



ON THE PROTECTION OF TURKISH CULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENT*

Türk Kültür Mirasının Korunması ve Tarihi Çevre Bilinci Üzerine

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Özet

Türkler millet olarak pek az toplumun sahip olabileceği köklü bir tarih ve kültürel mirasın varisleridir. Üç kıta üzerinde, çok geniş bir coğrafyaya yayılmış bulunan Türk mimarlık anıtları bunun en önemli parçalarından birini oluşturmaktadır. Gereği gibi korunamayan bu mirasın büyük bölümü şimdiye kadar çeşitli sebeplerle yok edilmiştir. Ne yazık ki, tarihi eser kavramının bütün toplumlarda benimsendiği ve korumacılığın artık tartışma konusu olmaktan çıktığı günümüzde de Türk sanat ve mimari eserlerinin tahribatı sürmektedir. Kültürel kimliğin yanında, tarihe de tanıklık eden söz konusu eserlerin yok olmasında bir çok neden sayılabilir. Ancak, kitlesel eğitim eksikliğine bağlı olarak, tarihi çevre bilincinin yetersizliği bu yok oluşta en etken rolü oynamaktadır.

Bugün dünyanın birçok yerinde Türk mimari eserleri; gelişme ve modernleşmenin önünde engelmış gibi gösterilerek yeni imar planlarıyla ve yapılaşmalarla ortadan kaldırılmakta; ya da yeni çevre düzenlemelerine kurban edilmektedir. Nitekim, son elli yıl içindeki kimi uygulamalar incelendiğinde, sayısız mimarlık eserinin böyle sebeplerle tamamen yok edildiğine veya içinde bulunduğu tarihi dokudan soyutlanarak, çevrelerinin uygunsuz yeni yapılarla doldurulduğuna tanık olunmaktadır. Oysa, gerçek anlamda kültürel mirasın ve mimari anıtların yaşatılması, onların içinde bulunduğu fiziki ve tarihi çevre ile bir bütün halinde korunmasını gerektirir. Bunu sağlayabilmek, tarihi çevre bilincinin ulusal ve uluslar arası düzeyde bütün toplumlarda ciddi eğitim programlarıyla acilen oluşturulması ve yerleştirilmesiyle mümkündür.

Bu makalede, Türk mimarlık mirasından bazı yapıların yanlış uygulamalar sonucunda nasıl yok edildiğinin, ya da çevrelerinden ne şekilde koparılmış olduğunun örnekleri verilerek; günümüzde artık insanlığa mal olmuş seçkin Türk anıtlarının mevcut tarihsel dokularıyla birlikte korunmasında, tarihi çevre bilincinin önemi ve gereği üzerinde durulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Kültür Mirası, Tarih Çevre, Koruma.

Abstract

Turks as a nation are the heirs of a cultural heritage and a radical history which only a few societies can have. This nation, which had sovereignty over three continents, has left deep impacts on them that can never be forgotten. The monuments of Turkish architecture that lie on a vast geography, have been subjected to a continuous destruction and annihilation so far. Even today where the concept of historical monuments is accepted

* This paper was presented in the *International Symposium on Environment and Its Education* held in Baku (Azerbaijan), in July 18-23, 2003. This version is revised and revisited.

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and the their protection is not matter of argument any longer, the destruction of the works of Turkish art and architecture continues mercilessly.

Unless the consciousness of historical environment has been taken up seriously and settled at all parts of the society; the laws, the councils and the experts will not be efficient and adequate to protect the cultural heritage. The main problem now is to think and concentrate how to protect the present Turkish heritage. First of all, the protection of the architectural heritage is possible by protecting the whole historical environment. In order to provide, the consciousness of the historical environment must be formed and rooted in all the national and international societies. This can be achieved through a serious education.

Key Words: Turkish Heritage Culture, Historical Environment, Protecting.

Turks as a nation are the heirs of a cultural heritage and a radical history which only a few societies can have. This nation, which had sovereignty over three continents, has left deep impacts on them that can never be forgotten. In the last periods of Ottoman Empire, with the end of the sovereignty in the countries that are separated from the Empire, there have been people trying to destroy the impact completely. However, their efforts were not enough to reach their aims. Perhaps Balkans is one of the best examples, since the cultural heritage of the Ottoman on these lands, regardless of the circumstances, keeps its presence.

The monuments of Turkish architecture that lie on a vast geography, have been subjected to a continuous destruction and annihilation so far. Even today where the concept of historical monuments is accepted and the their protection is not matter of argument any longer,¹ the destruction of the works of Turkish art and architecture continues mercilessly. In recent years we have witnessed the most tragic examples of this during the wars in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Today, due to the rapid destruction of our historical cities, the change in appearance is perceived as modernization there. It seems that we will continue to abolish the old, while turning the narrow roads of traditional structure into wide streets, and building large, profitable commercial buildings in the place of old ones. Thus, the old, traditional structure of our historical cities, which form the essential parts of our cultural identity, has been changing for the worse and our historic monuments have been either completely destroyed or surrounded by new buildings without considering their physical environment. In fact, what we destroy are not only our ancient monuments and historical environment but also our cultural identity. For the last 50 years, the appearance of many of our cities in Anatolia and other regions around the world has been changed unconsciously and these cities have greatly changed their cultural identity. Pity that of which the recovery is impossible, still have not been put to an end. These applications, of which the recovery is impossible. On the contrary, the West which we take as a model in modernization, pays immaculate attention to the protection of its own culture and protects its cities that have historical environments very carefully. In the historical cities such as Rome, Paris, Stockholm and Amsterdam we can see the best examples of the protectiveness. And it shows that, destroying the old is not a must for modernization. On the contrary, good progress and modernization can be achieved by founding the future on the past strongly, not by destroying it. So, destroying the historical environments is not a criterion of modernization but the sign of the fact that the consciousness of historical environment has not yet settled at those societies.

Unless the consciousness of historical environment has been taken up seriously and settled at all parts of the society; the laws, the councils and the experts will not be efficient and adequate to protect the cultural heritage. We can see this situation in many countries today. For example, the principles of protection are set

¹ Z. Ahunbay, **Tarihi Çevre Koruma ve Restorasyon**, Istanbul 2004, pp. 8-36.

by the laws in Turkey. The decisions are made by the councils. There are enough experts, yet the historical environments can yet not be prevented from destruction. So what is missing? No matter what the cause is, the main reason for the destruction is due to the lack of the consciousness of historical environment.

The current ways of protecting historic monuments can also be argued. During environmental planning the small old buildings around have been destroyed and wide areas, parks or streets replace the narrow roads. These plans, which are done to make the historic monuments look better, are in fact separating them from the old structure of those cities and the historical environments are losing their identity as well. Thus, the historic monuments fail to fulfill their functions since they are changed into statues for decorative purposes. Though this situation seems to be positive at first sight, it contradicts the spirit of structure and accelerates the destruction.² There are numerous examples important historic monuments, registered as ancient in some cities, which are made to lose their functions and which became ineffective.³ Instead of this, the thing to be done should be equipping the historic monuments according to their functions, while protecting them with their historical environments. At the same time, being a part of the modern life will let them remain standing and be protected effectively.

Another problem in protecting the traditional structure of ancient cities is the protection of historic houses which form the most important part of this structure. Today, even the mansions in which only wealthy families could reside in the near past are neglected and they are demolished. It is not so easy for people to restore the old due to cost. The shortage of equipment and not having enough craftsmen as well as the bureaucratic obstacles and procedures are difficult to overcome. Consequently, these buildings seem as a burden to their owners and they try to find a way to get rid of them. And this naturally causes the historic monuments and the old houses to be destroyed very rapidly. If the owners were to understand the real values of those monuments and if the encouraging measures were taken, there would be a progressive step towards the protection of historical environments. But, first, the consciousness of historical environment should be told and explained to the populous and make them understand the value of the historic monuments they own. Then the landowners should be encouraged to protect and the government's support should be provided in order to supply the craftsmen and equipment. This is not so difficult and expensive as might be expected. The historic monuments are generally made of traditional materials which can be easily found. This will be more economical than modern construction materials. Also local administrations can provide that kind of material for the landowners very cheaply. Furthermore, the procedure of restoration can be made more national and easy by training local craftsmen who have the ability to restore these monuments in their real sense. As a result, a new branch of business can be formed the countries where unemployment is a serious problem. Of course the bureaucratic obstacles and unnecessary procedures need to be removed while these are in progress.

In the last century and especially after 1950s, when industrialization gained importance, the historical environments have been affected badly by these developments. Lack of consciousness caused new restructuring to be in the foreground while the protection had to remain in the background. For instance, in various parts of Anatolia, both in the city and countryside, many of the historic monuments were sacrificed to road construction or arrangement of the environment. When the applications of the last 50 years are evaluated, we are faced with terrible consequences. For example, in Konya, the capital of Anatolian Seljuk State, the construction of roads in the city center have caused a wide demolition and destruction, including a part of the remains of the Seljuk Palace.

² M. S. Genim, "Koruma Kültürü Üzerine", **Türkiye'de Risk Altındaki Doğal ve Kültürel Miras – TAÇ Vakfı'nın 25 Yılı** (Ed. H. Sezgin), Istanbul 2001, p. 198.

³ A. Alkan, O.N. Dülgerler, H. Kulu, "Bir Türk İslam Şehri Olarak Konya", **The Conference on The Preservation of Architectural Heritage of Islamic Cities**, 22-26/4/1985, Istanbul 1987, pp.239-240.

We can see similar applications in other cities such as Istanbul, Bursa and Edirne. The applications resulting from the unconsciousness can be seen not only in the cities but also in the countryside. The most amazing example of this is the case of “Alay Han”, which was built between Kayseri and Aksaray during the Seljuk Period and which is one of the most valuable caravanserais in Anatolia. In the recent years, this caravanserai has been excavated and it was found out that the motorway between Aksaray and Nevşehir was passing through the courtyard of this han.⁴ Is there any other possible answer other than the lack of consciousness of historic monuments for the reason why this motorway, which is in the middle of a prairie, passed through the courtyard of such a valuable monument instead of somewhere else? In the last century, such applications were seen not only in Anatolia but also in the whole of Middle Asia, Caucasia and the Balkans, as the most merciless way to destroy Turkish cultural identity.

As it is seen, Turkish cultural heritage has experienced bad applications almost all over the world. The main problem now is to think and concentrate how to protect the present Turkish heritage. First of all, the protection of the architectural heritage is possible by protecting the whole historical environment. In order to provide, the consciousness of the historical environment must be formed and rooted in all the national and international societies. This can be achieved through a serious education. Firstly, the people in the administrative units should have the consciousness of historical environment and the administrators should be properly informed by education programs, seminars and conferences. Great attention must be paid to the construction plans and the new reforms in order to work harmlessly in the historical environments.⁵ Some of the city plans which don't take the historical environments into consideration⁶ sufficiently must be revised and the mistakes must be corrected immediately. In order to educate the public, the children should be taught to love the heritage from the very early ages. Similarly, we should tell the significance of our historic monuments to the great masses by means of television and the press and make them believe.

It shouldn't be forgotten that we didn't create those environments. Moreover, it wasn't possible for us to form them. Historical environments were formed after many years even through centuries. So, destroying them in a few days can be neither our nor the others' right. Historical environments are the trusts we took from our ancestors to carry to the future. The way of being loyal to this trust will be possible by making them live and transferring them to the next generation. If we do this properly, we can feel the peace of not only giving the trust to its owners but also protecting this heritage.

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⁴ B. Deniz, “Alay Han'ın (Aksaray) Hikayesi”, **Uluslararası Sanat Tarihi Sempozyumu –Gönül Öney'e Armağan-**, (10-13 Ekim 2001), İzmir 2002, pp.229-246.

⁵ Z. Görgülü, “Kültür ve Doğa Varlıklarının Korunmasında Planlamanın ve Plancının İşlevi”, **Türkiye'de Risk Altındaki Doğal ve Kültürel Miras – TAÇ Vakfı'nın 25 Yılı (Ed. H. Sezgin)**, İstanbul 2001, pp. 207-210.

⁶ T. Cansever, “Belediyelerin Kasalarındaki İmar Planları Yakılmadı”, **Mimarlık**, 1975/5, S. 139, Ankara 1975, pp.26-27.