

Chapter 5

National Concerns in the Preservation of the Archaeological Heritage Within the Process of Globalization: A View from Turkey

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Concern for the Preservation of “Antiquities” During the Ottoman Empire: Initial Endeavors

The westernization process of the Ottoman Empire started in the early eighteenth century. Efforts regarding archaeology and museum studies are first observed in the second half of the nineteenth century. We know that the first officially permitted excavations by western countries and researchers started in the 1840s. The fact that there is a clause in a permit issued in 1863 giving the state one of a pair of findings unearthed in the ensuing excavation suggests that such an approach existed since the first excavations (Çal 1990). However, the fact that the British who were excavating in the area during the construction of the Aydın railroad in the years 1860 took numerous stone works out of the country by rail or ship without permission disturbed the governor of Aydın. Thanks to his efforts the first *Asar-ı Atika Nizamnamesi* (Regulation of Antiquities) was issued in 1869 (Karaduman 2004). According to these regulations acquiring official permission for excavations became compulsory and no unearthed finds could be taken out of the country. However, excavated objects could be sold within the country, and the state had priority in the purchase. The same regulations prohibited the breaking and removal of antiquities found on the surface. As opposed to the preservation approach of the regulations, and under

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the influence of the Land Legislation¹ dated 1858, the owner of the land where an excavation took place was defined as the owner of works unearthed on his land. At the same time, it was stipulated that if a state officially requested an antique finding, the said finding could be taken out of the country with a special permit granted by the sultan.

Shortly following the first regulations, a new one was prepared by Philipp Anton Dethier, the ottoman imperial museum director of the period (Çal 1990). The new *Asar-ı Atika Nizamnamesi* of 1874 defined all kinds of artwork from the past as “antiquities.” These antiquities were classified in two groups: (a) coins and (b) all other things moveable and immoveable. The said legislation consisted of 36 clauses and was mainly prepared to regulate archaeological excavations. Nevertheless, the fact that some temples on private land and in perfect condition were to be preserved by officials appointed by the state shows that these regulations also considered the approach that preservation of heritage was the responsibility of the state. Although the 1874 legislation seems to be more developed than the previous one, for example, the provision in article 3 stating that unearthed finds are to be divided equally between the state, the land owner and the excavation director, unlike the previous legislation it permitted finds to be exported. This approach was criticized in the press of the time, and with his museum director in 1881, Osman Hamdi Bey² took the initiative to draft a new set of regulations in 1884. This legislation is considered the basis of the modern Turkish law regarding antiquities (Çal 1990). According to the said regulations, all antiquities were to be considered property of the state and their export was prohibited. In order to amend some shortcomings of the regulations, Osman Hamdi Bey issued a new law in 1906. Though this new law dealt mainly with archaeological excavations, as was the case of the older legislation, works of the Turkish-Islamic period were now also to be considered within the antiquities concept and thus, old houses were also covered by the heritage list.

Development of the Approach to the Preservation of “Archaeological Sites” in Modern Turkey

The Turkish State established in 1920 accepted the regulation of antiquities of 1906, and this law was in effect until 1973. Following the inauguration of the First Parliament on 4th May 1920, the Directorate of Turkish Antiquities was established under the Ministry of Education, and thus besides the legal regulations, an institution responsible for cultural properties was also established.

Turkey paved the way for excavation works by putting a special emphasis on archaeology when forming its culture policy. In the Early Republican Period (1923–

¹ Although all land was the property of the state in the classical Ottoman establishment, the Rescript of Gülhane dated 1839 and the Land Legislation dated 1858 permitted private individuals to buy land.

² Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910) is known as the first Turkish archaeologist and museologist. At the same time, he was one of the first Turkish painters. He is a successful representative of the modern Ottoman intellectual of the period (Rona 1993).

1938), which is defined as “nation building” by some modern-day researchers (Bozdoğan 2001), a philosophy of culture called “anatolism” was developed (Özdoğan 1998, 2011a). As part of this approach, which defined all communities that existed in Anatolia as the common ancestors of the present nation, emphasis was on researching the Sumerian, Hittite, Phrygian, Urartu, and other similar cultures, and excavations were supported by the state. While excavations of the Classical Period that started in the Ottoman period were continued, and the ruins of Asclepius in Pergamum (visited and appreciated by Atatürk) were converted into an open-air museum in 1936 (Özdoğan 2011b). The Turkish-Islamic period was not considered to be within the framework of archaeology, though monumental buildings of the Turkish-Islamic era were the first to be restored if considered to represent art history.

In 1951 the antiquities legislation and the directorate of antiquities were found inadequate for the decision-making process in the field of preservation in Turkey. A Supreme Council for Preservation formed of academics from relevant fields was established. This council was responsible for developing resolutions in the field of preservation and may be considered the first official academic organization working directly in the field of preservation. Its members were mostly prominent scholars from a diversity of fields such as archaeology, art history, architecture, history, or architecture. None of the board members were specialized in conservation, and only some of their decisions reflected international trends. It is worth noting that in the 1950s there were no Turkish experts or institutions specializing in the preservation of cultural heritage. For a long time the main agenda of the council consisted of how to make an inventory and documentation of the antiquities, the problem of registration, the restoration of monumental buildings, etc. This council did not work intensely on the archaeological finds, as they were considered to be the responsibility of the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums.

Turkey did not take part in World War II and did not undergo its destruction. It was also left out from the concept of the “historical site” that rapidly developed in the West during the postwar period. The concept that magnificent monumental buildings or archaeological ruins should not be preserved on a stand-alone basis, but instead be preserved within the totality of a site that included more simple neighboring historical buildings from different periods, made its way into the agenda for preservation only in the 1970s. Indeed, in 1967 the Supreme Council for Preservation officially accepted the Charter of Venice of 1964, and the registration of urban sites started in some Anatolian cities in the early 1970s. However, the new law of antiquities that came into effect in 1973 made it possible for Turkey to keep up with developing international approaches. In the new law of 1973 the state’s traditional approach to archaeological excavations and findings was continued, but the concept of “site” was defined for the first time, and “archaeological site” was explained as a subcategory. The law also enforced the registration process. Thus, the registration of archaeological sites and their annotation onto title deeds, legally defining them as “archaeological site to be preserved,” were ensured.

In the 1950s, as the legal and institutional process in the field of preservation gradually developed, parallel to excavations of magnificent ruins such as Ephesus, preservation works also started. At archaeological sites, anastylosis, restoration, and

sometimes even reconstruction gained momentum in the 1970s (Schmidt 1993). Archaeological areas that had a museum were added to excursion itineraries. A general evaluation of work from that time where archaeological ruins were partially restored and exhibited shows that efforts to preserve and exhibit were still on a stand-alone basis. The information panels were only used to give encyclopedic information about the relevant building. There was still no effort to handle the site area as a whole or to explain the importance and meaning of the ruins in respect to cultural history.

A different example in this context is the open-air museum established at the Karatepe-Aslantaş excavation site. Numerous stone monuments with inscriptions and reliefs were unearthed at this archaeological site, a settlement from the Late Hittite Period, during the 1950s. Some of these were in situ, and some were disturbed and scattered around. The excavation director Halet Çambel decided that these should be preserved in situ instead of in a museum and had a roof constructed over the ruins. In the following years, numerous monuments were completed by the anastylosis method and were reconstructed in their original positions (Çambel 1993, 2010). Çambel believed that an archaeological site could only be preserved when the local people became stakeholders, and she spent many years educating and modernizing living standards of the villagers of Karatepe. The primary school, health care center, and post office were established. She revitalized traditional crafts such as *kilim* weaving, ironworking, and woodworking, and the villagers could once again earn money from these crafts. She asked the elevation of the reservoir to be lowered when a dam was to be built nearby, and thereby prevented the archaeological site from being flooded. She also ensured that the region was registered as a national park, which enabled the neighboring forest including the archaeological site to be preserved as a whole. This project was initiated in the 1960s and was a pioneering implementation of concepts like “preservation of the cultural landscape as a whole,” “creating awareness for the local people,” and “creating a sustainable economic system that can create its own resources for the preservation of the archaeological site” (Özdoğan 2011a). However, for many years Çambel’s efforts were perceived as a stand-alone application, identified as the result of her personal involvement, and it was not taken to be an example of modern archaeology and preservation.

Development of the Concept of World Heritage Within the Process of Globalization in Turkey

The constitution of 1983 beckoned a liberal period in Turkey leading to the rapid change of the state and the society. These developments had their effects on the field of cultural heritage as well. The new “Law of Preservation of Cultural and Natural Properties” came into effect in 1983. The term “antiquity” was replaced by “cultural property,” as otherwise in the modern world. The concept of site was extended, and a sweeping legislation aimed at the preservation of all kinds of both archaeological and urban-rural cultural property was passed. This law paralleled the famous

“Malraux Law” that came into effect in France in 1962 and was also aimed at solutions to economic problems encountered in restoration works. Regional committees replaced the Supreme Council for Preservation. The obligation to have the approval of the regional committees, composed of specialists in architecture, archaeology, history of art, and urban planning, was imposed for the restoration projects. A new Supreme Council, in charge of the regional committees, was founded in 1987. Like its predecessor, this council was expected to produce national guidelines in the field of preservation which the regional committees were to use as the basis for evaluating the restoration projects that were submitted to them. While the concerned general directorate of the Ministry of Culture was basically responsible for the applications to excavate and restore archaeological sites, following the new regulations, the issue of the preservation of archaeological sites became the responsibility of the regional committees based on the Supreme Council’s guidelines.

In 1983, Turkey signed and ratified the UNESCO World Heritage Convention of 1972. In 1985, Göreme National Park and the rock sites of Cappadocia, the Great Mosque, the Hospital of Divriği, and historical areas of Istanbul were listed as World Heritage. By 1998, a total of nine cultural and natural areas in Turkey were listed as World Heritage (Pulhan 2009). Among these areas, four are purely archaeological; two are archaeological and natural, one is an urban, archaeological monument, and a single site is purely a monument, whilst one site is only urban. When nominating sites for World Heritage List, archaeological sites figure prominently, and, as noted above, serious problems were encountered in fulfilling the criteria set by UNESCO in nominating sites from other fields. Only traditional neighborhoods in Istanbul and the town of Safranbolu were listed as urban sites. Between 1998 and 2011 Turkey has been unable to list any heritage area. In 2011 the Selimiye Mosque and its social complex, again a monumental building, was listed.

The relationship Turkey has with the UNESCO World Heritage List, which forms the basic doctrine for conception and application of preservation on a global scale, reflects Turkey’s troubled relationship with the global economic and social model that the country has tried to be incorporated since 1980. The World Heritage Convention is a system where UNESCO aims to preserve the cultural and natural properties that it has defined as the documentation of the common history of humanity in a supranational scale. Cultural properties that are important milestones of global cultural history are selected according to certain criteria. It is a prerequisite that a cultural property must not only match these high-level criteria but also must have its authenticity and integrity preserved. As the lifestyles of societies gradually become similar in a globalized world, one of the basic approaches is to sustain the variation in colorful and rich social fabric that stems from cultural identities. Here, to promote various social and individual identities as a balance factor against globalization, it is especially important to preserve the cultural heritage and to ensure that the community embraces this heritage as part of its cultural identity.

In Turkey, the change in the traditional lifestyle during the modernization process also affected the architectural environment. Due to the rural-urban migration that began in the 1960s, slum areas surrounded the cities. As part of the same process, the original urban population abandoned the historical city center and moved to

modern suburbs, and poor immigrants appropriated the urban fabric of the city center. This change gained momentum over the years, and in the 1980s, also driven by the powerful entry of foreign capital and rapid economic development, there was widespread demolition of the urban cultural heritage. Despite the extensive preservation legislation, the enormous increase in the land value in the city centers, not only in Istanbul but also in many other cities, led to the demolition of the historic urban fabric, which was replaced by concrete housing. On a national scale, large public works such as dams, highways, etc. had a similar impact in the countryside.

This abrasive process affected the archaeological sites negatively. In the cities and the countryside construction works were carried out without any preliminary research and leading to substantial damage to archaeological sites. As Turkey did not have a good cultural inventory based on detailed research, obviously many archaeological sites were destroyed without documentation or even without any knowledge of their existence.³ As for the registered archaeological sites, the increasing pressure from mass tourism triggered dubious restoration works and haphazard tourist facilities.

When we compare the process that Turkey went through to other parts of the world, it is seen that the Western approach that emphasizes sensitive social differences related to cultural heritage was not adopted. Economic development destroyed significant parts of Turkey's cultural heritage and paved the way for monotype urbanization. Today, it is therefore difficult to determine the characteristics of a Turkish city from others. This situation is summarized by the fact that out of nine heritage sites that Turkey listed as of 1998, only one of them is a historic town (Safranbolu) and one is a neighborhood in a city (Zeyrek and Süleymaniye in Istanbul). The remaining seven are either purely archaeological or sites related to archaeology that were known, excavated, and preserved since the nineteenth century.

In the mid-1990s UNESCO defined a site management plan as a criterion for the inscription on the World Heritage List. In addition to the special value of the cultural heritage, it was therefore necessary with a long-term commitment to preserve heritage on behalf of the state. This caused a blockage in Turkey until 2004 when the Ministry of Culture and Tourism could recognize and regulate the legal procedures in accordance with these new concepts of cultural heritage management, site management planning, and sustainable preservation. It took a while for the municipalities and the academic world to adapt and start preparation of site management plans. After the listing of Troy in 1998, the first heritage site that could make it to the list with all the conditions fulfilled was the Selimiye Mosque and the surrounding building complex in Edirne in 2011.

The 2000s constitute a period when Turkey gradually started to question its attitudes and practices concerning cultural heritage. Heritage areas started to be seen as important to creating a difference in quality of life and experience, especially within the context of tourism. The development of nongovernmental organizations working

³ In this respect rescue operations carried out in the reservoir area of the Keban dam between 1967 and 1976 stands as an exceptional case (Özdoğan 2011a).

in the field of preservation and organizing events were important achievements that made local authorities perceive cultural heritage as a source of prestige as well as tourism. The media also contributed to this process by showing awareness about the preservation of cultural heritage.⁴ Its efforts to mold public opinion by putting negative examples on the agenda, concurrently publicizing positive examples as a source of pride, contributed to the process.

In the 2000s there was a significant increase in the number of scientific excavations and surveys carried out with permits from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. These new efforts have propelled Turkey to a more exceptional position in the world cultural history. Since then, some archaeologists conducting excavations have shown awareness for the preservation and publicizing of the site area, and for preservation-exhibition projects in addition to research. Preservation-restoration works are gaining momentum at various excavation sites of the Classical Period such as Sagalassos, Hierapolis, and Bergama (Ahunbay and İzmirligil 2006). At prehistoric excavation sites such as Troy, Çatalhöyük, Aşağı Pınar, Arslantepe, Aktopraklık, and Aşıklı, preservation and outreach projects like open-air museums that use various modes of modeling aimed to promote and present the site to the world by emphasizing its importance in the cultural history are also being implemented (Eres 2010). The increase in the number of archaeological research projects has led to the recognition of many new heritage sites and their outstanding universal value—opening them to be experienced by the public. This process has also improved the protection allotted from natural or man-implied damage.

In the recent years the expectations that cultural heritage can contribute to the local economy through tourism, as well as the wish of communities to harmonize the region they live in with their personal identities, have led local authorities to be increasingly sensitive to preservation issues. Although there are unfortunate applications of “preservation of the historic environment” in large centers such as Istanbul, driven by exaggerated expectations of capital gain, this process is working well in smaller scale cities and towns.

Today the main goal of both state and the local authorities is undoubtedly to be listed in the World Heritage List. However, as mentioned above, to a great extent Turkey has already lost the traditional urban neighborhood fabric, and this limits the potential to list such sites. Indeed, one of the criteria for listing Safranbolu (one of the best preserved urban settlements in Turkey) in 1994 is that it represents the sociocultural environment that is increasingly disappearing. In fact, no other urban settlement could apply to the list. For example, the city of Mardin has struggled to be accepted on the World Heritage List since the early 2000s. Though possessing a notably well-preserved urban fabric, the surrounding dense concrete housing prevents this. In 2012, the Municipality and the State made the decision to take down all concrete buildings in the old city in an attempt to regain its original expression and identity. Mardin should be commended for making a remarkable effort to reverse the last 30 years of destruction of its cultural heritage.

⁴In this respect, the media played a big role in developing a public awareness, pointing the thread on the major sites such as Zeugma, Allianoi, and Hasankeyf.

Recently, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, in charge of the initial national recommendations concerning listings on the World Heritage List, has turned its attention from the urban sites that have lost their integrity or monumental buildings, struggling with important problems of authenticity to the archaeological sites. Archaeological sites that are being excavated can more easily define their outstanding universal values in world cultural history thanks to the scientific research and their indisputable authenticity and integrity. The preparation of the necessary site management plan is easier compared to the urban sites. In this frame, archaeology is increasingly merging with preservation and display, leading the Ministry to prepare site management plans for archaeological sites and push the archaeological teams responsible for the site to prepare preservation or exhibition projects. This is a very positive development.

Future Prospects

The concern for the World Heritage List has invigorated the Turkish heritage sector by enabling the implementation of modern concepts of preservation in Turkey. Although Turkey long ago officially recognized and accepted international charters for the preservation, presentation, and management of archaeological sites that were introduced by ICOMOS and the Council of Europe, these were never put into practice. As Turkey not only developed legal regulations but also initiated the application of good practices out of concern for the criteria inherent to listing of cultural properties on the Heritage List, significant progress has been made.

This said it is also important to develop culture policies aimed at archaeological sites that are not expected to enter the World Heritage List. These sites also need to be protected, as they too are valuable for cultural history. If state and local governments are interested only in very special archaeological sites and emphasize only these for preservation and exhibition, this evidently will result in a biased selection and skewed approach, not only in considering the history of civilization but also in regard to the wider public's access to the relics of ancient cultures.

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