

Formulation of historic residential architecture as a background to urban conservation

Mesut Dinler

*The Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning,
Politecnico di Torino, Turin, Italy*

Formulation of
historic
residential
architecture

1

Received 17 September 2019
Revised 9 December 2019
29 January 2020
29 April 2020
Accepted 6 May 2020

Abstract

Purpose – The paper explores how interpretations of vernacular traditional architecture played a significant role in the development of urban conservation practice in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s. At the turn of the 20th century, the value of Ottoman historic residential architecture began to develop with the label of the Turkish House. At the turn of the 20th century, historic residential architecture of the Ottoman Empire gained a heritage value and labeled as the Turkish House. Thus, these houses became a part of a national heritage discourse, though their preservation only came to agenda in the early 1970s through preservation programs for Istanbul's waterfront mansions (*yali*). Turkey simultaneously adapted international heritage developments throughout the 1960s and the 1970s and introduced urban conservation both in practice and in theory to heritage management system of Turkey.

Design/methodology/approach – The main research material is derived from the archives of the primary preservation council of Turkey that functioned from 1951 to 1983. The earlier works of the members of the council, journals of the period and urban projects are investigated to outline the complexities of urban conservation.

Findings – This paper explores how modernist efforts of the early 20th century framed traditional Ottoman architecture with the label “Turkish House.” In addition, it reveals how preserving the Turkish House was a major motivation that triggered early urban conservation attempts primarily along Istanbul's Bosphorus shores.

Originality/value – The paper outlines dynamics of urban conservation. It outlines that urban conservation did not only emerge as a response to postwar context, but it was also a historic continuation of modernist understandings of “cultural heritage.”

Keywords Turkish house, Residential architecture, Urban conservation, Waterfront mansions (*yali*), Traditional houses, Timber structures

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Since the 1980s, a critical perspective has developed and framed cultural heritage as the use of past at the service of present. This perspective has revealed that cultural heritage operates through a complex network of socioeconomic, cultural and political dynamics. Among many others, some foundational research studies of this line of criticism are [Emiliani \(1974\)](#); [Lowenthal \(1983\)](#); [Nora, 1996–98](#); [Choay \(2001\)](#). One of the main outcomes of these key studies is that they revealed the complex relationship between nation(s)/nationalism(s)/nation-making/and so on and conservation of cultural heritage. Accordingly, such political underpinnings of cultural heritage have addressed how the definition and management of cultural heritage are linked to power relations. In fact, the history of this relationship is as old as the history of cultural heritage itself; because the idea of “cultural heritage” as an asset to be preserved is a phenomenon that emerged in the post-French Revolution global context ([Choay, 2001](#); [Glendinning, 2013](#)). Following this critical perspective, this paper focuses on the



case of Turkey investigating firstly how historic residential architecture was conceptualized with the label “Turkish House” in the early 20th century, and secondly, what role the *Turkish House* played in the development of urban conservation in the early 1970s.

In Turkey, a heritage management system had already emerged in the 19th century Ottoman world through movable objects, archaeology and museums (Dinler, 2019). In the early 1930s, after the Turkish Republic succeeded the Ottoman Empire in 1923, the value of Ottoman historic residential architecture began to develop with the label of the *Turkish House*. The paper first explores this period of the Turkish “modernization” [1] and then it traces the development and impact of the idea of the Turkish House. It shows how waterfront mansion (*yah*) along the shores of Bosphorus in Istanbul appealed as outstanding examples of the Turkish House to architectural communities. Providing a background on the development of urban conservation in Turkey aligned with international developments, the paper shows how efforts to safeguard *yah* buildings were one of the driving forces that gave birth to the restructuring of urban conservation practice as well as legislation.

The Turkish House as a building

At its most basic, the Turkish House is a historic Ottoman residential timber structure with pitched roof, projections and large eaves (Plates 1 and 2). However, finding a correct definition of the Turkish House is a topic that has occupied scholars and professionals for decades (Küçükerman, 1973, 1985; Arel, 1982; Kuban, 1995). The evolvement of the academic studies on the Turkish House itself also became a research interest for many researchers. These studies focused on the link between the Turkish House and its meanings for the Turkish

Plate 1.
Muslim quarter in
Istanbul in 1913.
BARTH, Hermann.
Constantinople:
Ouvrage illustré de 103
gravures, Paris, H.
Laurens, 1913.
Courtesy of Aikaterini
Laskaridis Foundation





Plate 2.
Post card showing an
old Turkish House, Salt
Research, Ali Saim
Ülgen Archive

experience of modernism (Bertram, 2008; Tuztaşı and Aşkun, 2013; Şumnu, 2012; Sezer, 2005). Indeed, the richness of this architectural legacy is studied also by its construction material and technique from a preservationist point of view (Şahin Güçhan, 2018).

The distinctive visual qualities of historic Ottoman houses were appealing to many European travelers and intellectuals in the 19th century. For instance, the Italian traveler Edmondo de Amicis drew these buildings during his visit to Istanbul (Plate 3). Moreover, with the technological development of photography, these historic buildings and their relation to social life began to be documented by numerous photographers during the final decades of the Ottoman Empire (Plates 4 and 5). However, the first attempts to ascertain heritage value to historic residential Ottoman architecture can be dated back to the beginning of the 20th century (Sezer, 2005). In other words, academic examination of these edifices began only at the turn of the 20th century.

Art historian Celal Esad (C.E. Arseven after the 1934 Surname Law) first wrote how Byzantine and Ottoman domestic architecture differed from each other in 1909 (Arseven, 1909); and he continued to develop his ideas in following decades (Arseven, 1928; Arseven, 1939). Ernst Egli, a Swiss-Austrian architect invited to Turkey by the Ministry of Education, in 1927 also studied traditional Ottoman houses (Akcan, 2009, pp. 228–234). Both Arseven's and Egli's approaches to the *Turkish House* were influenced by a course taught in the Fine

Plate 3.
An old house in historic
Istanbul. DE AMICIS,
Edmondo.
Constantinople
ouvrage traduit de
l'Italien avec
l'autorisation de
l'Auteur par Mme J.
Colomb et illustré de
183 dessins pris sur
nature par C. Biseo,
Paris, Hachette, 1883.
Courtesy of Aikaterini
Laskaridis Foundation



Une maison.



Formulation of historic residential architecture

5

Plate 4.
A street in Istanbul in
1880. Photograph
Studio: Abdullah
frères. In the Pierre de
Gigord Collection of
Photographs. Digital
images courtesy of the
Getty's Open Content
Program. Getty
Research Institute,
(96.R.14(A25))

Arts Academy in Istanbul; *Seminars on National Architecture (Milli Mimarih Seminarleri)*, which was initiated by the renowned Turkish architect Sedad Hakkı Eldem (1908–1988). For the course, the students were expected to study and produce architectural survey drawings (*rölöve*) of tradition residential buildings all over Turkey [2].

S.H. Eldem's ideas on traditional architecture are at the core of discussions on the Turkish House. His family was one of the most reputed families of both the late Ottoman and the early Republican era (Eldem, 2008). Eldem's academic and professional life had a significant impact on the architectural culture of Turkey that is essential to the study and understanding of modernism and modern architecture in Turkey. As a practicing architect, he not only studied historic houses, but in his architectural projects, he also did research on a national architectural language where the Turkish House was interpreted through lens of modernist architecture (Bozdoğan et al., 1987; Eldem et al., 2008; Tanju and Tanyeli, 2009; Acciai, 2018). Eldem found the basic features of modernist architecture in the Turkish House. For instance, he formulated the wooden-frame modular construction system of traditional Anatolian houses as an open plan, low large eaves as Frank Lloyd Wright's horizontal designs, elevated ground floors as LeCorbusier's pilotis and natural context as an answer to architectural discussions in Germany (Akcan, 2012). The Turkish House occupied Eldem for his entire career and in the 1980s, he published his monumental work *Türk Evi (Turkish House)* (Eldem, 1984).

The Turkish House as an ideal

What made historic Ottoman houses Turkish is a challenging question since a wide range of variations were developed in the diverse Ottoman territories developed over the centuries. Moreover, it is problematic to determine the nationality of a structure. Does the house have the nationality of those who constructed it, lived in it or designed it? Or does its nationality depend on the current nation in which it is located? Since any answer to these questions will fail to address the temporal and geographical diversity of historic residential architecture, the Turkish House can be considered to be a concept rather than a structure. As will be discussed

Plate 5.
Buyukdere Port in
Istanbul in 1868.
Photographer:
Guillaume Berggren. In
the Pierre de Gigord
Collection of
Photographs. Digital
images courtesy of the
Getty's Open Content
Program. Getty
Research Institute,
(96.R.14(A3))



further, the Turkish House cannot be located, surveyed or restored because in a certain way it is an ideal and/or a myth. This myth and its connection to the aforementioned efforts to locate Turkishness within the history of art and architecture gives rise to some important debates regarding the experience of modernism in Turkey (Nalbantoğlu, 1993; Bozdoğan, 2007; Akcan, 2008).

In his autobiographical book, Pamuk (2006) ingeniously narrates the history of Istanbul, which is intertwined with his own memories. He argues that witnessing the disappearance and decaying of remnants of the Ottoman past has prompted melancholy for individuals of modern Turkey. For him, the destruction of historic Ottoman houses (destruction of the Turkish House) due to fires or new urbanization projects in the 1940s and 1950s is a good example. He also argues that the waterfront mansions of Istanbul (*yah*) are the most significant examples of this Ottoman past (Pamuk, 2006).

The *yah* began to be constructed in the late 17th century with the European architectural influences. In the 18th century, the imperial community and the wealthier members of the late-Ottoman society also started to construct their own *yahs* on the shores of the Bosphorus (Kuban, 2000) (Plate 6). By the 19th century, the Bosphorus shores were already populated with *yah* structures. As Pamuk observed (2006), the landscape drawings of Antoine Ignace Melling present a “nuanced and convincing” depiction of the shores of the Bosphorus at the beginning of the 19th century (Plate 7).

In the previously mentioned scholarly works on the Turkish House, *yah* occupies a particular role because they are the most grandiose examples of the Ottoman residential



Formulation of historic residential architecture

7

Plate 6.

Panoramic view of Kanlıca from the shores of Bosphorus after 1883. In *Vues du Bosphore*. Photographer: Sébah & Joaillier. In the Pierre de Gigord Collection of Photographs. Digital images courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program. Getty Research Institute, (96.R.14 (C7.4a))



Plate 7.

View of the western Büyükdere, on the European shores of the Bosphorus in the early 19th century. MELLING, Antoine Ignace. (MDCCCXIX [= 1819]) *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore*, Paris, Treuttel et Würtz. Courtesy of Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation

architecture. However, as will be discussed further, the *yah* was at the core of the first urban conservation practices of Turkey as well. The Bosphorus Master Plan of 1972 was the first conservation-oriented master plan in Turkey, which was produced to generate a preservation scheme for *yah* buildings. Indeed, saving the *yah* was not the single driving force behind

developing a management scheme for urban conservation. On the contrary, as mentioned in the introduction, the dynamics of urban conservation operate in a complex set of economic, politic and sociocultural relationships. Therefore, before discussing how *yah* buildings triggered the preservation needs in the 1972 Bosphorus Master Plan, other dynamics that played a major role in this process need to be discussed.

Toward urban conservation

During the 1940s and 1950s, urban projects transformed Istanbul with the goal of generating a modern city and especially in the second half of the 1950s, ambitious and politically charged urban projects irreversibly damaged the historic character of Istanbul. In this period in which old buildings were being lost, the main development regarding historic preservation was the establishment of the High Council for Immovable Historic Works and Monuments (HC – *Gayrimenkul Eski Eserler ve Anıtlar Yüksek Kurulu*) in 1951. The HC was an autonomous expert committee designed to manage the cultural heritage of Turkey with an authority exceeding the power of central and local authorities. Under the HC, Turkey experienced a significant rise in both theories and practices of conservation in the 1960s and the 1970s (Madran, 1996; Şahin Güçhan and Kurul, 2009; Çeçener, 2003). It is important, though, to emphasize that this was a top-down management of cultural heritage.

All the members of the council were highly intellectual; most of them spoke more than one foreign language and already held other important state positions. The council simultaneously followed international conservation developments of the postwar; for example, it asked the Ministry of Education to place a request for Turkey to become a member of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) (HC Archives, 1966). It also recommended related directories to send their selected officers to participate in various UNESCO trainings programs (HC Archives, 1965). The 1964 Venice Charter had a greater impact on the council compared to other international development. As early as 1967, the council embraced all of the articles in the Venice Charter with a principle decision (HC Archives, 1967). Another important development was the establishment of the first conservation department of Turkey, with the name “Maintenance and Repair of Historic Monuments” at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara in 1966 in the context of the Cold War (Erdim, 2016). In this period, the economic role of cultural heritage in fostering economic development began to be developed and this potential was formulated in the development plans. Therefore, there was an economic motivation behind the rising interest in historic buildings as well (Madran and Özgönül, 1982).

It is important to note that these developments were simultaneous to Europe. Within the postwar context, the international conservation movement generated a heritage boom that both triggered a need to define internationally valid standards for the preservation of architectural and urban heritage and instigated an institutionalization process through the establishment of UNESCO (Glendinning, 2013; Meskell, 2018). One of the most important developments of this heritage movement was the *1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, which provided a universal identification and protection framework facilitated through operational guidelines. Moreover, as noted by Orbaşlı (2000), the links between urban conservation and social and economic were also uncovered in the second half of the 20th century that became linked to.

As the HC had upheld international standards, the real-life situations make it problematic to implement. The rapid destruction of historic houses made the situation urgent; Istanbul steadily lost significant examples of civil architecture. Especially in Istanbul, rapid urbanization necessitated the need to preserve the urban heritage in an urban scale. The causation of this rapid urbanization was related to the industrialization in the agricultural

sector driven by US aid under the Marshall Plan. Machines replaced manpower, and consequently this change in the mode of agricultural production shaped the urban character of the city through waves of migration (Kaynar, 2015).

Doğan Kuban, one of the most influential experts of architecture Turkey who also served as an HC member, argued in an article he wrote in 1965 (Kuban, 1965) that preservation of singular edifices would be insufficient to preserve historic Istanbul. He argued that the urban morphology and historic character of Istanbul should be considered as the main input in all planning activities. In a way, Kuban was echoing the ideas of Gustavo Giovannoni and Saverio Muratori. Toward the end of the 1960s, it became evident that the main need was a change of perception to emphasize areas, not merely buildings, as the focus of urban conservation policies. As mentioned earlier, international preservation developments were also pointing this direction.

The first attempt to realize an urban conservation project with this given framework came in the early 1970s. The *Yalı* as significant examples of the Turkish House were first to be preserved with such an understanding.

Conservation of *yalı* as an urban issue

In 1966, the “Istanbul Grand Master Planning Bureau” (PB – *Büyük İstanbul Nazım Plan Bürosu*) was established with the support of the World Bank to prepare a new master plan for Istanbul. The new master plan, which was complete in 1971–1972, had a conservation focus that was the result of the collaboration between PB and HC, the previously mentioned central preservation council of Turkey.

Regarding urban conservation, the new master plan of Istanbul was the first product of this process. In 1972, the PB finished preparing Istanbul’s master plan. The primary concerns of the new master plan were the construction of transportation infrastructures (the construction of the Bosphorus Bridge and its connection roads), the expansion of the city to the north and the level of urbanization on the shores of the Bosphorus (Altınyıldız, 1997, p. 112). The plan was prepared on a 1/25,000 scale with more detailed 1/5,000 scale proposals for specific sites. The Istanbul Coastal Strip, which covered the *yalı*, was one of these sites. Urbanization on the shores of the Bosphorus shores was a major concern for historic preservation.

The condition of the *yalı* buildings on these shores was also the theme of the exhibition “Vulnerable Bosphorus (*Korunması Gereken Boğaziçi*)” that was organized in 1972 by the Turkey Touring and Automobile Organization (*Türkiye Turling ve Otomobil Kurumu*), which had functioned as a semipublic authority in historic preservation before the establishment of HC (Gülersoy, 1972). This exhibition was aligned with the ongoing discussion about the need for preservation of the *yalı* (Akçura, 1972). Indeed, the HC played a significant role in this process.

One of the most controversial aspects of the new master plan involved the building categories; HC defined a system of categories and designated each *yalı* to a particular category (HC Archives, Dec. No. 6442, 1972a). Three categories were defined; the first category included buildings in which both the interior and the exterior should be preserved, the second category was for buildings for which only the exterior should be preserved and the third category was for buildings that could be demolished with HC consent (HC Archives, Dec. No. 5505, 1970a). The most noteworthy innovation of these categories was separating the interior and exterior of buildings. For the second category, construction works that could be done on the interior were to be determined by the master plan. However, this was a problematic decision because the master plan generated a framework for new construction works but not restoration works (Çeçener, 1972). Despite this drawback, following a second decision, each *yalı* was appointed to one of these three categories (HC Archives, Dec. No. 6442, 1972a).

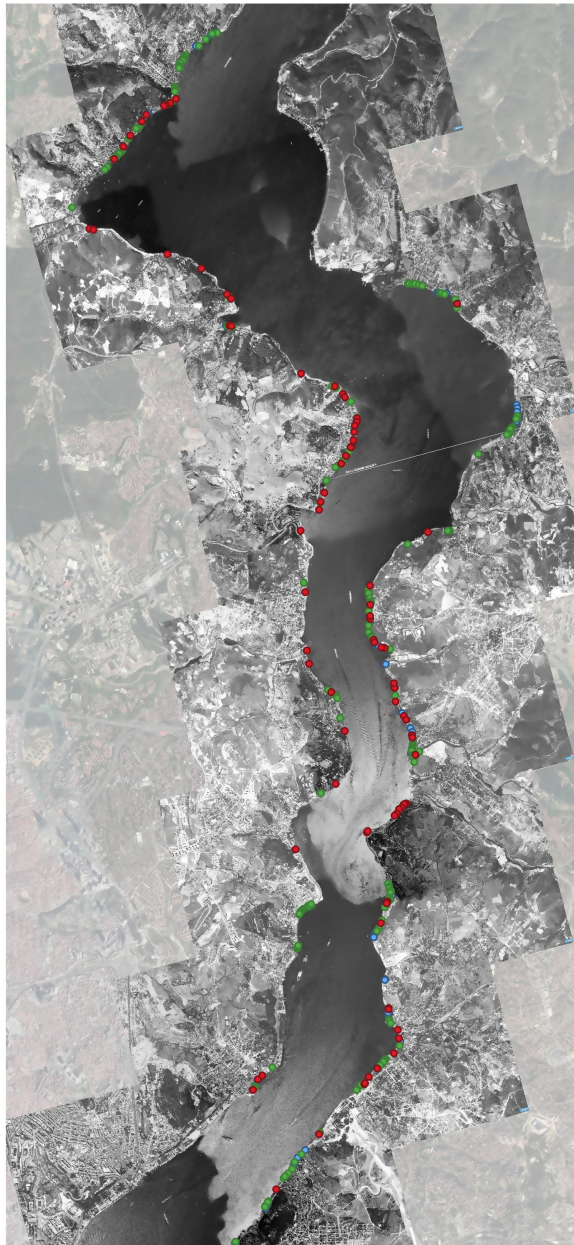
Since these *yah* structures were the outstanding examples of the Turkish House, they were the perfect study material for Sedat Hakkı Eldem, who regularly produced survey drawings of *yahs* (Eldem, 1993–1994). Eldem took initiative in the registration and the categorization process as well. Architectural survey drawings for each building, which were compulsory for registration, were not requested and categorization was based on photos and maps prepared by the Istanbul Grand Master Planning Bureau. However, out of 365 *yahs*, approximately only 89 of them were registered in the first category. 67 buildings were in the third category, and the rest were categorized in the second category (Plate 8).

Interventions on *yahs* according to the Bosphorus master plan

One criticism against the building categories suggested that property owners and architects had to follow their own intervention methods especially for the second category *yahs* since no intervention guideline was provided. As a result, reconstruction (rebuilding the deteriorated sections of the building with new materials) became the common practice in the 1970s for timber structures (Sezgin, 2002, p. 19). One of the major projects that caused public debates on the preservation of *yah* buildings was the restoration of the *Amcazade Yahsı*, which is also known as the *Köprülü Yahsı*, *Meşruta Yah*, *Kırmızı Yah*, and *Direkli Yah*. This 17th century residential timber house needed an extensive restoration intervention despite minor repairs in the previous decades (Plate 9).

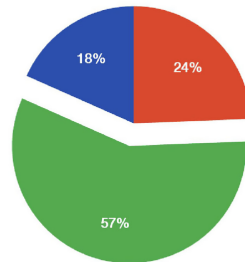
In the early 1970s, the Turing Club developed a conservation project for the *divanhane* (reception hall) of the *Amcazade Yahsı* with the stipulation that in the future, the *yah* would be used as a museum, not as a house, arguing that the residential use could potentially threaten the future condition of the *yah*. However, during the construction, HC decided that the *yah* should be completely demolished and then reconstructed. The Turing Club disagreed with the HC's decision, and the restoration stopped before it was finished. In the late 1970s, another nonprofit organization, the TAÇ Foundation, which was directed by the head of the HC, undertook another conservation project (Yıldız, 2011). The HC in fact allowed the complete renewal of the interior spaces for the second category *yahs* and in doing so, it activated a process that caused the loss of a traditional legacy of architectural construction. These situations caused HC to be conceived as a council that encouraged the destruction rather than the preservation of historic structures. Meanwhile, Eldem continued his efforts to protect old timber structures; he proposed that the HC decisions should be obligatory for construction works for any timber structure with a footprint larger than 100 m²; however, his proposal was rejected by other members (HC Archives, Dec. No. 5309, 1970b).

The Bosphorus master plan was the first attempt for the preservation of the Turkish House after the foundation of the Turkish Republic. It may seem conflicting that the Turkish House was conceptualized in the early 20th century, but its preservation came to agenda only in the 1970s. However, the Turkish House was a historic reference in the design of new buildings and its preservation was not the main concern. Moreover, the discussions on the preservation of historic houses only accelerated in the postwar period as a part of urban conservation discussions (Calabi, 2008; Cody and Siravo, 2019). Therefore, the period that the Turkish House was formulated was a period too early even for the international experts to generate a conservation project for the historic urban fabric. In fact, even if there was a project, it would be a technical challenge to implement it. Even the previously mentioned international standards failed to generate a systematic method for preservation of timber structures, because these standards were defined mainly for stone structures, which was a common construction technique in Europe. This Eurocentric standardization in historic preservation was even addressed by UNESCO in the Nara Document on Authenticity, which was the declaration of the Nara Conference on Authenticity held in Nara, Japan, in 1995 (Winter, 2014). This declaration is the main text addressing how European definitions on “authenticity” are



YALI BUILDINGS
ACCORDING TO THEIR
REGISTRATION CATEGORIES

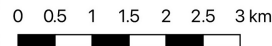
- FIRST GROUP YALI BUILDINGS
- SECOND GROUP YALI BUILDINGS
- THIRD GROUP YALI BUILDINGS



- FIRST GROUP YALI (89)
- SECOND GROUP YALI (209)
- THIRD GROUP YALI (67)



SCALE



Basemaps:

Google Earth and 1970 aerial photos obtained from the official webpage of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality.

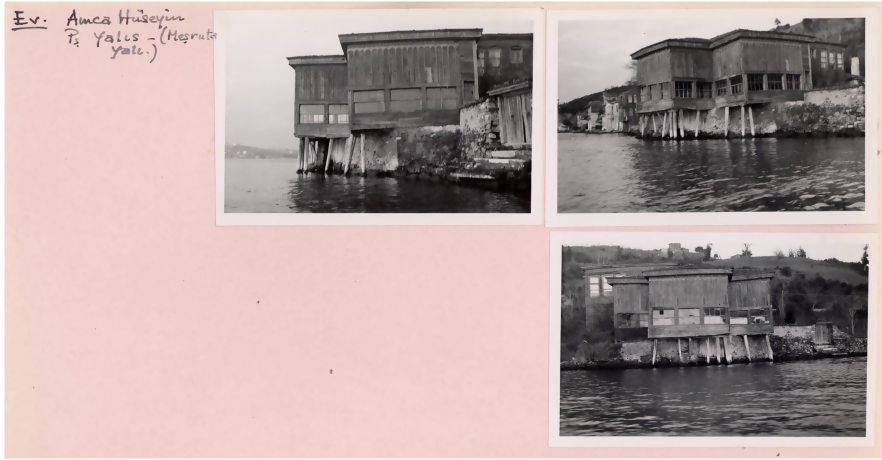
The map is created by the author. QGIS is used to georeference each 'yali' building based on the building block and lot (parcel) number indicated on the council decision (HC Archives, Dec. No. 6442, 1972).

Plate 8.

Map showing the distribution of the yali buildings according to building categories

nonapplicable generally in Asia and particularly for timber structures. Thus, the restoration of a Turkish House would require a skill that is relatively recent. Even in the 1970s when *yali* structures were being restored, these restoration projects were mainly limited to the reconstruction of deteriorated sections of the building.

Plate 9.
Amcazade Hüseyin
Paşa Yalısı (Meşruta
Yalı). Salt research, Ali
Saim Ülgen Archive,
ID: TASUH3471



Enacting urban conservation

Following the Bosphorus master plan, the first Turkish law on cultural heritage (Law No. 1710) was promulgated restructuring the heritage scheme of Turkey. Until then, preservation law had been based on the 1906 Decree on Old Assets (*Asar-ı Atika Nizamnamesi*), which mainly concerned movable heritage (Dinler, 2018). With the new law, the guiding principles of historic preservation were finally defined based on “sites.” A draft of the law was already prepared in 1971. A temporary commission was formed within the parliament to finalize the law. The main sections of the law were (1) general provisions, (2) immovable old artifacts and historic and natural monuments, (3) movable old artifacts, (4) the old artifact trade, (5) excavations, (6) treasure hunt excavations, (7) rewards and penalties, (8) various statutes, (9) temporary statutes and (10) execution and executive statutes (HC Archives, Doc. No. 732–8272, 1972b). HC was asked to present a report to highlight their remarks regarding the draft. In this report, the HC emphasized that the new law should be very well prepared since Turkey, as a country rich in cultural heritage, had lacked a law for decades and now, the new law should fill the gap. Before stating their remarks for each article, the HC stated:

These remarks and recommendations are based on laws and statutes of developed countries such as France, England, Netherlands, Denmark, or Norway, and also in a UNESCO document about preservation of historic and architectural monuments, *kiilliye* (complex), and sites.

The UNESCO document the HC referred to was the Venice Charter. The reference to Europe and the willingness to uphold European standards is noteworthy. However, the main innovation of the law involved changing the perception of scale. The object of preservation included a land covering a group of buildings as well as sites.

The first article of the Old Artifacts Law defined “old artifact” as:

All structures, movable or immovable assets, and all documents with financial value from historic or prehistoric era relating to science, culture, religion or fine arts, located underground, above ground, or underwater are called old artifacts.

The rest of the article was an item-by-item list of movable and immovable old artifact types. In fact, the definition and the long list of building types generated a broad spectrum under which any object could be a historic artifact. It lacked no clear timeframe since “prehistoric and historic ages” included all periods. It also lacked a clear scope since science, culture, religion and fine arts did not create a boundary. Legal experts argued that the main motivation behind

the law could be framed as “public interest,” in terms of preserving old artifacts for future generations (Umar, 1981). In addition to two separate paragraphs listing movable and immovable heritage, new concepts were also introduced. Following the definitions of monument (*anıt*) and complex (*külliye*), *sit* (the French word “*site*,” which means a landscape with a view, was directly adopted into Turkish), which would correspond to conservation areas, was defined. The term *sit* was the biggest breakthrough in terms of both its conceptualization and the implementations that followed. Three different *sit* categories were defined; historic *sit*, archaeological *sit* and natural *sit*.

As discussed earlier, conceiving of historic preservation as a planning problem rather than an architectural problem was simultaneously emerging in Europe as well. The European Architectural Heritage Year (EAHY) 1975, which was celebrated with the motto “A Future for Our Past,” was effective in generating a new force among the European networks within the Council of Europe and Europa Nostra. Turkey was invited as a founding member of the Council of Europe in 1949 in the aftermath of the Second World War. Europa Nostra Turkey, on the other hand, was only established in 2010.

The primary ideas involved in EAHY first took shape in 1969, and in 1971, it was formally proposed by a subcommittee on monuments and sites established by the Council of Europe. A new document (the Amsterdam Declaration) was prepared to answer the challenges of preservation in Europe. To produce this document, 50 implemented pilot projects would explore “new ideas on the rehabilitation of the cultural heritage as part of regional and urban planning” (Glendinning, 2013, p. 405). The lessons of these pilot projects would be presented and evaluated at the Amsterdam Congress to form the principles of both the Amsterdam Declaration and the European Charter of the Architectural Heritage, with the latter produced specifically for the cultural heritage of Europe. The Amsterdam Declaration (CoE, 1975) extended the scope of conservation from buildings to sites and promoted “integrated conservation,” an approach that underlines the need for considering social and physical characters of sites as integrated entities in generating urban policies. Özgönül (2015) groups the impact of the Amsterdam Declaration on Turkey under five headings: legislation (the formation of the new 1983 law on historic preservation), organizational restructuring (the replacement of HC with other local preservation boards in the 1980s), new financial sources (tax exemptions for historic property owners), “integrated” urban planning approach and increased awareness in public (new NGOs established in the late 1970s). In fact, with the 1973 law on historic preservation, Turkey was already two years ahead of the Amsterdam Declaration in terms of defining the scale of urban conservation as site rather than buildings (Şahin Güçhan and Kurul, 2009).

Following the law, HC began an immense and enthusiastic program of *sit* designations. From 1973 until its dissolution in 1982, HC designated 417 *sits* and registered 6,815 monumental and 3,442 residential structures as “old artifacts” (Ahunbay, 1996, s. 136). Following the designation of a historic area as a *sit*, all the previous plans would be overruled, and local municipalities would have to prepare “conservation master plans” within two years. In the preparation process, HC-defined temporary conditions would apply.

The role of the Turkish House had gradually waned in *sit* designations during this period. However, one can easily notice the impact of the Turkish House on urban conservation by simply looking at the heritage actors of the period. For instance, Celal Esad Arseven, who was one of the pioneering scholars of the Turkish House, was the first director of the HC. Sedat Hakkı Eldem also served for the HC. Doğan Kuban, who also undertook and published research on the Turkish House, also served at the HC. For this reason, the selection of *yah* (which are the most outstanding examples of the *Turkish House*) to generate an urban conservation scheme involved not only an attempt to save a collection of buildings but also an intention to revive and remind the *Turkish House* ideal.

Throughout the 1970s, especially in civil society and in the activities of nonprofits, the Turkish House continued to be the main element of Istanbul’s urban fabric (Türel, 2014).

A major controversial project to save the Turkish House came in 1985 when Turing Club undertook a project to restore row houses along Soğukçeşme Street close to the Hagia Sophia and the Topkapı Palace. The main criticism regarding this project was that it resulted in the Disneyfication of historic environment (Çelik, 1994).

Until the new 1983 law, many municipalities struggled to implement site designations. The State Court (*Danıştay*) was the highest authority to cancel the HC designations, and several municipalities appealed to this court for the cancellation of their *sit* status. The new 1983 law, which was called “the Law on Preservation of Historic and Natural Assets,” replaced the HC with local preservation councils over which a high council presided over conflicts about preservation cases.

Conclusion

In the early 20th century, the intellectual architectural community of the young Turkish Republic (founded in 1923) reformulated traditional timber-frame Ottoman residential architecture (which documents a centuries-long architectural legacy developed in various geographies) and called it the *Turkish House*. By doing so, they ascertained their values as cultural heritage. The most grandiose and appealing examples of the Turkish House were *yah* buildings on the shores of the Bosphorus. In the following decades, the *yah* occupied a significant space in studies that aimed at understanding and defining the Turkish House.

Despite the early formulation of traditional Ottoman residential structures as heritage assets, their preservation came to agenda only in the 1970s. There were several reasons for this delay; firstly, the conservation of historic houses only became a conservation standard in the postwar period following the international conservation movement. This movement led to the establishment of several international heritage organizations, which defined the international standards of historic preservation. An outcome of this development involved redefining the scope of “cultural heritage” and the methodology of preservation. Secondly, the timber-frame construction techniques of historic Ottoman houses posed a technical challenge, which limited their conservation to reconstruction.

As problems related to urbanization necessitated a preservation scheme on an urban scale, the international standards that Turkish professionals wanted to uphold also imposed a similar practice. This shift in perspective was about the scale of conservation; it became evident that a building-based management system was not sufficient and urban conservation policies were needed. As a result, Turkish heritage experts of the period defined a new management scheme that was based on the conservation of sites rather than single buildings. The *Turkish House* was still an important factor in these developments, because the first urban conservation activities had focused on the *yah*. Before the adaption of the new preservation law in 1973 (which was the first preservation law following the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923), the new scheme was applied to the *yah* on the shores of the Bosphorus. Therefore, the first attempts to preserve the *yah* constructed the foundations of the nation-wide regulations that introduced urban conservation practices to Turkey.

The heritage significance of the Turkish House developed at the beginning of the 20th century, and it was a driving force in the development of the preservation legislation in the 1970s. Indeed, the values of the Turkish House was transformed and redefined in each period depending on the context; however, the heritage status it gained at the turn of the 20th century was instrumental in shifting the scale of the conservation practice.

Notes

1. The paper acknowledges the equivocal uses of the term “modernization” as well as its social and political connotations that transcend a clear-cut timeframe. In this article, it mainly addresses the

early republican period of Turkey (1923–1950), yet, it is not possible to discuss this period without referring to nation-making or societal transformations.

2. Unfortunately, a huge portion of these valuable documents was lost in the fire of 1948 in the Fine Arts Academy where S.H. Eldem used to teach.

References

- Acciai, S. (2018), *Sedad Hakki Eldem. An Aristocratic Architect and More*, Firenze University Press, Firenze.
- Ahunbay, Z. (1996), *Tarihi Çevre Koruma ve Restorasyon*, YEM Yayın, İstanbul.
- Akcan, E. (2008), “Eldem, Arseven, Egli ve ‘Türk Evi’ Tezinin Algılanan Nesnelliği”, in Tanju, B. and Tanyeli, U. (Eds), *Sedad Hakki Eldem II: Retrospektif*, Osmalı bankası Arşiv ve araştırma merkezi, İstanbul, pp. 47-52.
- Akcan, E. (2009), *Çeviride modern olan: Şehir ve Konutta Türk-Alman İlişkileri*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Akcan, E. (2012), *Architecture in Translation: Germany, Turkey, and the Modern House*, Duke University Press, London.
- Akçura, N. (1972), “Korunması gereken boğaziçi’ sergisi hakkında görüşler”, *Mimarlık*, Vol. 104, p. 45.
- Altınıydız, N. (1997), “Tarihsel çevreyi korumanın Türkiye’ye özgü koşulları (İstanbul 1923-1973)”, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, İstanbul Technical University, İstanbul.
- Arel, A. (1982), *Osmanlı Konut Geleneğinde Tarihsel Sorunlar*, Ege Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi Yayınları, İzmir.
- Arseven, C.E. (1928), *Türk Sanatı*, Akşam Matbaası, İstanbul.
- Arseven, D.E. (1909), *Constantinople Da Byzance a’ Stamboul*, Librairie Renouard H. Laurens, Istanbul.
- Arseven, C.E. (1939), *L’art Turc: Depuis Son Origine Jusqu’a Nos Jours*, Devlet Basımevi, İstanbul.
- Bertram, C. (2008), *Imagining the Turkish House: Collective Visions of Home*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Bozdoğan, S., Özkan, S. and Yenal, E. (1987), *Sedad Eldem: Architect in Turkey*, Concept Media, Singapore.
- Bozdoğan, S. (2007), “Reading Ottoman architecture through modernist lenses: nationalist historiography and the “new architecture” in the early republic”, *Muqarnas*, Vol. 24, pp. 199-221.
- Calabi, D. (2008), *Storia Dell’urbanistica Europea*, Bruno Mandadori, Milano.
- Çeçener, B. (1972), “Kültür Değeri olan Yapılarda koruma ve mimar”, *Mimarlık*, Vol. 104, pp. 40-44.
- Çeçener, H.B. (2003), *Anıtlar Yüksek Kurulu Yılları*, TMMOB Mimarlar Odası İstanbul Büyükkent Şubesi, İstanbul.
- Çelik, Z. (1994), “Urban preservation as theme park: the case of Sogukcesme Street”, in Çelik, Z., Favro, D. and Ingersoll, R. (Eds), *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space*, University of California Press, Berkeley, pp. 83-94.
- Choay, F. (2001), *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Cody, J. and Siravo, F. (Eds) (2019), *Historic Cities: Issues in Urban Conservation*, The Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles.
- CoE (1975), *The Declaration of Amsterdam*, Congress on the European Architectural Heritage, Amsterdam.
- Dinler, M. (2018), “The Knife’s edge of the present: archaeology in Turkey from the nineteenth century to the 1940s”, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 728-745.

- Dinler, M. (2019), *Modernization through Past: Cultural Heritage during the Late-Ottoman and the Early-Republican Period in Turkey*, Edizioni ETS, Pisa.
- Eldem, E., Tanju, B. and Tanyeli, U. (Eds) (2008), *Sedad Hakki Eldem 1: Gençlik Yılları*, Osmanlı Balkası Arşiv Ve Araştırı Merkezi, İstanbul.
- Eldem, S.H. (1984), *Türk Evi*, Tac Vakfı, İstanbul.
- Eldem, S.H. (1993-1994), *Boğaziçi Yalıları*, İstanbuli Vehbi Koç Vakfı, İstanbul.
- Eldem, E. (2008), "Sedad Hakki Eldem Olunmaz, Doğulur (mu?) bir aile ve Gençlik Hikâyesi 1830-1930", in Eldem, E., Tanju, B. and Tanyeli, U. (Eds), *Sedad Hakki Eldem: Gençlik Yılları*, Osmalı Bankası Arşiv Ve Araştırı Merkezi, İstanbul, pp. 10-40.
- Emiliani, A. (1974), *Una Politica Dei Beni Culturali*, Einaudi, Torino.
- Erdim, B. (2016), "Under the flags of the Marshall plan: multiple modernisms and professional legitimacy in the Cold war Middle East, 1950–1964", in Gürel, M.Ö. (Ed.), *Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey: Architecture across Cultures in the 1950s and 1960s*, Routledge, London, pp. 113-140.
- Glendinning, M. (2013), *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation Antiquity to Modernity*, Routledge, New York.
- Gülersoy, Ç. (1972), *Korunması Gereken Boğaziçi*, Yenilik Basımevi, İstanbul.
- HC Archives (1965), Decision No. 3014, 26 07.1965.
- HC Archives (1966), Decision No. 3029.» 04 02.1966.
- HC Archives (1967), Decision No. 3674. 24 09.1967.
- HC Archives (1970a), Decision No. 5505. 11 09.1970.
- HC Archives (1970b), Decision No. 5309. 09 05.1970.
- HC Archives (1972a), Decision No. 6442. 13 05.1972.
- HC Archives (1972b), Document No. 732-8272. 08 02.1972.
- Kaynar, M.K. (Ed.) (2015), *Türkiye'nin 1950'li Yılları*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Kuban, D. (1965), "İstanbul'da tarihi çevrenin önemli bir kısmı ortadan kalkıyor", *Mimarlık*, Vol. 24, pp. 20-21.
- Kuban, D. (1995), *Türk "Hayat"lı Evi*, Eren Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Kuban, D. (2000), *İstanbul Bir Kent Tarihi Bizantion, Konstantinopolis, İstanbul*, Türk Tarih Vakfı, İstanbul.
- Küçükerman, Ö. (1973), *Anadolu'daki Geleneksel Türk Evinde Mekân Organizasyonu Açısından Odalar*, TTOK, İstanbul.
- Küçükerman, Ö. (1985), *Kendi Mekanının Arayışı İçinde Türk Evi*, TTOK, İstanbul.
- Lowenthal, D. (1983), *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Madran, E. and Özgönül, N. (1982), "Planlı dönemde (1963-1981) tarihsel çevre'nin korunması ve değerlendirilmesinde kamu'nun yakalaşımı", in *Türkiye Birinci Şehircilik Kongresi, 2. Kitap*, ODTÜ Şehir ve Bölge Planlama Bölümü, Ankara, pp. 283-301.
- Madran, E. (1996), "Cumhuriyetin ilk otuz yılında (1920-1950) koruma alanının örgütlenmesi", *METU Journal of Faculty of Architecture*, Vol. 16 Nos 1-2, pp. 59-97.
- Meskel, L. (2018), *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Nalbantoğlu, G.B. (1993), "Between civilization and culture: Appropriation of traditional Dwelling forms in early republican Turkey", *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 47 No. 2, pp. 66-74.
- Nora, P. (Ed.) (1996-98), *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, Columbia University Press, New York.

- Orbaşı, A. (2000), *Tourists in Historic Towns: Urban Conservation and Heritage Management*, E. & F.N. Spon, London.
- Özgönül, N. (2015), "Turkish involvement in the 1975 European heritage Year campaign and its impact on heritage conservation in Turkey", in Falser, M. and Lipp, W. (Eds), *A Future for Our Past: The 40 Th Anniversary of European Architectural Heritage Year (1975–2015)*, ICOMOS, Österreich, pp. 332-345.
- Pamuk, O. (2006), *İstanbul: Hatıralar Ve Şehir*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Şahin Güçhan, N. and Kurul, E. (2009), "A history of the development of conservation measures in Turkey: from the mid 19th century until 2004", *METU Journal of Faculty of Architecture*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 19-44.
- Şahin Güçhan, N. (2018), "History and characteristics of construction techniques used in traditional timber Ottoman houses", *International Journal of Architectural Heritage*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 1-20.
- Sezer, Y. (2005), "The perception of traditional Ottoman domestic architecture as a category of historic heritage and a source of inspiration for architectural practice (1909-1931)", Unpublished master thesis, Bosphorus University, İstanbul.
- Sezgin, H. (2002), "Bir yangının ardından boğaziçi yalıları", *Mimarist*, Vol. 6, pp. 16-21.
- Şumnu, U. (2012), "Between being and becoming: identity, question of foreignness and the case of the Turkish house", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Bilkent University, Ankara.
- Tanju, B. and Tanyeli, U. (Eds) (2009), *Sedad Hakkı Eldem 2. Retrospektif*, Osmanlı Balkası Arşiv Ve Araştırı Merkezi, İstanbul.
- Türel, İ. (2014), "Heritagisation of the "Ottoman/Turkish house" in the 1970s: Istanbul-based actors, associations and their networks", *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 19, pp. 1-32.
- Tuztaş, U. and Aşkun, İ.Y. (2013), "'Türk evi' idealleştirmesinde "Osmanlı evi" ve "Anadolu evi" kavramlarının ortaklıklarına ilişkin işlevsel açıklamalar", *Bilgi*, Vol. 66, pp. 273-296.
- Umar, B. (1981), *Eski Eserler Hukuku*, Ege Üniversitesi Basımevi, İzmir.
- Winter, T. (2014), "Beyond eurocentrism? Heritage conservation and the politics of difference", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 123-137.
- Yıldız, M. (2011), "Türk Sivil mimarisinin en Eski Yapılarından Amcazade Hüseyin Paşa Yalısı'nın tarihi Serüveni", *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 395-433.

Corresponding author

Mesut Dinler can be contacted at: mesut.dinler@gmail.com