as the Government Square or the Barrack Square in the pre-constitutional monarchy and named as Freedom or Nation after the promulgation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy<sup>23</sup>, a similar thing was experienced in the Republican period. The new regime defined the new model of public life with names and titles appropriate for the regime, thus aiming at disseminating its presence to every sphere of social life. The fact that the “Konak Square” took on a secondary function with the attempts at reconstructing Izmir in the first years of the Republic is also a consequence of this situation.

Economic problems, along with such reasons as an insufficient amount of construction machinery and the inadequacy of dialogue between the municipal council and the mayorship, are the primary factors that prevented the implementation of the Dangers Plan.<sup>24</sup> In 1932, the opening of Republic Square did take place under the mayorship of Behçet Uz. Thus Konak Square continued its function as an administrative center. Besides being such a center, it has also been a center for transportation in Izmir since the late nineteenth century. With the growth of the city, horsecars started to be used in the 1880s upon the need to connect new residential areas with the center. The center was thus connected on the one side with Punta, and with Güzelyalı on the other.<sup>25</sup> These practices continued in the Republican era. In the early Republican period, horsecars were replaced by an electric tramway and minibusses – dubbed literally as ‘snatched and fled’ (*kaptıkaçtı*) – that also used the Konak Square as a route.<sup>26</sup> In the 1930s, a wooden ferry port was established in Konak and buses took the place of tramways in these years, thus increasing the traffic in the square.<sup>27</sup>

As can be understood from this brief historical survey, in the early Republic period, Konak Square was not only an official square encircled by buildings representing state power but was also a public space encompassing the transportation sector at the service of the public.

22 Özlem Arıtan, “Modernleşme ve Cumhuriyetin Kamusal Mekân Modelleri, *Mimarlık*, No: 342, 2008, pp. 49-56.

23 Doğan Çetinkaya, “1908 Devrimi ve Meydan Adlarının Değişimi”, p. 36.

24 *Hizmet*, 16 August 1931.

25 Fikret Yılmaz, *Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Konak Meydanı*, p. 22.

26 *Anadolu*, 22 September 1933.

27 Buses that were initially run by private individuals started to be run by the municipality in accordance with the decision taken by the municipal council on 1 April 1936. See *Izmir Belediyesi Meclis Tutanakları (Minutes of the Izmir Municipal Council)*, 01 April 1936.



## **2. Konak Square's Transformation After 1950**

Apart from Rene Danger, Le Corbusier, and some other Western architects were also consulted in the westernization process of Izmir and with this purpose in mind, an international project competition was held in 1951 so as to specify the reconstruction plan of Izmir. In the specifications prepared by the municipality for this contest, the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Articles contained the following statements regarding Konak Square:

Article 14: Relocation of the historical prisonhouse situated right behind the square; Article 15: It has been established that the Barracks and the Fortifications Command situated in the region of Konak, and the Officers' Club and its appurtenances be removed from this sector and this sector shall thus be arranged based on the principle of betterment of Konak Square and be allocated for public buildings and entertainment venues. The relation between the square and its vicinity shall be taken into consideration.<sup>28</sup>

As can also be understood from the specifications drawn up for the contest, among the projects prepared for the reconstruction of Izmir, particular importance was given to those proposals presented especially for the Konak Square. What was particularly expected from the participant projects was to put forth ideas concerning the demolition of the Barracks and prospective use of this site, a task which had been planned in 1924 but could not be put into practice for various reasons.<sup>29</sup> Among the projects receiving a high ranking or an honorable mention, the winner was project number 13, submitted by Prof. Kemal Ahmet Aru from İstanbul and his assistants Gündüz Özdeş and Emin Canbolat, all of whom were architects.<sup>30</sup>

A look at Kemal Aru's project shows that a business office, a commerce house, and shops were to be installed on the site to be vacated after the demolition of the Yellow Barracks; the site between the Customs Square (Gümrük Meydanı) and the Konak Square was to be allocated to big shops and businesses, and high commerce blocks were to be established at the outset of Fevzi Paşa Boulevard just across from the port square (Customs Square). For the purpose of increasing fine arts activities in the city, a 510 square meter site near the barracks was assigned for building an opera and theater building.<sup>31</sup> Yet this project could not be realized to a large extent for reasons such as financial incapacibilities and differences of opinion within the Municipal Council.

---

28 "İzmir Şehri Milletlerarası İmar Planı Müsabakası Jüri Raporu", *Arkitekt Aylık Mimarlık, Şehircilik ve Belediyecilik Dergisi* (1952) 20 (5-8), p. 146.

29 The then Prime Minister Adnan Menderes defined the barracks building as "a veil on the beautiful face of Izmir" and stated that it had to be immediately demolished. "Şehir Meclisinin Fevkalade Toplantısı", *Yeni Asır*, 18 July 1951.

30 "İzmir Şehri Milletlerarası İmar Planı Müsabakası Jüri Raporu", *Arkitekt Aylık Mimarlık, Şehircilik ve Belediyecilik Dergisi*, p. 138.

31 "İzmir'in İmar Planı Raporu", *Yeni Asır*, 4 March 1955.

Meanwhile, the Izmir Municipality still took important steps towards the demolition of the Yellow Barracks.<sup>32</sup> For the residence of the military organization in the Yellow Barracks, new barracks were commissioned to be built on Hatay Street and in Rahmi Bey Park.<sup>33</sup> The Yellow Barracks, whose evacuation was completed in March, started to be demolished on 6 May 1955. The Officers' Club in this area could not be demolished, as it had been added later to the Yellow Barracks and was the most solid section of the structure and had undergone various improvements. In accordance with the decision, this part of the Yellow Barracks could be used not only for public entertainment and recreation by being rented out in summer by the municipality, but also conferences, fashion shows, etc. could also be organized in the hall on the upper floor. It was also decided to demolish some of the warehouses located outside the Yellow Barracks on the northern side of the square.<sup>34</sup> Following the demolition of the Yellow Barracks, this empty space extending from the Clock Tower up to the Bahribaba Park led people to call the Konak Square as "the farm".<sup>35</sup>

There was an attempt at endowing a commercial identity to the square with the public buildings and entertainment spaces planned for construction in place of the Barracks. At the same time, an opening of a street, stretching from Basmane to the Government House and connecting to the northern axis from there, caused a traffic that literally divided the street down the middle. These serious changes undergone in the Konak Square in the said years are closely related to the political developments of the period. It is thus necessary to have a look at the changing urban space with the political shift to a multi-party system in Turkey in the 1950s.

In the wake of the Second World War, Turkey became a part of the international economic order in the reconfigured Western world. The attempt at being articulated to the international order naturally had particular consequences. Making way for significant structural changes, these consequences primarily necessitated the surge of policies prioritizing private enterprise in the place of policies attaching priority to the state. Thus started the search for liberal politics in the 1950s. Inevitably, the integration with the international system and the developments brought about by the liberal newly adopted model caused a change in the architectural traditions of Turkey. As a matter of fact, far from being solely formal changes as perceived then, the changes emerging in the

32 "The real estate, owned by the Treasury, situated in the Konak district of Izmir, and on which there is located the Officers' Club, the Yellow Barracks and its appurtenances, shall be handed over to the Izmir Municipality by the Ministry of Finance, on condition that a division command building, officers' club and a recruitment office be built on this site." *Resmî Gazete*, 09 March 1954.

33 "Sarıklı'nın Tahliyesine Hazırlık", *Yeni Asır*, 30 January 1955.

34 "Kışlanın Yıkılmasına Merasimle Başlanacak", *Yeni Asır*, 4 May 1955.

35 Deniz Tibet, *19. Yüzyıldan Günümüz Dönemine İzmir'de Yaşanan Sosyal, Ekonomik Değişimler Çerçevesinde Konak Meydanı'nın Geçirdiği Evrelerin İncelenmesi*, Gazi University, Unpublished MA Thesis, Ankara, 2005, p. 93.

urban architecture had deeper and structural repercussions. The priority given to the private sector in the economic sphere expanded the volume and content of this sector's demand for construction. In their own schemes and templates, the offices, bureaus, marketplaces, etc. that were necessitated by the new economy and the expanding business volume became a part of the agenda of architecture in the 1950s.<sup>36</sup>

With the shift to a multi-party political system, the concept of "public sphere" began to drift apart from its form idealized in the early Republican period, developing at variance with the mindset of the previous period. In this period, main streets and squares in big city centers were expanded in line with commercial interests; ground floors were transformed into arcades, upper floors into bureaus and business centers oriented to the services sector. In an effort to provide a better service for vehicle traffic, streets were expanded, and pavements and green spaces between traffic lanes were destroyed. Hence, the social public spaces declined in importance and the concept of "avenue" (*cadde*) serving for luxury consumption came to the forefront.<sup>37</sup> When considered from this standpoint, it is also understood that what lies behind these practices of the early 1950s is an attempt to endow a commercial identity to the Konak Square. Similar proposals were given and similar developments were experienced in later reconstruction activities.

With the demolition of the Yellow Barracks in 1955, it was decided to hold a competition to determine a new form for Konak Square, which was regarded as the city center. Initiated in 1956, the competition involved only the urban center encompassing sixty thousand square meters. The reason underlying this spatial constraint was that the piles of debris had still not been removed and Konak Square had become an undefined, fuzzy site under heaps of dust despite the fact that almost one year had passed since the demolition of the Yellow Barracks.<sup>38</sup> The winner of this competition was a project prepared by Doğan Tekel, Tekin Aydın, and Sami Sisa; the second was the Güngür Kaftancı and Cihat Fındıkoğlu's project; and lastly, the third was the project by Metin Hegüler. As stated in the jury's report, all these rewarded projects presented important ideas for the arrangement of the Konak Square.<sup>39</sup> These projects, however, could not be put into practice for various reasons.

During all these developments, in accordance with the winning project of the earlier 1951 competition for the arrangement of the square, a decision was taken to build an opera house and a small theater near it, which had long

---

36 Afife Batur, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türk Mimarlığı", *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Vol: 5, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, pp. 1380-1413.

37 Sibel Polat, *Kamusal Dış Mekânlarda Mimari Kimliği Değerlendirmek İçin Bir Yöntem Önerisi: Bursa Cumhuriyet Alanı Örneği*, p.127.

38 Ziya Nebioğlu, "İzmir Nereye Gidiyor?", *Demokrat İzmir*, 26 January 1956.

39 "İzmir Konak Sitesi Proje Müsabakası", *Arkitekt Aylık Mimarlık, Şehircilik ve Belediyecilik Dergisi* (1956) 25, 57-65.

been a cultural gap in the city. The planned venue for these buildings was the site that emerged after the demolition of the Yellow Barracks and its premises.<sup>40</sup> However, after 1955, discussions took place in the Municipal Council regarding the necessity of such activities within the square and the idea of building a theater building was ultimately abandoned.<sup>41</sup> The Konak Square had been the most important public space of the city since its formation, yet it had been transformed into an undefined site with the demolition of the Yellow Barracks and no project could be implemented, so the municipality tried to use the square in a different manner.

Within this scope, a decision was taken to send letters to some municipalities abroad requesting their assistance. These letters were centered upon the question of the best method of arrangement of this residual “empty space” after the completion of the reconstruction of Konak Square. The incoming replies stated that in the planning of a public space in the center of a historical city could not be conducted in this way. Then in 1966, the General Directorate of Social Insurance organized a “Project Competition for the Izmir Konak Site” and the winner was Orhan Dinç, the second place Fikret Cankurt, and third, Oral Vural.<sup>42</sup>

The jury report about the first project included the following comment: “... A quick development of the commercial activity within this complex, which would immediately adapt to the urban texture and fuse with it, the organization of all shops and stores on the ground level, the ease of renting the types and sectors of the offices by cultural experts and craftsmen not only secure important advantages in terms of rent, but also provide opportunities for sea breeze and scenery for the part of the city situated in the southern part of the site.”<sup>43</sup>

The jury report about the second project contained the following comments: “The greatest success of this complex is thought to be the extension of this site into the remote and immediate vicinity, thus, the metropolitan texture seems to be the rich space created by the Anafartalar Avenue with the sequence of the mass of offices along the seaside. This space has been vivified with low market units and the whole area has been assigned to shops and stores. Also partly enriched with mezzanines, this space meets the requirements of the program with its highest rent level and quality organization-....”<sup>44</sup>

The jury reports separately prepared for the first and second projects of the competition for Izmir Konak site organized in 1966 by the General Directorate

40 Rıza Aşkan and Harbi Hotan, “Izmir Şehir Tiyatrosu Projesi”, *Arkitekt*, Vol: 24, 1955, p. 17.

41 *Belediye Meclis Tutanakları (Minutes of the Izmir Municipal Council)*, 06 June 1955.

42 “Izmir Konak Sitesi Mimari Proje Yarışma Sonucu”, *Arkitekt Aylık Mimarlık, Şehircilik ve Belediyecilik Dergisi* (1966) 35, 40-47, p. 40.

43 “Izmir Konak Sitesi Mimari Proje Yarışma Sonucu”, *Arkitekt Aylık Mimarlık, Şehircilik ve Belediyecilik Dergisi*, p. 40.

44 “Izmir Konak Sitesi Mimari Proje Yarışma Sonucu”, *Arkitekt Aylık Mimarlık, Şehircilik ve Belediyecilik Dergisi*, p. 43.

of Social Insurance feature a striking element: Both projects were appreciated in terms of their capacity to produce a “high level of rent”. As stated before, as a consequence of the shift to a multi-party political system from the beginning of the 1950s, there was an intense attempt to impart a commercial aspect to public spaces. It was from this point of view that the project competition for the Konak Site was evaluated and, as a result of the transformation of the flexible former Yellow Barracks space into a new shopping mall, a decision was taken to put into practice Orhan Dinç’s project, which was the Social Insurance Market. And banks were also opened on the axis of Gümrük and Konak.

On the other hand, the Izmir Municipality decided to embark on a multi-storey parking lot system in order to meet the increasing need of the city for parking lots. Mayor Osman Kibar stated that the first step had been taken in this direction, explaining that the site of the previous prison house in Konak Square would be transformed into a modern, four-storey parking garage.<sup>45</sup> Construction work thus started on the site where the Yellow Barracks had been demolished in 1959. Following the demolition of the Barrack and warehouses, project competitions had been held by the municipality for almost ten years for the purpose of creating ideas for reconstruction of Konak Square; yet, as some of these could not be put into practice, this process had a major negative impact on the public identity of Konak Square. The square had become in this period an undefined site used by peddlers, buses, and minibusses.

In 1970, a very significant development took place concerning Konak Square. As a consequence of a big fire that broke out in August of that year, the Judiciary Building and the Government House, two symbolic structures encircling the square, fell into extreme ruin.<sup>46</sup> The Izmir Prosecution Office launched an investigation about the fire breaking out in the historical government building and asserted that, even though it was not yet then certain, the fire occurred as a result of an electrical short circuit.<sup>47</sup> This disaster disrupted the working life of many people in Izmir and the trials in the Izmir Judiciary were postponed.<sup>48</sup>

After the burning of the Government House, bus stations were built next to it. The road passing in front of the Yalı Mosque also created a total rupture in this undefined square. When the Government House was being restored, about half of the section facing the square and the block at the end of the unit extending to Kemeraltı were excluded from the project and then demolished. In addition, the burned Judiciary Building was also completely demolished and multi-storey buildings for the Judiciary and the Provincial Directorate of National Education were constructed in its stead.

45 “4 Katlı Otopark Devlet Hastanesi Karşısındaki Sahada Yapılacak”, *Yeni Asır*, 23 July 1966.

46 “İzmir Vilayet Konağı Yandı”, *Yeni Asır*, 1 August 1970.

47 “Yangının Zararı 40 Milyona Yakın”, *Yeni Asır*, 3 August 1970.

48 “İzmir’de İş Hayatı Geniş Çapta Felce Uğradı”, *Demokrat İzmir*, 2 August 1970.

In 1970, the architects in Izmir opened a photography exhibition titled "The Uglifying Izmir" and described Konak Square in the following words: "The peddlers in Konak Square create an image reminiscent of an Indochinese city, especially in the evenings when people depart from work. The dust and dirt emanating from the construction site of the theater hall further worsen the brilliant spectacle of Konak Square. With each passing day, the square further loses its essential characteristics. Some of the buses take off from Konak Square. The current image of the Konak Square resembles a bus terminal of a central Anatolian city."<sup>49</sup>

### Conclusion

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, the area of Izmir known as the "Konak Square" containing the Yellow Barracks, Government House, and Warehouses was defined as the city's first public center. As can also be understood from the characteristics of the structures in this period, this square had administrative, military and commercial characteristics. As the political structure changed over time, the square acquired new features along with the changing society and social order. With the reactivation of the constitutional monarchy, it witnessed various protests, rallies, and demonstrations under the spell of the emancipatory atmosphere prevalent all over the country. Hence, the political characteristic of the square burst into prominence. The national and modern urban conception of the Republican administration had also cast salient reflections on Konak Square. Such structures as the library and cinema halls, whose foundations had been laid in the early twentieth century, were activated in the Republican period. The social characteristic of the square thus gained momentum. As is seen, Konak Square has undergone three important phases, i.e., the Tanzimat, the Constitutional Monarchy and the Republic, but despite all these changes, it has maintained its public center characteristic to the present day.

---

49 "Çirkinleşen Izmir", *Yeni Asır*, 29 September 1970.

## REFERENCES

- "4 Katlı Otopark Devlet Hastanesi Karşısındaki Sahada Yapılacak", *Yeni Asır* (1966) 23 July.
- "Çirkinleşen İzmir", *Yeni Asır* (1970), 29 September.
- "Dünkü Girit Mitingi", *Köylü* (1910), 14 May.
- "Gazi Heykeli Bugün Saat (18)de Açılıyor", *Anadolu* (1932) 27 July.
- "Girit Meselesi ve Miting", *Ahenk* (1909), 8 January.
- "İzmir Vilayet Konağı Yandı", *Yeni Asır* (1970), 1 August.
- "İzmir'de İş Hayatı Geniş Çapta Felce Uğradı", *Demokrat İzmir* (1970), 2 August.
- "İzmir'in İmar Planı Raporu", *Yeni Asır* (1955) 4 March.
- "Kışlanın Yıkılmasına Merasimle Başlanacak", *Yeni Asır* (1955) 4 May.
- "Sarıkişla'nın Tahliyesine Hazırlık", *Yeni Asır* (1955) 30 January.
- "Şehir Meclisinin Fevkalade Toplantısı", *Yeni Asır* (1951) 18 July.
- "Yangının Zararı 40 Milyona Yakın", *Yeni Asır* (1970), 3 August.
- AKSOY, Y. (1986) *Bir Kent, Bir İnsan: İzmir'in Son Yüzyılı, S. Ferit Eczacıbaşı'nın Yaşamı ve Anıları*, Eczacıbaşı Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Anadolu* (1933) 22 September.
- ARITAN, Ö. (2008) "Modernleşme ve Cumhuriyetin Kamusal Mekân Modelleri", *Mimarlık*, 342, 49-56.
- "İzmir Şehri Milletlerarası İmar Planı Müsabakası Jüri Raporu", *Arkitekt Aylık Mimarlık, Şehircilik ve Belediyecilik Dergisi* (1952) 20 (5-8), 119-146.
- "İzmir Konak Sitesi Proje Müsabakası", *Arkitekt Aylık Mimarlık, Şehircilik ve Belediyecilik Dergisi* (1956) 25, 57-65.
- "İzmir Konak Sitesi Mimari Proje Yarışma Sonucu", *Arkitekt Aylık Mimarlık, Şehircilik ve Belediyecilik Dergisi* (1966) 35, 40-47.
- AŞKAN, R.ve HOTAN, H. (1955) "İzmir Şehir Tiyatrosu Projesi", *Arkitekt*, 24.
- BARAN, T. A. (2003) *Bir Kentin Yeniden Yapılanması: İzmir 1923-1938*, Arma Yayınları, İstanbul.
- BATUR, A. Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türk Mimarlığı, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, (5) 1380-1413.

- BEYRU, R. (2011) *19. Yüzyılda İzmir Kenti*, Literatür Yayınları, İstanbul.
- BİLSEL, C. (2009) "İzmir'de Cumhuriyet Dönemi Planlaması (1923-1965): 20. Yüzyıl Kentsel Mirası", *Ege Mimarlık*, October, 12-17.
- ÇETİNKAYA, D. (2003) 1908 Devrimi ve Meydan Adlarının Değişimi, *Toplumsal Tarih*, 120 (December), 34-37.
- Demokrat İzmir* (1956) 26 January.
- Demokrat İzmir* (1970) 2 August.
- EYÜCE, Ö. (2000) Meydanlar, *Ege Mimarlık*, 34 (2), 11.
- GENCEL, Z. (2000) "Geleneksel Türk Kentinde Meydan Kavramı", *Ege Mimarlık*, 34 (2).
- Hizmet* (1931) 16 August.
- İzmir Municipal Council Minutes* (1936) 01 April.
- İzmir Municipal Council Minutes* (1955) 06 June.
- İttihad* (1909) "Girit İçin Nümayış", 8 January
- KARABULUT, U. (2014), *İzmir Kentinde Siyasi Protesto Kültürü (1908-1912)*, Yeditepe Yayınları, İstanbul.
- KIRLI, C. (1999/2000) "Kahvehaneler ve Hafiyeler: 19. Yüzyıl Ortalarında Osmanlı'da Sosyal Kontrol", *Toplum ve Bilim*, 83 (Winter) 58-79.
- Köylü* (1909), "Dünkü Miting", 14 May.
- NEBİOĞLU, Z. (1956) "İzmir Nereye Gidiyor?", *Demokrat İzmir*, 26 January.
- POLAT, S. (2013) *Kamusal Dış Mekânlarda Mimari Kimliği Değerlendirmek İçin Bir Yöntem Önerisi: Bursa Cumhuriyet Alanı Örneği*, Bursa.
- REFET, K. (1931) "İzmir'in İmarı Hakkında", *Mimar* 1 (7), 228-230.
- Resmi Gazete* (1954) 09 March.
- TANYELİ, U. (1992) "Çağdaş İzmir'in Mimarlık Serüveni", *Üç İzmir*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul, 327-338.
- TİBET, D. (2005), *19.yüzyıldan Günümüz Dönemine İzmir'de Yaşanan Sosyal, Ekonomik Değişimler Çerçevesinde Konak Meydanı'nın Geçirdiği Evrelerin İncelenmesi*, Gazi Üniversitesi Basılmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara.
- UZUN, İ. (2007) "Kamu İdari Yapıları Mimarisi", *İzmir Kent Ansiklopedisi*, Architecture, Vol. I, İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kent Kitaplığı, İzmir, 342-352.
- Wikipedia*, "Selamlık" [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selamlık>] Erişim Tarihi (25.01.2016).



YILMAZ, F. (2003) *Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Konak Meydanı*, İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kent Kitaplığı, İzmir.

ZENGEL, R. (2007) "Dönüştürülmüş Bir Meydan: Konak Meydanına Analitik Bir Yaklaşım", *Mimarlık*, 334, 40-43.