

THE MOVING HOUSE OR ATATÜRK HOUSE MUSEUM AND THE ALTERED MIND-SET OF YALOVA PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

THE MOVING HOUSE OR ATATÜRK HOUSE MUSEUM AND THE ALTERED MIND-SET OF YALOVA PROVINCE

History of Turkish Republic contains exemplary endeavours of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who showed an admirable exertion to elevate the republic to standards of the contemporary civilisations following the proclamation of the republic. Amongst his endeavours, the wooden building, named as Yürüyen Köşk (The Moving House) by the locals in Yalova province, and the adjacent Ulu Çınar Ağacı (The Great Plane Tree) are of immense significance as indicators of Atatürk's sensibility towards nature in environmental and museum studies. Conveying a message of love of nature not only to Turkish people but also the rest of the world, The Moving House, also known as Atatürk House Museum, demonstrates the exertion of a leader imbued with love of nature and people. Whilst executing his designs into nourishing the newly-found republic, Atatürk was also well aware of the significance of nature in every single territory that had been reclaimed during Turkish War of Independence. His decision to relocate the custom-built house exemplifies the extent of his respect for nature. By abstaining from cutting a bough of a tree at a time when issues such as ozone layer depletion, global warming, pollution, acid rains, destruction of forests, and changing climates were neither known nor mentioned, Atatürk's conduct has set an example of love of nature for the entire humanity. The public's support for environmental consciousness and the museum is blatantly reflected in record-breaking numbers of visitors since conversion of the house into a museum during the 1980s. The amount of interest and solicitude shown by the locals of Yalova Province is a proof of their ardour to safely hand down the token of Atatürk's memory the future generations. This article will discuss amalgamation of the story of Atatürk's environmental mind-set with the museum and its impact of Yalova Province.

Key Words: The Moving House, Environmental Mind-set, Plane Tree, Yalova Province

Introduction:

With the proclamation of the republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk took interest in enhancement of urban planning and nature. His service in urban and environmental studies in 1920 paved the way for today's mind-set of urban planning. Carrying his afforestation spirit everywhere he travelled, Atatürk made sure that greening activities were at full velocity.

During his very first visit to Yalova province in 1927, Atatürk spent time at Termal and Baltacı Ranch. Admiring the thermal springs that have been in use since Roman and Byzantine times, he, in the later years of summer, decided to remain at the spot where some of the most crucial decisions of the history of Turkish Republic were made. Both Baltacı Çiftliği Köşkü (Baltacı Ranch Mansion), constructed in 19th century, and The Moving House, the subject of this article, served as abodes to him over the course of his stay. The latter, constructed in 1929, was decided to be converted into a museum during the 1980s (1).

On August 21th 1929, Atatürk set out on a journey from İstanbul to Bursa Province, first from Dolmabahçe to Yalova Province by Ertuğrul Yatı (Ertuğrul Yatch), from there to his final destination by land. During the seafaring, the Great Plane Tree on the shore of Yalova Province captured Atatürk's attention. His fascination with the tree was such that he decided to divert their course towards the shore in order to rest under it. There and then, instructions for the construction the house was given by Atatürk. Following his return to İstanbul, he embarked on building an exemplary ranch for Turkish agriculture by purchasing the entire land including the plane tree. Prior to his demise in 1938, he both transferred all his wealth to state treasury, and bequeathed the ranch to Turkish nation. A parcel of the ranch was distributed amongst the public. The rest was consigned to an establishment founded under the name of *Atatürk Bahçe Kültürleri Merkez Araştırma Enstitüsü* (Atatürk Horticultural Central Research Institute). Atatürk's endeavours to maintain the green fields of Yalova Province resulted in creation of a Garden of Eden (2).

Atatürk was well aware of the fact that lack of fertile and green land was the primary reason behind the Turk's migration from Central Asia. Therefore, he had always encouraged love and respect for nature, which was oftentimes included his in opening speeches at *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi* (Turkish Grand National Assembly). "The Moving House's Relocation Project" is surely the most beautiful embodiment of his environmentalist mind-set and love and respect for nature.

Account of The Moving House

Construction of the house, started on August 21th 1929, was concluded in 22 days on September 12th 1929. Being a rectangle shaped, double floor and semi-masonry building, the house, located in a southern district of Yalova

Province called Termal, initially served as an accommodation. Next to the building, there stood The Great Plane Tree whose branches began to damage the exterior parts of the house. In a response to gardener's request for trimming the tree, Atatürk uttered "There will be no trimming, the house will be dislocated!" As unthinkable it may have been at the time, his words were immediately delivered to *İstanbul Belediyesi Belediye Fen İşleri Yollar-Köprüler Şubesi* (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Department of Technical Works) that undertook the responsibility to initiate and execute the relocation project.

The Chief Engineer Ali Galip Alnar, a staff member of this department, arrived in Yalova Province along with his team on August 8th 1930. Starting with digging around the building, they continued doing so until they reached the foundation of the house. Next, they laid the tramway rails, brought from İstanbul, underneath the building. In the afternoon, operations of distancing the building from the tree began (3).



Photo. 1 and 2: The Relocation Operations of The Moving House Photo source: Engin Çakır; Dergibursa.com.tr; <http://www.dergibursa.com.tr/doga-sevgisinin-kosk-hali-yuruyen-kosk/>

The entire process had been observed by Atatürk himself, Makbule Hanım (his sister), Lieutenant Governor Mr. Muhtittin Ustundag, Substitute Director of Technical Works Mr. Yusuf Ziya Erdem, engineers and journalists from İstanbul for two days. The relocation process was comprised of

two phases (4). First, the terrace area surrounded by windows on three sides, which was then used as a parlour, was moved. Next, operations to move the main building were commenced and finalised in two days. August 10th saw the conclusion of the operations and the building was moved 5 meters to the east. Today, the building is known as "The Moving House" due to the method used in the process of its relocation.

Thanks to this engineering work, both the building and the Great Plane Tree eluded destruction. However, it is crucial to note that it is not the relocation by itself but also the message it bears are worthy of notice. Via the agency of the branch of the Great Plane Tree, Atatürk managed to convey an environmentalist message to the public. Additionally, his decision to use the relocation method when pulling down the building, and erecting a new one were less laborious by comparison points to his disposition towards protection instead of destruction.



Photo. 3 and 4: The Relocation Operations of The Moving House Photo source:Engin Çakır;Dergibursa.com.tr; <http://www.dergibursa.com.tr/doga-sevgisinin-kosk-hali-yuruyen-kosk/>

Conversion of The Moving House into a Museum

Having been called as "The Moving House" since 1930, the house was included in Cultural and Natural Properties by Ministry of Culture Department of Real Estate Ancient Monuments' decree dated 12.07.1980 and numbered 12238. After conclusion of the restoration process initiated by Yalova Municipality, the museum has been open to visitors since 2006. Free of charge for veterans and persons aged 65 and above, the museum welcomes visitors every day of the week, except Monday (5).

The building is characterised by its duplex, square-planned, carcass and small structure encircled by columns. The upper part is a free standing roof covered with Marseilles tile. Windows are in a traditional fashion with boxing shutters. The ground floor is furnished with mosaic and marble, whereas the second floor has a hardwood floor. Plasterboard walls have painted cement renderings (6).

The ground building on the east consists of a small room, parlour, toilet, bathroom and meeting room furnished with crystal windows looking out to sea. The entrance to the building is through a door on the west. The compartment on the left side of the entrance used to function as a station where tea and coffee were prepared. Today it is used as a cloakroom. The wooden stairs on the right side of the entrance lead to upstairs. Below the stairs, there is a partial basement where a small water purification centre operates. The heat source of the building is provided by water heated in a cast iron, graduated and thermostatic kettle. It is distributed upstairs via pipes. There is a small room next to the toilet at the entrance. The beachside of the building holds the assembly hall in which Atatürk's favourite gramophone is exhibited. All the fronts of the hall facing the sea are furnished with crystal doors through and through. The resting room on the left that belongs to Atatürk opens to terrace. Across the room, there is a (L) shaped bed room in which various pictures of the ranch are hung.



Photo. 5: Dinner Set for 32 (Photo Source:F.Erbay)



Photo. 6: Atatürk's Favourite Gramophon
(Photo Source:F.Erbay)

Cupboard on the left side of the stairs contains Belgian porcelain dinner set and cutlery for 32, two crystal pitchers, blankets, pillows, linens and table covers that belong to Atatürk. The beachside of the building is a marbled area encircled by 11 marble columns. 8 flights of stairs lead down to the wooden dock that is approximately 30 meter long and 2 meter broad. The Plane Tree, both occasion of the relocation and fascination of the viewers, stands on the west side of the building. There is a water well underneath the old water reservoir in the garden. Generator room, situated on 60 meters west of the building, was constructed at the same time as the house. It contains a Siemens 110 volt electric motor that provides for the lightening (7). Still used as a museum today, The Moving House includes exhibition of personal belongings of Atatürk as well as his wax figure.



Photo 7: Atatürk's Rest Room,2006 (K:F:Erbay)



Photo 8: Atatürk's Rest Room,2018 Photo Source:Engin Çakar;Dergibursa.com.tr; <http://www.dergibursa.com.tr/doga-sevgisinin-kosk-hali-yuruyen-kosk/>

Restoration of the Moving House (2006-2015)

Due to its location at an open field and proximity to sea, the building has been subject to detrimental effects of salty water and damp, which is accelerated by its old structure. Restoration of the exterior surface of the building began in 2006. Despite the attempt, there still remained fractions on the building, fixed by small operations, which signals that it still requires a restorative work. The wooden dock of the house has been restored several times as well as its environmental planning. A restaurant, rented and run by *Yalova Çevre Koruma Vakfı (YAÇEV) AŞ* (Yalova Province Environment Protection Association), was located in the garden of The Moving House. This area was emptied on October 4th 2009 (9).

Time has proven that The Moving House is a building that requires restoration every three or four years. Having been restored 2 times until 2012, the building was prepared for another restoration initiated by Yalova Province Mayorily. The due consents required for the restoration were granted by *Kocaeli Kültür ve Tabiat Varlıklarını Koruma Bölge Müdürlüğü* (Kocaeli Province General Directorate of Cultural and Natural Heritage) and expenses were calculated to be about 140.000 Turkish lira (9)

In 2013 an extensive restoration, in which the exterior fractions were repaired, was carried out by Yalova Belediyesi (Yalova Province Municipality). During the process, only the materials that are compatible with those of the old building were used by sampling. Especially dampness caused by water leaks through windows was aimed to be prevented. Outworn marbles on the portside were also renewed. After requiring the due consents, each and every single section of the house that had been worn out by time was fixed by remaining faithful to its original form (10).

Over the course of the restoration, the Plane Tree, located in the garden of the house, also underwent an alteration. In 2005, the tree was specified to be 390 years old with ten years of margin of error. X-ray examinations of the tree, dated 2005 as well, ascertained that state of its health

was poor, which necessitated commencement of treatment efforts (11). The treatment included removing fungus detected on the trunk, trimming, and reinforcing the branches leaning towards the seaside (12). Examinations, including radiocarbon dating test and x-ray, made in 2015 revealed that it was a wholesome tree of 390 years of age. (13). Now 404-year-old, the Great Plane Tree travels through time along with 90-year-old building. Recently, TEMA (The Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats) initiated planting 10 plane trees along the road of the Moving House in a joint environmental planning work with Yalova Temsilciliği ile Yalova Belediyesi (Representative Office of Yalova Province and Yalova Municipality) as part of events arranged for the commemoration of Atatürk (14).

The Moving House's Impact on Yalova Province

Public has shown a great amount of interest in the house via which Atatürk taught an environmentalism lesson to the entire world. The house is not only a cultural and touristic contribution to Yalova Province but also a museum hosting various events. For instance, the house became a centre of attraction on the 95th anniversary of the Republic when it set a record with 1.209 visitors. According to data provided by *Yalova Belediyesi* (Yalova Municipality), the museum received 25.000 visitors in 2015. Following this, number of the visitors consistently have increased by each passing year being 27.486 in 2016 and 37.540 in 2017. The numbers saw a %40 increase in 2018 with 52.885. That 13.000 of these visitors were comprised of teenagers proves both efforts and concern of nearby educational institutions and the young for maintenance of nature and history. Special occasions such as April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day, May 19 Youth and Sports Day, August 30 Victory Day, October 29 Republic Day, November 10-16 Atatürk Week and August 29 Atatürk's Visit in Yalova Province the museum saw 5. 868 visitors in 2018.

The highest number of visitors was recorded on November 10-16 Atatürk Week with 3.370 visitors, more than half of which were children, followed by 1.712 visitors on October 29 Republic Day. The end of 2018 saw more than 60.000 visitors (15).

The museum has successfully maintained its relevancy on Turkey's agenda via various events. For instance, the very first electric car of Yalova Province was publicised at The Moving House on January 31th 2019. Nature friendly vehicles are still being introduced at the garden of the museum that has remained standing by the environmentalist mind-set (16). Vefa Salman, Yalova Province Mayor, remarked that The Moving House is a world brand for being an environmentalist message in its entirety conveyed to the world by a leader. The Moving House has contributed to conversion of Yalova Province into a world brand.

International Recognition Studies

By Atatürk's decision to relocate the house whose construction he had commissioned, "a mere tree branch is precious" motto has been spread across the world. In light of this, The Moving House has become an international epitome of environmental consciousness not only of Yalova Province but of the world at large. To promote Atatürk's legacy, The Moving House, Jockey Club has traditionalised The Moving House Races. Moreover, the world-renowned pianist Fazıl Say composed a musical piece dedicated to the house. In 2017, Vefa Salman, the mayor of Yalova Province, has commissioned a series of campaigns in an attempt to initiate the inclusion of The Moving House in UNESCO World Heritage List. The organisation requires compatibility with only one of ten criteria set for inclusion in the list. The features of the house correspond to three of ten criteria listed below:

- 1-Being a supreme epitome of a creative mind.
- 3- Being a unique and rare example of an existent or a non-existent cultural tradition or civilisation.
- 5- Being a human settlement that is representative of a culture or an interaction between human beings and nature. Land and marine use are also deemed significant in making it into a special example. (17) The pursuit of an admission by UNESCO for The Moving House's inclusion in the list still continues. It is a common belief that the house's recognition as a world heritage will serve as an example of preservation of a natural and cultural heritage amongst other nations.



Photo. 9: The Moving House (K:F:Erbay)



Photo. 10: Parlour of the house (K:F:Erbay)

Conclusion:

The Moving House's relocation, lest the Great Plane Tree received any damage, has made its mark in Turkish history for occurring at a time when the conception of environmentalism and environmental consciousness were non-existent, and environmental engineering had yet to be regarded as a field of profession. This is included in our museum history as a prominent testimony of Atatürk's love of nature and his environmental mind-set. Yalova The Moving House, otherwise Atatürk House Museum, has safely travelled through years until today under the special preservation of the locals and administrators of Yalova Province. It has remained as an influential example for younger generations in respect of environmentalism and environmental protection.

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