



## Un travagliato spazio urbano a Istanbul: il Simkeşhane come caso di studio

Mesut Dinler (Politecnico di Torino)

*Nel diciassettesimo secolo il Simkeşhane era il palazzo della Zecca ottomana costruito sul Forum Tauri (il Foro di Teodosio), il più grande forum di Costantinopoli nel quarto secolo a.C. Le vicende relative all'edificio e al suo contesto urbano sono caratterizzate da conflitti tra diversi attori e istituzioni. Negli anni Trenta del ventesimo secolo, il governo repubblicano aveva invitato Henri Prost (1874-1959) per il progetto di un nuovo piano regolatore urbano per Istanbul. Tra gli obiettivi di piano vi era la valorizzazione dell'Arco di Trionfo del Foro, situato nel cortile del Simkeşhane che Prost prevedeva di demolire. Il progetto di dismissione per favorire la città bizantina a scapito di quella ottomana fu definito dal Comitato per la Conservazione dei Monumenti Storici (Eski Eserleri Koruma Encümeni). Negli anni Cinquanta, il potere del governo repubblicano però passò in mano all'opposizione per un decennio, dunque si abbandonò l'obiettivo di secolarizzazione della società turca. Il nuovo governo, con il supporto degli Stati Uniti nella seconda metà degli anni Cinquanta, lanciò un nuovo ambizioso progetto urbano per Istanbul che prevedeva la distruzione di interi quartieri storici. Il Simkeşhane fu pertanto totalmente demolito per la creazione della grande arteria stradale del corso Ordu (Ordu Caddesi), pur restando una delle azioni più controverse del programma filostatunitense.*

# Troubled Urban Heritage in Istanbul: Simkeşhane as a Case Study

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Mesut Dinler

Today, when visitors to Istanbul walk along the historic Ordu Avenue, they pass by a strange assemblage of archaeological artifacts. They might think that these artifacts have been found and were then left there due to the chaos of traffic, people on the sidewalk, insistent street vendors, or the huge stone-brick building behind it. Yet on closer inspection, an information panel is seen indicating that the findings were deliberately placed where they are and displayed as they appear (figs. 1a-d). These artifacts belong to the Triumphal Arc of the Forum of Theodosius, and the huge building behind it is an Ottoman industrial building, Simkeşhane. Together they narrate a historical dialogue between the Ottoman and pre-Ottoman pasts of Istanbul – a dialogue that is one of the most contested – but also the most defining essence of the post-Ottoman history of the city.

This heritage-related conflict is not particular to Turkey; on the contrary, as Silverman noted, since the 1990s there has been a «paradigm shift toward a socially engaged, politically aware study of the past that regards heritage as contested»<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, Ashworth conceptualize “dissonant heritage” to show that contestation is in the very nature of heritage itself, mainly due to two reasons; firstly, heritage is a market commodity, and secondly, everyone has their own heritage. Therefore, any process of heritagization may simultaneously activate a process of de-heritagization<sup>2</sup>.

1. SILVERMAN 2011, p. 5.

2. ASHWORTH, GRAHAM, TUNBRIDGE 2007, pp. 36-37.



Figures 1a-d. Istanbul. Simkeşhane (on the upper row) and the archaeological remains of Forum Tauri as seen in 2018. The busy traffic on the road and the sidewalk is not related to the hour of the day, but rather is constant throughout most of the day. This is due to Ordu Avenue being one of the main arteries of the historic peninsula of Istanbul. Regarding the archaeological fragments, the pieces of the arch columns and base are protected with an iron fence whereas other pedestals along with other architectural fragments are left exposed. The graffiti and carvings on the columns indicate the lack of even basic protection measures. The information panel can be seen in the photograph on the bottom right. It is difficult to read due to stickers and dirt on the surface (photo M. Dinler, 2018).

The contestation can be observed more clearly where a particular period of history is emphasized, especially through archaeology. For instance, in Egypt and Iran, nationalistic and relatively secular governments have emphasized pre-Islamic periods, but when pan-Islamic (or pan-Arabic, in the case of Egypt) power structures prevail, the same period has been de-emphasized favoring Islamic periods<sup>3</sup>. Yet this process is not so straightforward. On the contrary, regardless of the emphasized past, there is always a reaction. For instance, in Egypt, despite efforts to generate links between the pharaonic past and the modern Egyptian national identity, these links have never been strongly embraced by the local population<sup>4</sup>.

Following the suggestion that «heritage is present-centered and is created, shaped and managed by, and in response to, the demands of the present»<sup>5</sup>, the paper aims at showing how the urban operations on the multilayered urban area of Simkeşhane were defined by the changing present-day circumstances of the twentieth century, especially following the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Focusing on Simkeşhane as a case study, which has the remains of both the Byzantine and the Ottoman past, the main aim of the paper is to understand and present how the contestation aligns with heritage in the urban history of Istanbul.

### *A Brief History of Simkeşhane*

Simkeşhane is located in the Beyazit Square at the geographical center of the historic peninsula of Istanbul (figs. 2-3). It is a part of the ceremonial segment of the Divanyolu, which is the avenue running from Topkapi Palace and Hagia Sophia towards Çemberlitaş and Beyazit Square. Divanyolu, which corresponds with the *Mese* of the Byzantine Constantinople, was the stage for the sultans' stately processions. According to Cerasi, the Divanyolu is «an aggregation of Byzantine spolia and new, fully Ottoman, spaces and concepts»<sup>6</sup>. The history of Simkeşhane also confirms this suggestion.

After the conquest of Constantinople by sultan Mehmed II in 1453, the sultan constructed his first palace over the Forum of Theodosius and then ordered the construction of a new palace (Topkapi

3. TRIGGER 1984. In his seminal essay, Trigger suggests that most archaeological activities are undertaken with a nationalist agenda and argues that archaeology created a common bond between divided classes in Western Europe in the late nineteenth century.

4. MITCHELI 2013, pp. 181-182.

5. ASHWORTH, GRAHAM, TUNBRIDGE 2007, p. 3.

6. CERASI 2005, p. 193.



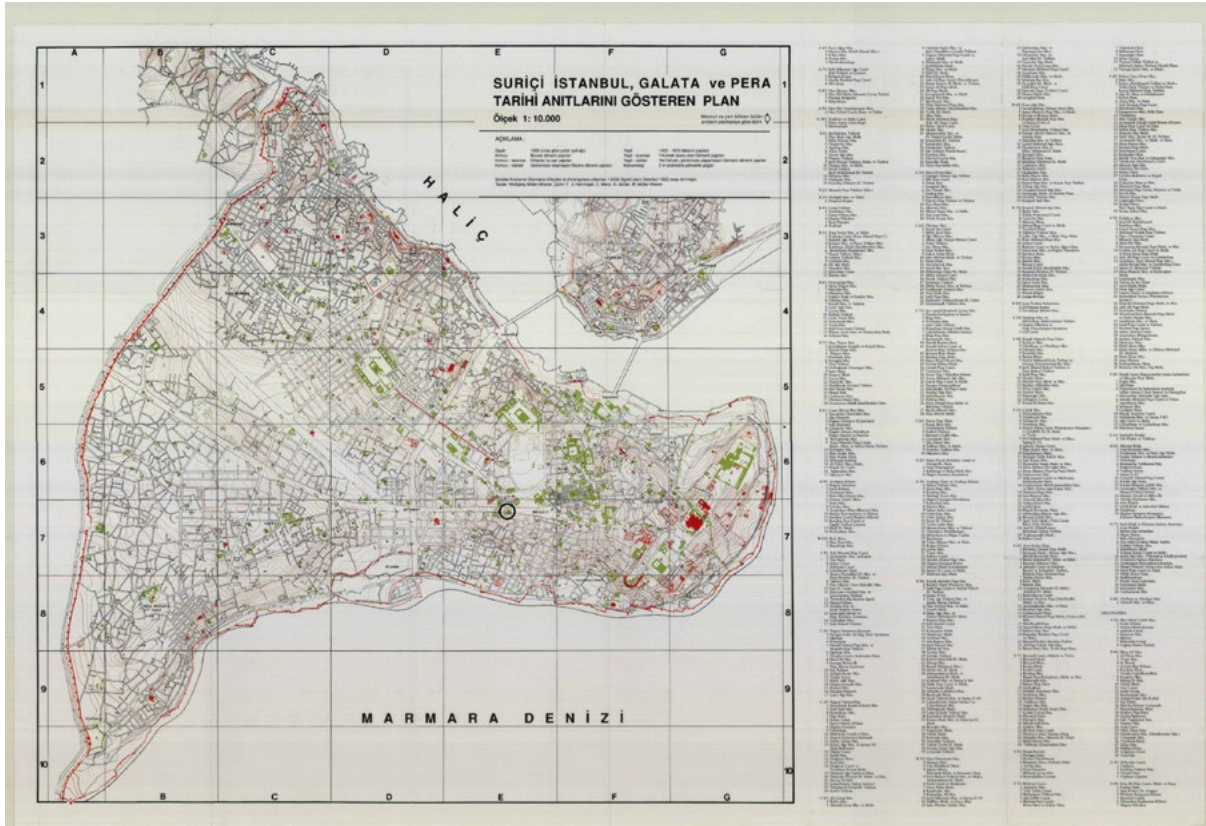


Figure 2. *Istanbul Galata ve Pera Tarihi Anıtlarını Gosteren Plan*, Simkeşhane is indicated with a black circle (<https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/102345>, access December 3<sup>th</sup> 2020).

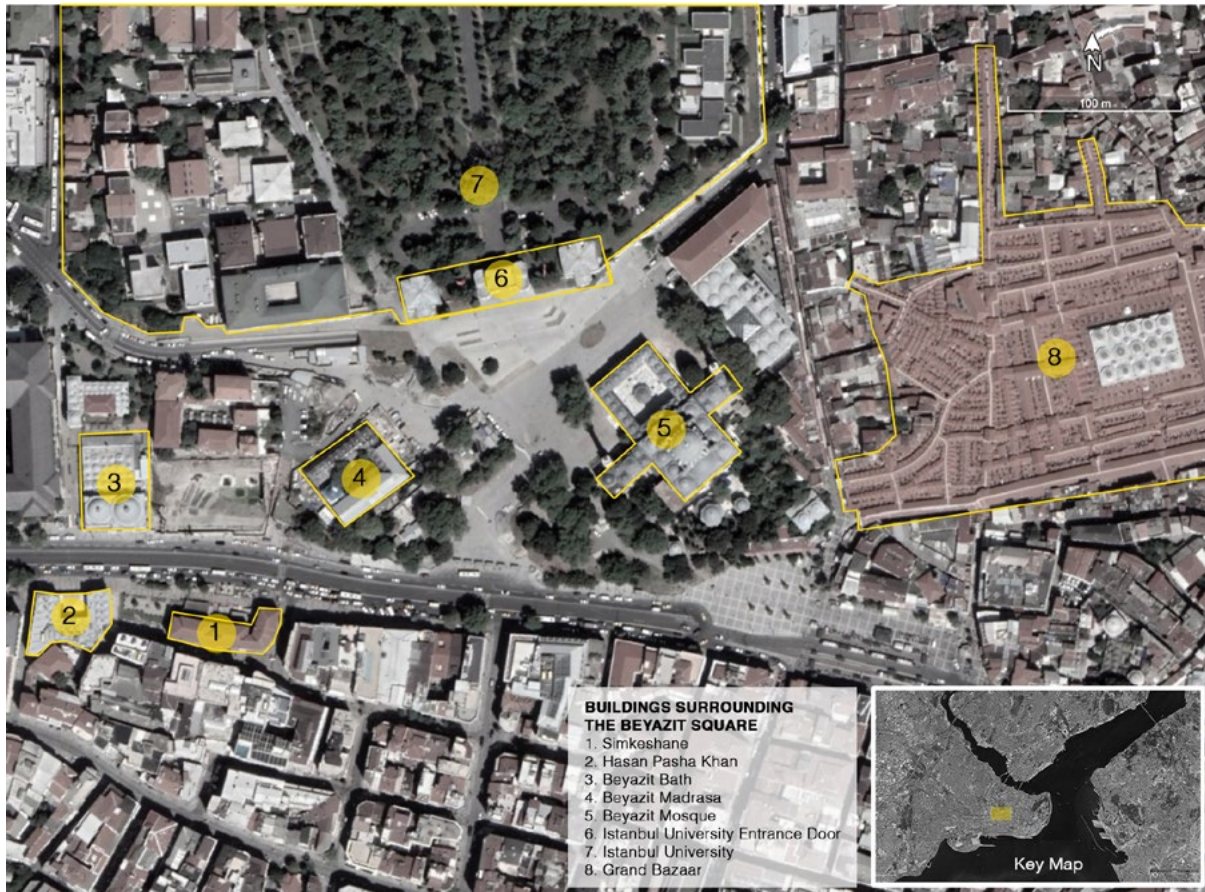


Figure 3. Istanbul. Beyazit Square and the buildings surrounding the square. The buildings are: 1. Simkeşhane, 2. Hasan Pasha Han, 16th century. Ottoman han. 3. Beyazit Bath is a part of the Sultan Beyazit II's complex (külliye) constructed in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, 4. Beyazit Madrasa is also a part of the Sultan Beyazit II's complex (külliye) constructed in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century 5. Beyazit Mosque is the imperial mosque of Sultan Beyazit II constructed in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and then restored by Sinan the Architect (Mimar Sinan) again in the 16<sup>th</sup> cent, 6. The entrance door of Istanbul University, which is an example of Ottoman Baroque 7. Campus of the Istanbul University, 8. Grand Bazaar. In the key map, it is possible to see the location of Beyazit Square in the historic peninsula of Istanbul (elaboration by the author based on Google maps).

Palace) over the Byzantine acropolis as part of his grandiose architectural projects<sup>7</sup>. Despite being a true palimpsest today with additions of each sultan throughout the centuries, Topkapi Palace can also be considered one of few buildings that was constructed during the period of sultan Mehmed II under the establishment of his waqf<sup>8</sup>. Other buildings constructed during the reign of the sultan Mehmed II are his own religious complex Fatih Kulliye (the Conquest Complex) which includes also his own mosque, the Galata Bedesten (market), and the first imperial mint<sup>9</sup>. This imperial mint was constructed over the site of Simkeşhane. When the imperial mint was transferred to another building located in the first courtyard of Topkapi Palace before the 17<sup>th</sup> century (exact date of this transfer is not known)<sup>10</sup>, the building was converted into a Simkeş-hane (meaning Simkeş-house; simkeş is the craft of producing glittered shiny textiles and yarns through treating gold and silver<sup>11</sup>). When Simkeşhane was constructed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Beyazit Square was already filled with the buildings constructed by the waqf of the sultan Beyazit (1481-1512) in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to the mosque, the madrasa and the imaret, after his death, a bath was also constructed. In the foundation of this bath, fragments of the Column of Theodosius were used as spolia<sup>12</sup>.

The transformation of the building from the imperial mint to Simkeşhane was managed by the waqf of Gülnuş Emetullah Valide Sultan, the mother of sultan Ahmad III who reigned from 1703 to 1730<sup>13</sup>. In this transformation, the lower floors were occupied by manufacturers, and the upper floors were the dwellings of the shop owners (fig. 4). In addition, the managers of the building also lived there; and

7. NECİPOĞLU 1991, pp. 4-9.

8. The waqf or vakıf [evkaf in plural] were the basic structures of Islamic societies (similar social organizations, in fact, had already existed in the Roman and Greek periods). Vakıf simply means donating a property for public use for charity purposes. After the conquest of Constantinople, vakıfs were instrumental in the urban development of the city because each vakıf would construct its own socio-religious complexes (külliye) or public kitchens (imaret) and new districts would emerge around these complexes. Moreover, vakıfs also helped transform Constantinople to an Islamic city by converting churches to mosques. Like sultans, other family members of the sultans, members of the ruling class, and wealthy community leaders could also establish their own waqf. See BAKIRER 2006; BAYARTAN 2008.

9. CANTAY 1994, vol. 6, p. 561.

10. Before the Topkapı Palace, the mint was briefly transported to the Ali Paşa Madrasa that is located in Çemberlitaş. See Koç University, Cahide Tamer Historic Buildings Restoration Projects Collection, CTA\_S005\_D01, The folder consisting of documents of the restoration of Simkeşhane and the Beyazit Bathhouse. Available online at: <https://libdigitalcollections.ku.edu.tr/digital/collection/CTA/id/3177> (access December 3<sup>th</sup> 2020).

11. In some maps, the building is also referred as a han that is a typical Ottoman commercial building typology with small shops that may also provide accommodation.

12. MULLER-WIENER 1977, p. 264.

13. CANTAY 1994, vol. 6, p. 561.









Figure 5. Istanbul. Simkeşhane, 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ataturk Library, Husrev Tayla Archive, Accession N. FOTO\_019084. The fountain can be seen on the corner of the building facing the street on the far left. The types of shops on the ground floor, the poor condition of the units on the first floor and the heavy vegetation on the roof suggest that the building was already in a poor condition in this period and the simkeş craftsmanship had already waned. The shop on the bottom left of the photograph reads “*manav*”, which means greengrocer. The clothes of pedestrians (men in suits with hats, women without headscarves and with skirts) and the use of Latin script for “*manav*” indicate the photo was taken after 1928. A tram line is also visible on the street. This was constructed in 1914 in the second constitutional era of the Ottoman Empire (1914-1918).

projects that were mainly landscape arrangements. The common theme of these arrangements was the use of water as a design feature, both in parks and in urban settings as fountains<sup>15</sup>. Another important common feature of the Tulip Period is that the patrons of these water-related projects, including fountains, were mostly the women of the palace<sup>16</sup>. Also in Simkeşhane, the mother of the Sultan (Gülnuş Emetullah Valide Sultan) added a fountain to the main façade of the building in the Baroque style. In addition, she also added a masjid and a school to the inner courtyard<sup>17</sup> (figs. 5-6).

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, simkeş craftsmanship was already disappearing and owners were closing up their shops. As a part of the Ottoman industrialization efforts in 1867, during the reign of sultan Abdulaziz (1861-1876), the building was converted into a simkeş factory after a restoration project and started to produce military uniforms with all their epaulets and ornaments. However, as the military uniforms became less ornamented and more modest in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the factory stopped its engines and became empty<sup>18</sup>. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Simkeşhane was an abandoned building and the upper floors, above all, were structurally in poor condition. From the

15. BATUR 1985. The excessiveness of the “Tulip period” was terminated by a public rebellion. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Baroque architecture was another source of influence. Baroque was adopted into Ottoman monumental architecture.

16. ARTAN 2006.

17. ŞEHSUVAROĞLU 1956.

18. *Ibidem*.



Figure 6. Istanbul. The fountain of Simkeşhane in the 40s of the 19th century, Salt Research Archive, Archive No. TASUH0909 (<https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/74329>, access June 15<sup>th</sup> 2019). Construction of water elements (i.e. fountains) with ornamented surfaces by Ottoman women patrons in the 17<sup>th</sup> century is a common feature of the Tulip period, which marks the beginning of European influence in the Ottoman urban texture. Moreover, it is noteworthy that also in the Forum Tauri there a nymphaeum.

archival photographs, it is understood that especially at street level, there were some small shops, but the rest of the building was empty (fig. 7).

### *The Byzantine Past in Simkeşhane*

In the aftermath of World War I, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of a new state in 1923 following the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923) marked a milestone in the history of Simkeşhane, as it did for many other historic structures in the city. The new government established an ambitious archaeological program in Turkey, and as will be elaborated below, remains of the Arch of Theodosius were discovered in this period in the courtyard of Simkeşhane.

Archaeological activities in Turkey date back to beginning of the modernization process of the Ottoman Empire (the late 17<sup>th</sup> century) with the concept of “asar-ı atika” (old artifacts). In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mainly through archaeology and museums, the concept of cultural heritage became institutionalized through the establishment of the Müze-i Hümayun (Imperial Museum) in Istanbul<sup>19</sup>. The legacy of archaeology continued to accelerate especially during the first decades of the Turkish Republic<sup>20</sup> and foreign teams were also encouraged to undertake archaeological research<sup>21</sup>. The British team led by Stanley Casson for the British Academy also received special permission to study the inner courtyard of Simkeşhane<sup>22</sup>.

19. For the archaeological activities of the late-nineteenth century Ottoman world and the foundation of the Imperial Museum, see SHAW 2003. The Istanbul-based museum gradually established a growing authority over archaeological activities controlling foreign excavations, prohibiting the export and trade of archaeological findings, and launching archaeological campaigns in various territories (including today's Iran, Iraq and Syria) of the late Ottoman lands.

20. Even though there is continuity in archaeological interests from the Ottoman to the Republican era, the contexts were different. For the Republican period, the main reason of this acceleration was a need to provide scientific archaeological evidence for the Turkish History Thesis; a thesis which suggested that Turks were a race related not with Mongoloid or Near Eastern societies, but with Europeans. Moreover, it was suggested that the Turk race migrated from Central Asia to the whole world improving the civilizations it encountered (including European civilizations) during these migrations. See TANYERI-ERDEMİR 2006; ATAKUMAN 2008; DINLER 2018.

21. DINLER 2019, p. 81. Atatürk's encouragement for foreign teams to conduct research in Turkey was well received by the European and American communities. Many universities and institutes such as the French Archaeological Institute in Turkey, the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, the German Archeological Institute, and the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton undertook archaeological research projects and subsequently the museum collections expanded in many cities of Turkey. See also WHITTEMORE 1943.

22. In fact, according to the archival records of Topkapi Palace, even when the imperial mint was first designed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, there were projects to construct additional buildings in the courtyard. However, after finding the remains of Forum



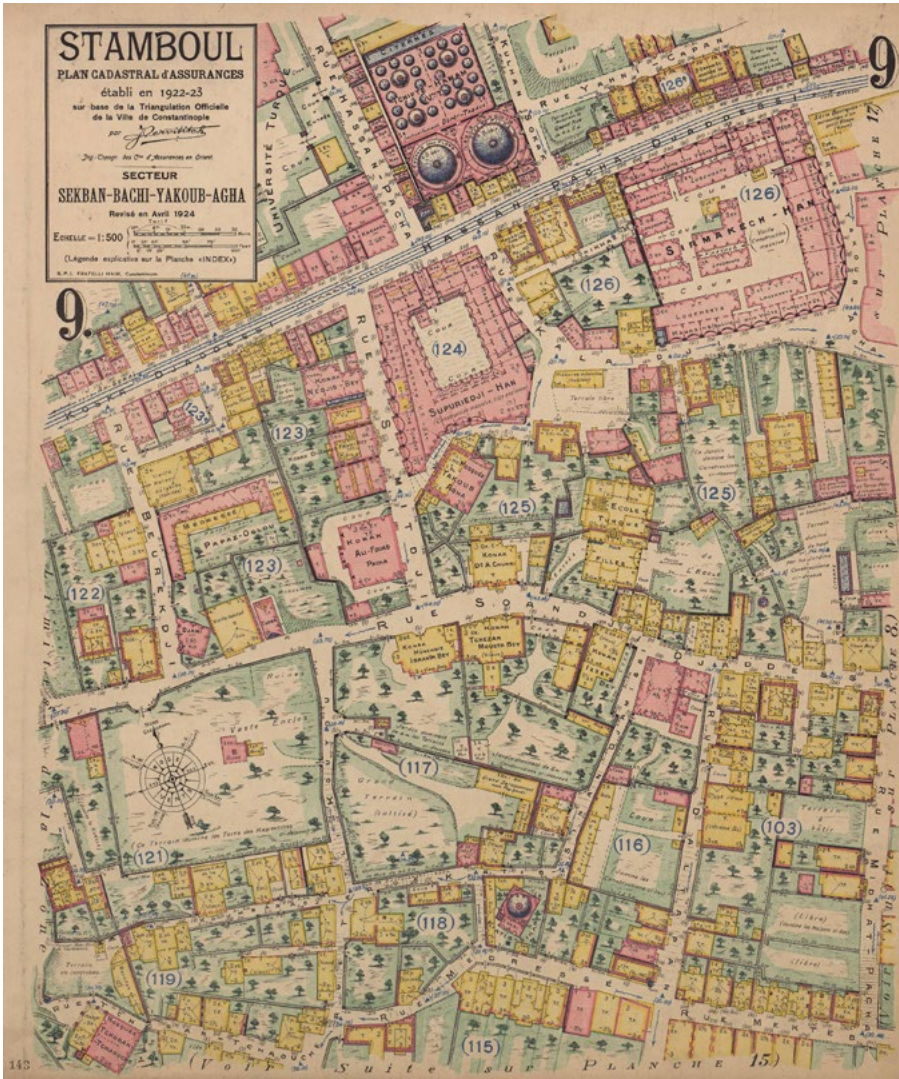


Figure 7. Istanbul. Pervititch Maps, Simkeşhane in its surrounding before the 1920s. Istanbul, Atatürk Library (Atatürk Kitaplığı), Jacques Pervititch, *Stamboul secteur 9: Sekban-Bachi, Yakup-Agha, Plan cadastral d'assurances*, 1923, Hrt\_000666, 912.563 PER 1923 k.1/1. When 1870 led to the introduction of the concept of insurance, Jacques Pervititch (about whom there is very limited information) was put in charge by Central Office of Turkish Insurance Agents (*Türkiye Sigortacılar Daire-i Merkeziyesi*) of preparing insurance maps between 1922 and 1945. Giving information on function, building height, construction technique, and building material, the Pervititch maps are the most comprehensive source on building stock of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



The British Academy's excavation revealed architectural fragments of the Arch of Theodosius, a triple triumphal arch that stood over the Forum of Theodosius, which extended towards the Hippodrome and Hagia Sophia<sup>23</sup>. The Forum of Theodosius was an extension of the *Mese* and was one of the main urban transformations that differentiated the Constantinian and Theodosian transformations of the city<sup>24</sup>. The only remains of the Forum are found in the site of Simkeşhane. Therefore, there is a lack of evidence regarding the exact dimensions and planimetric configuration of the Forum. Naumann argues that the arch is at the western entrance of the Forum<sup>25</sup>. Bauer also seconds this suggestion and notes the forum took inspiration from the Forum of Trajan in Rome<sup>26</sup>. Berger, on the other hand, suggests that the Triumphal Arch was not the western entrance, but rather the eastern entrance and, analyzing the foundation walls found in the vicinity of the Arch, argues that the forum was much smaller than suggested by previous studies<sup>27</sup>. The addition of the Forum of Theodosius to the extension of the west of the *Mese*, together with the Forum of Arcadius Arcadios (or Xeropholon) on the western end of the *Mese* were two major urban projects that gave the city its Theodosian character<sup>28</sup>. Although the lack of archaeological evidence and multilayered urban character of the city presents a challenge for understanding the byzantine past of the city<sup>29</sup>, it is known that the Column of Theodosius was located in the forum and was one of the elements that bestowed the city with a byzantine skyline<sup>30</sup>.

It is known that Theodosius had a column erected with his own statue in the Forum of Theodosius in 386 and had inaugurated the Forum in 393. The structure contained many splendid buildings including the Basilica of Theodosius, but a devastating earthquake destroyed most of them in 447, including the Basilica. The location of this Basilica and the boundaries of the forum remain uncertain, moreover, the exact function of the arch is also debated; some scholars suggest it was the entrance of the forum, whereas others argue that it held the statues of Arcadius and Honorius near the column of

Tauri in a preliminary excavation, the project was withdrawn since excavating the earth and removing the remains would require a larger budget and longer times. ŞEHİSVAROĞLU 1956.

23. CASSON *ET ALII* 1928; CASSON *ET ALII* 1929. From the reports, it is understood that this excavation in the courtyard of the Simkeşhane was a very difficult one since it required working in a limited space.

24. BARSANTI 1995.

25. NAUMANN 1976.

26. BAUER 1996, p. 194.

27. BERGER 1996.

28. BASSETT 2007, pp. 82-83.

29. BERGER 2000, p. 161.

30. YONCACI ARSLAN 2016, pp. 136-137.

Theodosius<sup>31</sup>. In the late 8<sup>th</sup> century, the forum was used as an animal market and some parts of the column were defaced in the 9<sup>th</sup> century; however, even in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as can be understood from the records and depictions of travelers, the columns and reliefs were mainly intact and even when sultan Mehmet II constructed his first palace over Forum Tauri, the column was still standing<sup>32</sup>. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when sultan Beyazit II constructed his complex over Forum Tauri, pieces of the columns were used as spolia in the foundation of the Beyazit Bath after an earthquake caused the column to collapse in 1517<sup>33</sup>. The excavation by Casson and his team revealed both the fragments of the column of Theodosius and also the remains of the Triumphal Arch. The discovery by Casson and his team was one of the instances during which Istanbul's byzantine past was uncovered. Today, Simkeşhane is the principal place to observe the archaeological remains of the Forum of Theodosius.

The multilayered urban character of Istanbul was one of the main issues that created conflicts during the implementation phase of Henry Prost's Istanbul master plan in the 1940s. Before focusing on how interventions on Simkeşhane created debates among authorities, for a comprehensive understanding it is necessary to outline the urban changes that were proposed with the Prost Plan.

### *Changing the Old Capital with the Prost Plan in Line with Republican "Imagination"*

French architect-urbanist Henri Prost occupies a very important space not only for the urban history of Istanbul but also for the political history of Turkey, as Prost was commissioned by the republican regime who governed the country with a highly centralized government until the 1950 election. The republican rulers enacted reforms to transform a society that had been ruled with islamic sharia into a secular modern nation-state. This transition required reforms such as replacing islamic education with a modern one, abolishing spaces of Islamic practices (Sufi lodges-*tekke*, shrines-*türbe*, spaces of fraternities-*zaviye*), changing the alphabet from the arabic to the latin script, improvement of women's rights, land reforms, etc.<sup>34</sup> Among these reforms, architecture and urban planning functioned as tools that both facilitated and represented change of society. In that sense, interventions on urban spaces helped the republic "imagine the new nation"<sup>35</sup>. Changing the capital from Istanbul to Ankara in 1923,

31. JANIN 1950, pp. 69-71.

32. MULLER-WIENER 1977, pp. 263-264.

33. *Ivi*, p. 264.

34. AHMAD 1993; ZURCHER 2004.

35. ANDERSON 1983. According to Anderson, see nation "is an imagined political community" and in that sense it is a product. He investigates this imagination process not through political ideologies, but rather by focusing on wider cultural

in that respect, was a strategic act to distance the new state from its ottoman past, because the old capital was still filled with the remnants of the collapsed empire<sup>36</sup> and it had already been the main theatre of the late-ottoman modernization<sup>37</sup>. Moreover, by changing the capital, it became possible to form a new intellectual class committed to republican ideals, rather than the ottoman Islamic past<sup>38</sup>.

As the first decade of the Republic was involved in the construction of new cities, in the second half of the 1930s, the planning of the old capital was also put on the agenda. In this period, the republican regime had already all the power concentrated centrally in their hands, ruling parliament with a single party *id est* the Republican People's Party (CHP – *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*). Accordingly, the modern movement dominated the architectural and urban projects as an image of the new secular nation-state<sup>39</sup>. Prost was offered the job to transform Istanbul with a similar perspective. However, as will be elaborated below, when republican power was replaced by the opposition in the 1950 election, not only was this imagining process interrupted, but also Prost's contract was terminated although some major suggestions in his plan, especially road constructions, were used as a basis of the urban operations of the 1950s.

Prost was contracted in 1936 and submitted the first phase of his proposal, the Master Plan for the European Side, in 1937 (fig. 8). Aligned with the republican ideology of creating a modern secular

systems. Additionally, for the young republic, architecture, urban planning, and cultural heritage were aligned with this image of a nation. In addition to Ankara and Istanbul, rural areas were also transformed mainly through railroad construction. However, the development of rural areas resulted in a uniform urban form. Only the main infrastructural buildings would be constructed in each train station. See KEZER 2009.

36. CENGİZKAN 2004. The first urban plan for Ankara was the Lörcher plan in 1924, however, uncontrolled urban growth had necessitated a new plan. In 1928, an international urban planning competition was launched for Ankara. German urbanist Hermann Jansen won the competition. For Jansen's plan, see Tankut 1990. Jansen also prepared master plans for six other cities; İzmit, Adana, Ceyhan, Tarsus, Mersin, and Gaziantep. In all these cities, the Ankara plan was the model. Akcan shows how Jansen adopted the garden city approach to Ankara. He shows how the idea of the 'garden city' was *translated* in different geographies. He also suggests that this plan, and new housing proposals in particular, was irrelevant to the Turkish context and implementation of these proposals were indicators of a top-down modernization approach of the republican rulers. See AKCAN 2012.

37. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for the reconstruction of ruined districts after natural disasters (mainly fire and earthquakes), building regulations required stone masonry constructions instead of timber, and organic street patterns were replaced with grid patterns. These transformations were part of the broader modernization of late Ottoman society. See ÇELİK 1986.

38. In Istanbul, the latter community was still powerful to a certain extent and they were already disappointed with the republican regime since their position of power was lost. MARDİN 1990.

39. BOZDOĞAN 2001; AKCAN 2012.

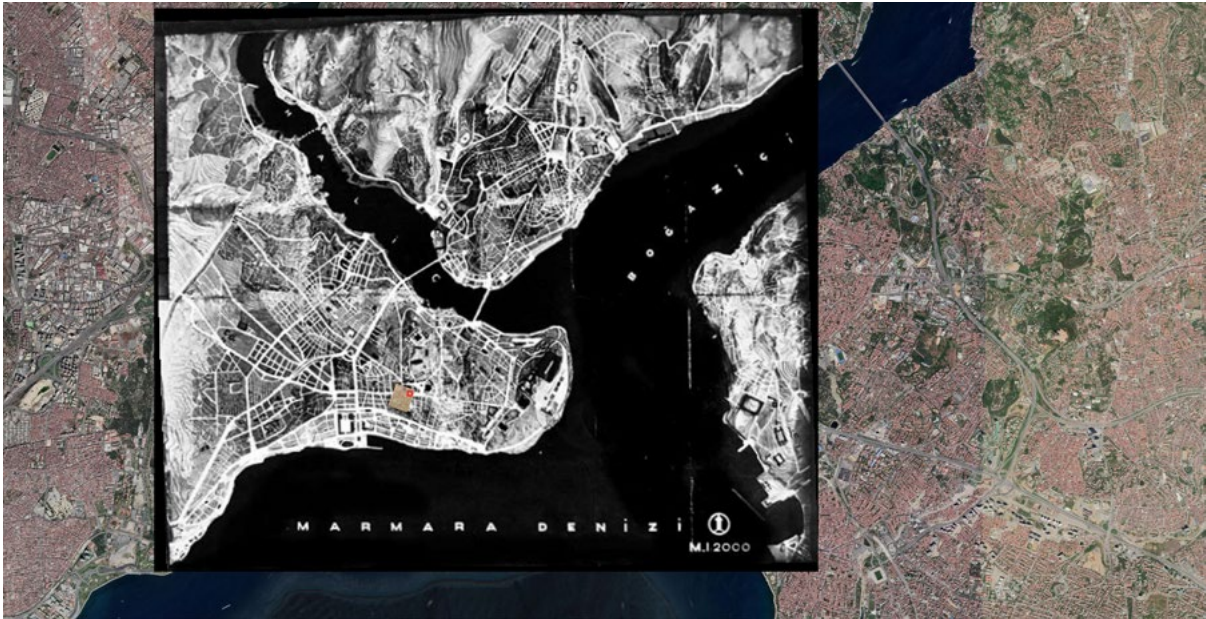


Figure 8. Istanbul. Henri Prost's master plan, architectural model of Istanbul. Paris, Centre d'archives de l'IFA, Académie d'architecture/Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, Fonds Henri Prost (1874-1959), 1935-1950, "Les transformations d'Istanbul" (Turquie): vue de la maquette du plan directeur, n.d. (cliché anonyme), Objet PROST-E-01. Dossier 343 AA 45/13. Doc. HP-PHO-030-04-03. Prost did not present a comprehensive report but rather his suggestions consisted of reports and letters written directly to the mayor-governor. For this reason, it is not easy to comprehend the totality of his vision for Istanbul. In the image above, the location of Simkeşane is indicated with a red rectangle and the Pervititch Map corresponding to Figure 1 is also included. The current-day satellite view on the background gives an idea about the urban density of Istanbul today.



nation-state, implementation of Prost's master plan began in the 1940s. The general principles of the plan were shaped around three main themes: transportation, hygiene and aesthetics<sup>40</sup>.

The main proposals of Prost's master plan can be summarized as zoning decisions (including new development areas, industrial zones, residential zones), a transportation system of roads and maritime lines including transportation infrastructures (new ports, train stations), large squares and public parks, open air spaces, destruction of structures surrounding monuments, and construction of large boulevards and streets<sup>41</sup>. Secularization was also emphasized through open air spaces. Prost encouraged the visibility of women in public and challenged the mosque-dominated urban character of the city<sup>42</sup> (fig. 9).

Regarding the main curiosity of this paper, Prost's project is significant as he was criticized for undermining Ottoman monuments in favor of Byzantine ones. Above all, his Archaeological Park Project caused conflicts mainly with the Commission for the Preservation of Antiquities (*Eski Eserleri Koruma Encümeni*), which was the main preservation council of Istanbul<sup>43</sup> (fig. 10).

Revealing the Greco-Roman past of Turkey in the master plan of Prost was aligned with the ideology of the Turkish Republic in terms of by-passing the Ottoman past and making a secular national identity. Moreover, especially regarding monumental Ottoman buildings, such as ceremonial mosques, Prost already had a preservation approach to liberate these buildings by demolishing surrounding structures and making them visible from passing cars<sup>44</sup>. However, his proposal to demolish Simkeşhane to reveal the Triumphal Arc of the Forum Tauri was one of the projects that caused conflicts (fig. 11).

40. DAVER, GÜNAY, RESMOR 1944. In 1944, the Istanbul Municipality published a book to promote the finished and ongoing urban projects of the master plan. The graphic design of the book is particularly interesting with translucent sheets presenting before-after comparisons and photographic representations.

41. AKPINAR 2003; BİLSEL & PINON 2010; AKPINAR 2014; BOLCA 2017. On Prost's Istanbul master plan, compared to these studies, Murat Gül's research presents a different position as he criticizes Prost arguing that his plan extensively damaged the historical character of the city. See GÜL 2009.

42. AKPINAR 2003, pp. 68-77.

43. AYKAC 2020. The Council was formed in 1917 in the last decade of the Ottoman Empire with the name *Muhafaza-ı Asar-ı Atika Encümeni* (the same name with Ottoman words). After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, parliament ratified the commission. See ALTINYILDIZ 2007; ACIKGOZ 2014. In 1933, following the orders of Atatürk, the Council for the Protection of Monuments (Anıtları Koruma Kurulu) took responsibility for the monuments in other Anatolian cities. See DINLER 2019.

44. AKPINAR 2003.

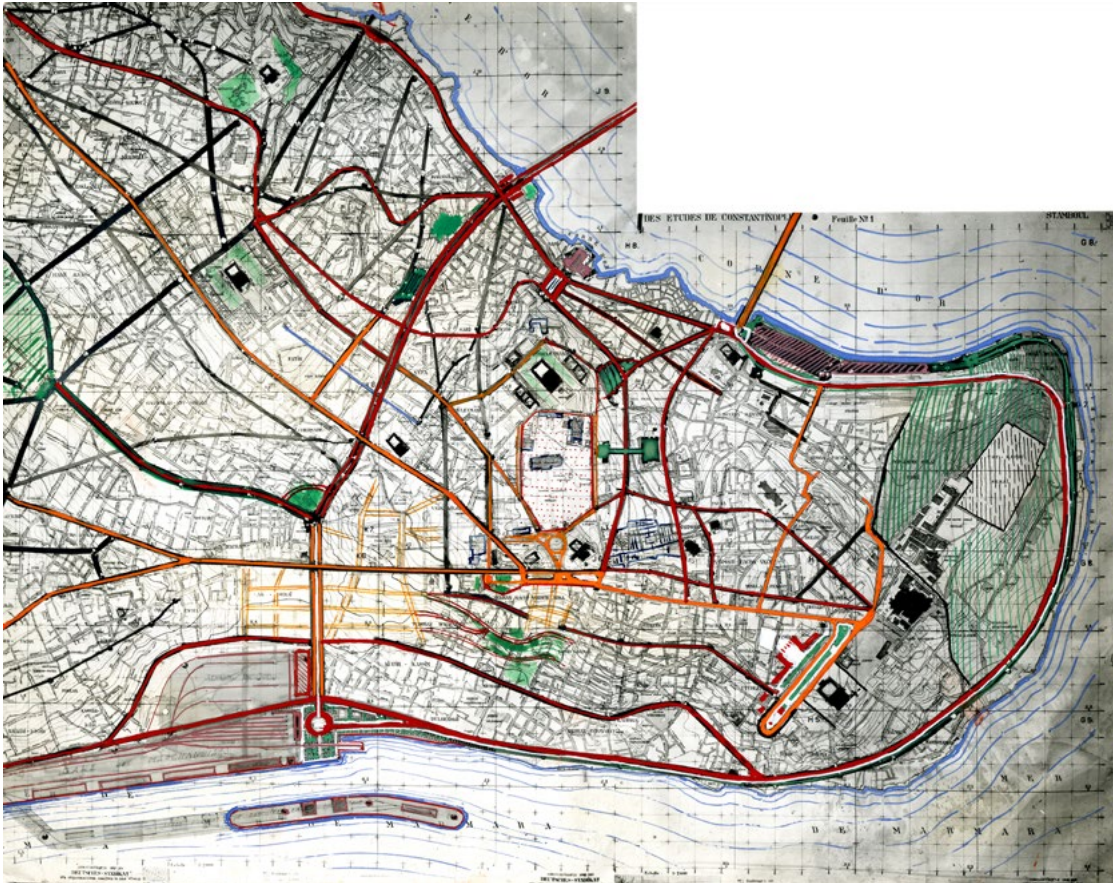


Figure 9. Istanbul. Prost's master plan study for Istanbul. Paris, Centre d'archives de l'IFA, Académie d'architecture/ Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, Fonds Henri Prost (1874-1959) 1935-1950. "Les transformations d'Istanbul" (Turquie): vue d'un plan de circulation rehaussé à la gouache, n.d. (cliché anonyme). (Objet PROST-E-01. Dossier 343 AA 66/11. Doc. HP-PHO-030-03-22. The main road proposals are indicated with red and *espaces libres* are indicated with green. The *espaces libres* were dispersed in the city and functioned as secular open public spaces. As narrated by scholars on note 51, Prost liberated historic monuments sometimes even demolishing non-monumental historic structures and road proposals considered the visibility of these monuments from cars. An interactive map of Prost's master plan prepared by Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine is available online (<https://expositions-virtuelles.citedelarchitecture.fr/prost/01-CHAPITRE-00-PLAN.html>, access December 3<sup>th</sup> 2020).







Figure 11. Istanbul. Simkeşhane, the entrance door. Salt Research Archive, Archive No. TASUH6948 (<https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/76793>, access June 15<sup>th</sup> 2020). The photograph is probably from 1930s due to the use of the Latin script. The archaeological findings of the Forum Tauri are visible in the courtyard. On the ground floor, simkes business was already replaced with shops, such as barber or butcher shops (*ciğerci* means liver seller). However, the panel on the left of the door indicates that there was a nickeling atelier inside. Despite the vegetation on the roof of the first floor, the curtains indicate that upper floors were also being used.

### *Conflicts about Simkeşhane in the Prost Plan*

Prost's proposal for Simkeşhane was a part of his proposal for Beyazit Square. He proposed enlarging the square by demolishing some of the buildings surrounding the square. In the 1944 publication *Güzelleşen İstanbul* (Istanbul Getting Beautified)<sup>45</sup>, which was the official publication of the municipality for promoting the implementation of works in the Prost's master plan, for Beyazit Square it was written that «old municipalities did not realize the importance of this square [...] finally during the foundation of the Republic, the first urbanization works took place [...] but there is an important job to do: Removing the shabby coffee houses and dilapidated sheds together with some decayed buildings on the left of the square»<sup>46</sup>.

The publication was also graphically designed with translucent sheets, folded pages, and illustrations to depict before-after comparisons<sup>47</sup>. As can be seen in figure 12 the madrasa of Beyazit was liberated by demolishing the structures surrounding it. A part of these structures can be detected in the Pervitich

45. DAVER 1944.

46. *Ibidem*.

47. In an individual conversation, Cana Bilsel (whose works present a comprehensive analysis of Prost's Istanbul projects) suggested that Prost was probably involved in the graphic design of this publication.



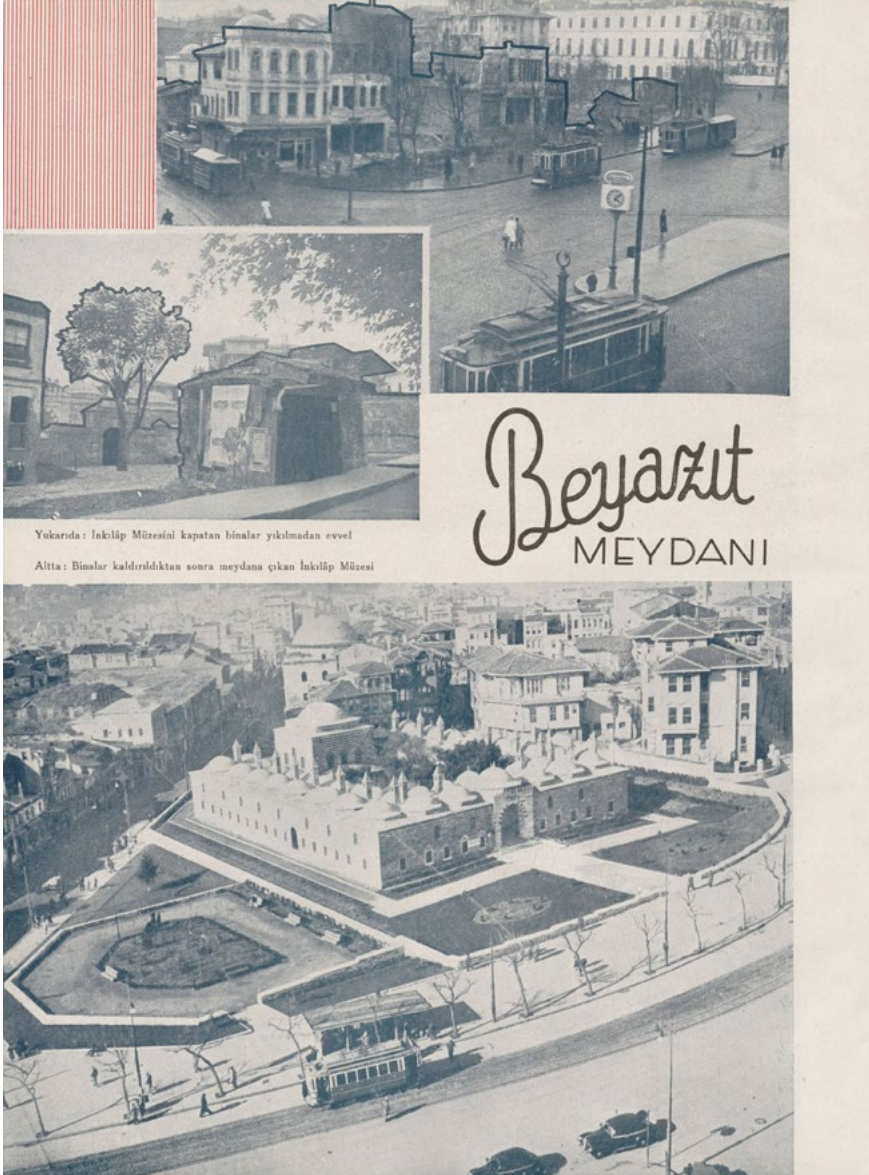


Figure 12. Istanbul. Güzelleşen, Beyazıt Square (from DAVER 1944, p. 32). The highlighted structures in the top photo were demolished to reveal the madrasa of the Beyazıt Complex in the bottom photo. In the bottom photo, Simkeşhane and the dome of Beyazıt Bath is also visible. In Simkeşhane, the roof of the structures in the courtyard is also visible.

Map in figure 7. In this way, the monument would be visible to passing cars. The liberation approach is the main preservation feature in the Prost plan.

Prost's proposal regarding Beyazit Square had originally included demolishing Simkeşhane. By doing so, Prost was aiming to provide parking space for public transport and also reveal the remains of the Arc du Triumph inside Simkeşhane. According to him, demolishing this ruined building and highlighting the colossal remains of the Arc du Triumph would contribute to touristic and archaeological interests in Istanbul. However, as he wrote in the master plan notes, «Les Compétences ont décidé inadmissible de toucher à cette construction en ruines»<sup>48</sup>.

The competent authority which Prost referred to was again the Commission for the Preservation of Antiquities (Eski Eserleri Koruma Encümeni). In 1940, the Commission had formed a sub-committee for in-situ investigation of buildings in ruined conditions, which also included buildings to be demolished for road constructions. The municipality had already informed the Commission about the destruction of Beyazit Bath and Simkeşhane, therefore, these two buildings were also in the agenda of the sub-committee. Following the report of the sub-committee, the Commission replied to the municipality that Simkeşhane was a unique structure for its social, architectural and historical qualities; therefore it was not appropriate to demolish a “Turkish” structure in order to reveal the Forum of Theodosius, and, consequently the master plan should be changed accordingly<sup>49</sup>.

Apart from the Commission, a major role was played by Turkey Touring and Automobile Organization (TTOK-Türkiye Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu) which was established in 1923 as Touring Club Turk (Türk Sayyahin Cemaati). TTOK functioned as the main opposition against the Prost projects. Prost himself also visited the office of TTOK to explain his projects, and the members advocated that the historic and urban fabric of Istanbul was under threat due to the emphasis on roads and boulevards<sup>50</sup>.

Even though Prost's proposal for Beyazit Square was revised and Simkeşhane was not destroyed, the building was partially demolished in the second half of the 1950s by the Demokrat Parti (Democrat Party), which is the opposition party that terminated the single party rule by the Republican Party. The Demokrat Parti won the 1950 election and concentrated more power throughout the 1950s with populist political policies. The demolition of Simkeşhane was part of a much larger project called İmar Hareketi, or Istanbul'un İmarı, meaning the redevelopment of Istanbul.

48. Istanbul, Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes (IFEA), Fond Prost, col. obs Urb 41 – VII, fs. XVII, 1937, H. Prost, *Composé de dix mémoires relatifs à l'aménagement des divers quartiers du vieil Istanbul*.

49. İSTANBUL ARKEOLOJİ MUZELERİ 1943.

50. DİKMEN 1994.

### *Redevelopment of Istanbul (Istanbul'un Imari) in the Second Half of the 1950s*

The 1950s was a significant decade for the development of Turkish democracy as a new political party challenged the Republican regime, won successive general and local elections, either reversed or slowed down some of the reforms, and then came to an end with the 1960 coup d'état after which the Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes was sentenced to death. This decade also witnessed industrialization in agriculture (which caused a migration wave from countryside/villages to urban centers) and infrastructural investments (mainly road constructions) realized with US support. As the ties between Turkey and the US became stronger, "Americanization" became one of the dominating themes of the 1950s. In the first half of the decade, US financial support increased economic growth, but overall economic policies led to debts and eventually placed the government in economic hardship in the second half of the decade<sup>51</sup>. Imar was a project launched by the government in 1956, one year before the parliamentary elections. For some scholars, this decade was an era in which an Islam-oriented rhetoric dominated the political atmosphere along with nationalism. The Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes, and his construction projects are generally described as an echo of a populist nationalist Islamic discourse over architecture and urban planning<sup>52</sup>.

Between 1956 and 1960, the era in which Imar began and the construction activities in Istanbul accelerated, German urban expert Prof. Hans Högg was invited to direct the construction activities<sup>53</sup>. There were four offices that had an active role in Imar. These were the office established by Hans Högg (under the municipality), the Directorate of Development, again under the municipality, İller Bankası (Bank of Provinces), and the General Directorate of Highways (KGM-Karayolları Genel Müdürlüğü)<sup>54</sup>.

51. ZÜRCHER 1993, pp. 221-240; KAYNAR 2015.

52. BOYSAN 1990; BOYSAN 1993; KUBAN 1993. Murat Gül differs from these scholars: he defends Menderes and argues that Imar operations were based on Prost's master plan even though Prost's contract was terminated in 1951. See GÜL 2009.

53. AYATAC 2007. Högg's plan was mainly on infrastructure and coastal roads in addition to a radial road network to connect the old city to the new settlements, airport connections and transportation for the suburbs. According to Kuban, Högg's duty was mainly to provide the expert perspective that the political power required to justify the Imar. See KUBAN 1993, p. 391. In fact, for the public eye, the government and the municipality needed legitimation to increase political credibility. See Boysan for this reason, even Prost was re-invited to present his opinion on Imar. Prost observed the ongoing works and as one can easily imagine, he did not have positive opinions about the implementation. This was Prost's last visit to Istanbul. See BOLCA 2017, p. 68.

54. *İller Bankası's* main duty was to plan and supervise the financial structure of the provinces and municipalities in their projects such as surveying, planning, implementing, etc. The management of the bank, however, was central, which increased the power of the government. GERAY 1990, p. 222. The centralization of power helped the Demokrat Parti government implement Imar more easily. Moreover, these directorates under different ministries helped by-pass the bureaucratic

Among these four offices, KGM was the most influential decision-making actor. It was a directorate established by US support to develop a Turkish system of highways which was deemed necessary for distribution of goods. Moreover, a new network was now needed more than ever since the American influence had a profound impact on the automotive sector. As a result of “Americanization”, cars were the main transportation vehicle and a car-friendly city was the main goal<sup>55</sup>. For highway engineers, historic and topographic features were problems for highway construction, and they needed to be “fixed”. This approach of KGM was to use intra-city highway construction standards in a historic urban setting without an adaptation process<sup>56</sup>. In addition to these four offices, the new preservation council also had a role in *Imar*. In addition to the above-mentioned preservation councils, a new committee was also formed in 1951. This committee, the High Council for Immovable Old Assets and Monuments (GEEAYK – Gayrimenkul Eski Eserler ve Anıtlar Yüksek Kurulu, abbreviated as HC), was established in 1951 with an authority beyond local and central authorities<sup>57</sup>. For the removal or destruction of listed historic buildings, a HC decision was necessary, however, unfortunately, HC was not able to stop the destruction of the *Imar*<sup>58</sup>. In 1958, the year that the pace of *Imar* slowed down due to financial limitations, which obstructed expropriations, a new bureau was also established under the Directorate of Development under the municipality. This bureau, the “Bureau of Old Assets” (Eski Eserler Bürosu), was established to find a balance between development and conservation. This bureau had next to zero activities during *Imar*, however in later years it functioned to generate inventories for Istanbul<sup>59</sup>.

With the launch of *Imar*, in less than a year, the city became a huge construction site. The main goal of the project was constructing roads, and any kind of structure that obstructed the road construction, historic or not, was either demolished or removed (fig. 13).

blockages. When one department blocked the process, or rejected a project, the necessary procedures could be completed through other departments. BOYSAN 1993, p. 89.

55. KGM was established in 1950 under the Ministry of Public Works as a part of the Marshall Plan. The visit of an American expert team to survey and plan the highway network of Turkey in 1948 followed an agreement between the forenamed Ministry and the Public Roads Group of the American Aid Mission the very same year. In addition to long-term cooperation, the KGM’s establishment as a semi-autonomous office was included in the agreement. See GÜL 2009, pp. 123-124.

56. The KGM engineer Muzaffer Uluşahin’s remark “this city has a hunchback; we need to fix it” is still used to outline the planning approach of the 1950s. Inevitably, such an understanding which conceived of hills as obstructions for new roads, would not mind demolishing old buildings. See TEKELİ 2009, p. 171.

57. DİNLER 2021.

58. HC was founded by Act No. 5805 in 1951, which is a brief 8-article law that declared the foundation of a scientific committee to deal with architectural and historic monuments in the country.

59. ÇEÇENER 2003, pp. 17-18.



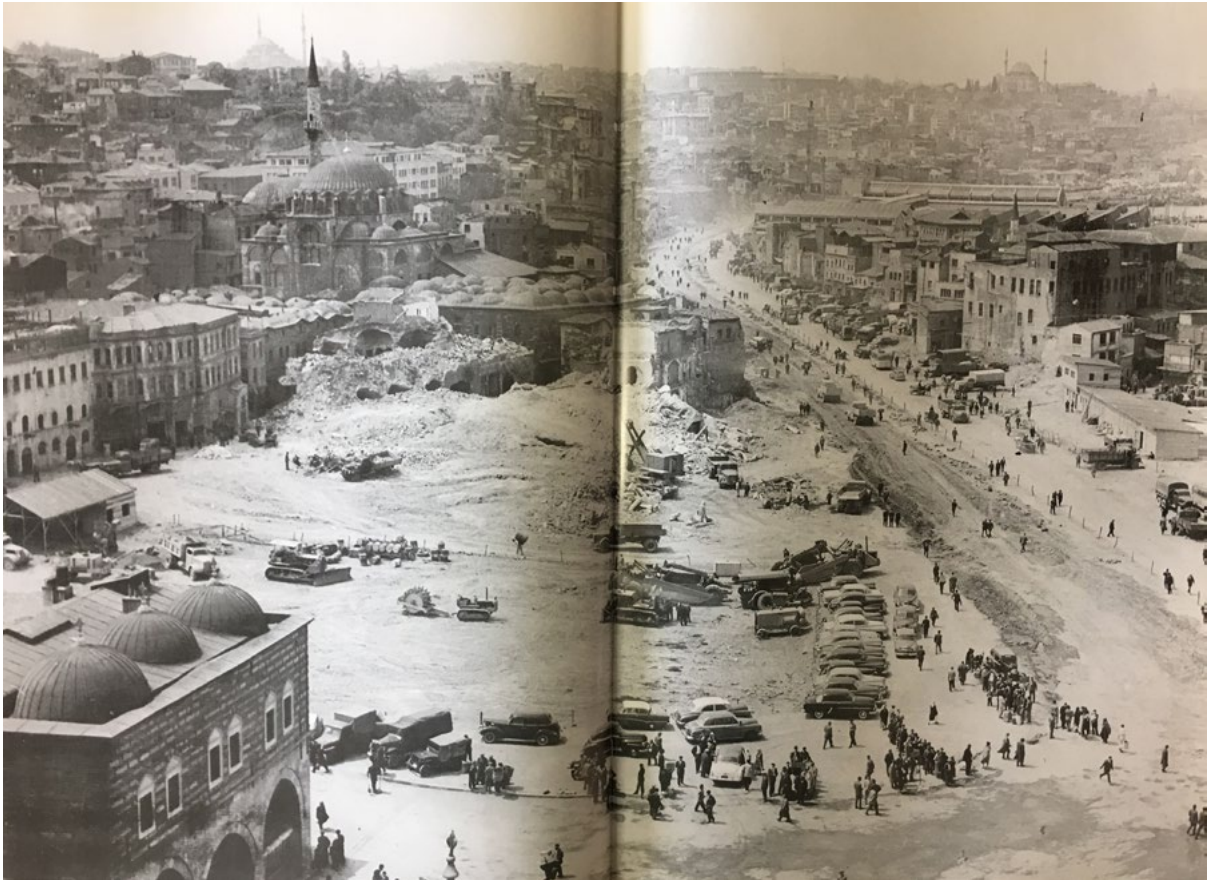


Figure 13. Istanbul. Eminonu district in the Historic Peninsula during the Imar (from ŞAHENK 1996, pp. 161-162).

Regarding the listed historic structures that were demolished with HC approval, one of the most important sources is an article published in 1969 by one of the professor members of the HC<sup>60</sup>. Another important source for the urban projects of Imar is an anonymous 1957 publication by Istanbul Municipality. This publication, which is called *Istanbul'un Kitabı* (the Book of Istanbul) describes mainly the road construction projects all over Istanbul<sup>61</sup>. The impact of Imar for the historic peninsula of Istanbul is mapped (based on these two sources-UNSAI 1969 and *Istanbul'un Kitabı*) and presented in figure 14.

The Imar was promoted in the mass media as a national issue with a populist discourse, which drove the opposition to remain hesitant in their reaction against the demolition. For instance, in the municipality's publication *Istanbul'un Kitabı*, the Imar was defined as "the second conquest of Istanbul"<sup>62</sup>. The concept of "Conquest" triggers the question "from whom is Istanbul being conquered?" as Akpınar rightfully asks<sup>63</sup>. Considering the fact that in September 1955, an organized violent lynch mob was incited against minority communities (especially against the Greek community) and forced them leave their country, the idea of conquest becomes even more terrorizing. In fact, according to Keyder, the concept of "conquest" corresponds to the Turkification of the properties left by Anatolian Greeks<sup>64</sup>. Akpınar affirms that the government was involved in the September 1955 events, but she shows that Keyder's arguments were invalid, at least in the two districts Keyder discusses<sup>65</sup>.

Regarding urban space, the historic urban fabric was clearly being conquered by road construction. According to Lefebvre, through a concrete slab or a motorway, it is possible to generate a "dominant space" which is not the product (road), but rather the process of construction (road construction)<sup>66</sup>. The

60. ÜNSAL 1969.

61. *Istanbul'un Kitabı* 1957. The book starts with these words: «Istanbul is now being conquered for the second time by dear Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. Fatih [the Conqueror] was victorious against the Byzantines. Menders has given us a victory of civilization against pain, looseness, irregularity, and disorder. Because Istanbul is designed from the beginning; rearranged from the start with its streets, squares, buildings, mosques and historic buildings, cultural and educational facilities, and from all aspects. The works we have accomplished in a very limited time are powerful enough to make proud not only the Istanbulites, but all the Turkish citizens». Translated by author.

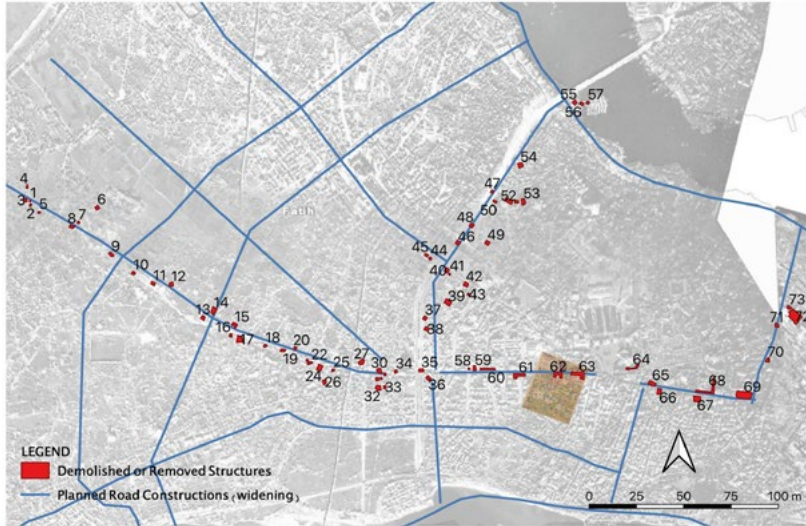
62. It is noteworthy that in 2020, when the Turkish government decided to reconvert Hagia Sophia Museum into a mosque, again it was promoted as "Istanbul's Conquest" in the media. Even the opening ceremony included a recreated performance of the conquest.

63. AKPINAR 2016.

64. KEYDER 1999, pp. 173-186.

65. AKPINAR 2016, p. 77.

66. LEFEBVRE 1991, pp. 164-165. Original version of the work is published in 1974.



THE IMPACT OF THE ISTANBULUN IMARI PROJECT (LIMITED TO THE HISTORIC PENINSULA),  
IN TERMS OF DAMAGED HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND ROAD CONSTRUCTIONS

Basemap: 1946 Aerial Photo obtained from the official website of the Fatih Municipality

#### LIST OF DEMOLISHED / REMOVED STRUCTURES

No. 63: The Simkeşhane is presented with the Pervititch Maps as presented in Figure 1.

id	NAME	id	NAME	id	NAME
1	HALKALI FOUNTAIN	26	HAFTANI MOSQUE	51	KATIB CELEBI TOMB
2	WATER SCALE	27	MURAD PASHA MOSQUE	52	HASAN PASHA FOUNTAIN
3	TULBENTCI MEHMET EFENDI MASJID	28	AKSARAY FOUNTAIN	53	YUVNUK SUJACETTIN MOSQUE
4	KURKCU FOUNTAIN	29	AKSARAY POLICE STATION	54	SERSAFA HATUN MOSQUE
5	KIZLAR CHURCH	30	HORHOR BATH	55	SULEYMAN SUBASI MOSQUE
6	MEHMET AGA MOSQUE	31	OGLANLAR LODGE AND FOUNTAIN	56	BYZANTINE CAPITALS
7	POLICE STATION	32	CAKIR AGA MOSQUE	57	YAVER AGA SQUARE FOUNTAIN
8	SEHREMINI MOSQUE	33	EBUBEKIR PASHA SCHOOL	58	LALELI BABA TOMB
9	DNIZABTAL MOSQUE	34	CAMCILAR MOSQUE AND FOUNTAIN	59	LALELI FOUNTAIN
10	GRAVEYARD	35	AKSARAY VALIDE FOUNTAIN	60	LALELI MOSQUE WALL
11	MACINCUCU TAKKA	36	AKSARAY VALIDE TOMB	61	RACIP PASHA LIBRARY
12	KAZASKER MOSQUE	37	BABA H. A. MOSQUE	62	HASAN PASHA KHAN
13	NURI DEDE MOSQUE	38	ISMAIL AGA MOSQUE	63	SIMKESHANE
14	FINDIKZADE TAKKA	39	ANKARAVI MEHMET EFENDI MADRASA	64	KOCA RESIT PASHA TOMB
15	HEKIMBASI OMER EFENDI MADRASA	40	IBRAHIM PASHA BATH	65	KEMANKES MUSTAFA PASHA MADRASA
16	REMAINS FROM A LODGE	41	GURCU MEHMET FOUNTAIN	66	MERZIFONI KARA MUSTAFA PASHA COMPLEX
17	MOLLA GURANI MOSQUESS TOMBS	42	EBULFAZIL MAHMUT MADRASA	67	ATIK ALI PASHA MADRASA
18	SARI MUSA MOSQUE	43	VEZIR AHMET PASHA FOUNTAIN	68	ATIK ALI PASHA MOSQUE TOMB
19	NAKSI LODGE	44	MIMAR AYYAS MOSQUE	69	SULTAN MAHMUD TOMB
20	SELÇUK SULTAN MOSQUE	45	FOUNDATIN	70	CEZRI KASIM PASHA MOSQUE
21	SIRBERT CAVUS MOSQUE	46	FIRUZAGA MOSQUE	71	ELHAC YUSUF AFANDI TOMB
22	SIRMERD CAVUS TOMB	47	REMAINS OF A MASJID AND KHAN	72	BABIALI PROVINCE OFFICE
23	CAVUS FOUNTAIN	48	S. B. IBRAHIM AGA MASJID	73	NALLI MASJID
24	TEVEKKUL BATH	49	R. CELEBI MASJID		
25	YUSUF PASHA FOUNTAIN	50	KIRK FOUNTAIN		

Note: The GIS map is created by the author based on the information provided in UNSAL 1969, for structures, and Istanbulun Kitabi 1957, for roads.

Figure 14. Istanbul. Mapping of planned road constructions (from *Istanbul'un Kitabı* 1957) and removed/demolished structures during the Imar in the historic peninsula of Istanbul (taken from UNSAL 1969). QGIS map produced by the author. No. 63 indicates Simkeşhane. The map under Simkeşhane is the Pervititch Map presented in Figure 7. This visualization is significant especially for Ordu Avenue, which was the Divanyolu of the Ottoman era and the *Mese* of the Byzantine era. It is possible to observe the continuity of the emphasis on this main axis in each period.

process of this domination is fundamentally related to political power. In an era in which xenophobia, conservatism, and nationalism were the impetuses of society, all these infrastructural investments (road constructions) were, in a way, strategies to make Istanbul dominant.

Among all historic structures that were damaged with the İmar urban operations, destruction of Simkeşhane caused the most heated conflicts and debates both among institutions and departments and in mass media outlets. This time, though, the main motivation was not revealing the Byzantine past but constructing the road. In fact, as noted by Tanyeli<sup>67</sup>, the reactions did not mention this past at all, but rather emphasized the importance of the ottoman monuments. As will be discussed below, Beyazıt Bath and Hasan Pasha Han were among the ottoman buildings to be demolished, but Simkeşhane was the most debated demolition.

### *The Demolition of Simkeşhane as a Part of İmar*

Simkeşhane was not the only structure partially demolished for the construction of the Ordu Street. Hasan Pasha Han and Beyazıt Bath were also planned to be demolished. Hasan Pasha Han, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman han, was also partially demolished, however, it was not debated nearly as much as Simkeşhane. According to Tanyeli<sup>68</sup>, the main reason for the silence of the professional community was due to the eighteenth-century additions (the Tulip period) to the han. The architectural style of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (an import of Baroque architecture brought by Ottoman elites with Francophone tendencies) was undermined by the turkish architectural community until the mid-1950s and the ottoman-baroque was regarded as a pretentious architecturally wrong step by Europe-admiring Ottomans<sup>69</sup>. As mentioned above, this period had also an impact on Simkeşhane, but it was a minor influence that is reflected mainly with the addition of a fountain to the façade. Beyazıt Bath, on the other hand, was already in a ruined condition, it was being used as a leather depot which produced a bad odor. Advocates of the demolition of the bath argued that it should be demolished since Patrona

67. TANYELI 2004, p. 518.

68. TANYELI 2004.

69. This attitude has changed since the 1950s. Paolo Verzone (1902-1986) civil engineer, restoration and architectural historian professor of Politecnico di Torino had taught in Istanbul in the 1950s and had an impact in the recognition of this period. Under his supervision, Doğan Kuban (who is one of the most eminent Turkish professors in architectural history and restoration) completed his doctoral study on Ottoman Baroque. See KUBAN 1954. Following his doctoral research, Kuban was sent to Italy by ITU with funding from the Italian government to carry out research on the Italian Renaissance. Following his study trip, he produced another major work which compared Ottoman classical architecture with Italian Renaissance architecture.



Halil, the key rebellion of the rebels against the Ottoman state (which concluded the Tulip period), once worked in this bath as a tellak (bath attendant). The name of the bath, for this reason, is also known as Patrona Bath<sup>70</sup>.

Similar to many demolished structures of the İmar project, also for these structures, the main excuse for the demolishing was mail-i inhidam (the condition of creating danger for the environment due to poor structural condition). When the İstanbul municipality gave a mail-i inhidam report for a historic structure, then HC consent was no longer required for demolishing that structure<sup>71</sup>. Also for Simkeşhane and Beyazit Bath, the main argument of the municipality was that these building were mail-i inhidam. HC had requested the formation of a sub-committee with the expert architects of the General Directorate of Museums and Old Monuments (Eski Eserler ve Müzeler Umum Müdürlüğü) operated under the Ministry of Education (Maarif Vekaleti). These architects were Cahide Tamer,

Mualla Eyüboğlu, Mustafa Ayaşlıoğlu, and Macit Kural<sup>72</sup>. Tamer's recently digitized archive<sup>73</sup> shows the intensive and careful investigation that the committee carried out (figs. 15-16).

The committee presented their report to the Ministry of Education on 2 April 1956 and the final conclusion of the report was that the major deterioration was on the roof. The general evaluation of the report is that although some vaults were removed for installing stairs, some bearing walls were damaged by users, and finishing materials were mostly fractured, there were no structural damages that could potentially classify these buildings as mail-i inhidam<sup>74</sup>. However, their conclusion was not enough to save Simkeşhane from destruction.

70. NURALIOGLU 1955.

71. In fact, mail-i inhidam condition was included in the 1933 Law on Buildings and Roads. This law also regulated the heights of the buildings in accordance with the width of the roads. HC made attempts to keep old structures exempt from this condition. However, the practice of demolishing old buildings based on mail-i inhidam continued in the decades following DP rule.

72. HC Archives, Meeting no. 36, Decision no. 465, March 19<sup>th</sup> 1956. It is noteworthy that two women members of this committee (Tamer and Eyüboğlu) were eminent women conservation architects of the republican period.

73. Tamer's archive has recently been digitized and made online by the Koç University Digital Collections. This collection (Cahide Tamer Historic Buildings Restoration Projects Collection) provides very rich material for the study of history of conservation in Turkey as well as the study of women's role within that history. The collection is available online at: <https://libdigitalcollections.ku.edu.tr/digital/collection/CTA/search> (access June 15<sup>th</sup> 2019).

74. Koç University, Cahide Tamer Historic Buildings Restoration Projects Collection, CTA\_S005\_D01, The folder consisting of documents of the restoration of Simkeşhane and the Beyazit Bathhouse. Available online at: <https://libdigitalcollections.ku.edu.tr/digital/collection/CTA/id/3169> (access June 15<sup>th</sup> 2019). The committee also stated that even if Simkeşhane was not a *mail-i inhidam*, it surely needed a conservation project. They continued their work to survey the building, to outline the main works to be done, and to create a draft bill of quantities to guide future conservation works. They presented their study to the Ministry of Education with a second detailed report (which included also the history of both buildings) on 26 May 1956.

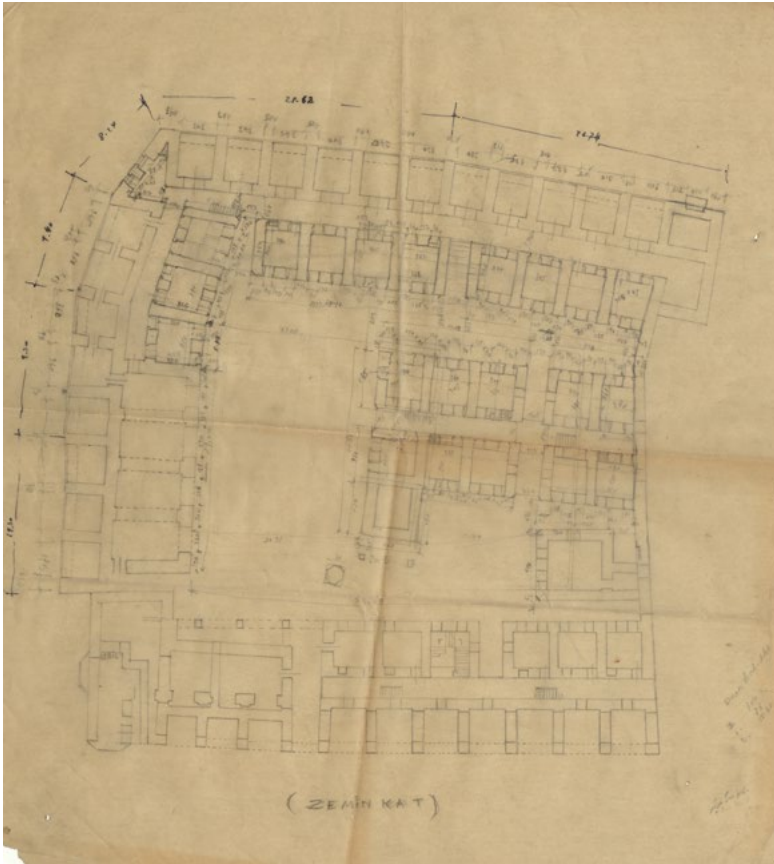


Figure 15. Istanbul. Architectural survey of the Simkeşhane, the ground floor plan survey. Koç University Digital Collections, Cahide Tamer Historic Buildings Restoration Projects Collection, Folder Album No: S005\_D01, Folder-Album Year: n.d., Identifier: CTA\_S005\_D01\_dra\_01. The drawing gives an idea on a dual level: the first one is the attitude of this expert committee to the site and the second one is the precise careful technical approach they adapted. First one is evident on what is omitted in the survey. The committee paid almost no attention to the remains of the Forum Tauri which is indicated with a dimly drawn faded rectangle. This rectangle is hardly notable on the north of the entrance (top of the image is the north). Second one, on the other hand, is visible on the quality of the drawing. The flawless lines drawn with a ruler indicate that the committee arrived at the site with this base-drawing they had already prepared, and they took measurements not from the shop units on the north façade which faces the Ordu Street, but mainly from the masjid on the courtyard (which was a later addition to the Simkeşhane constructed by the waqf of Gülnuş Emetullah Valide Sultan) and the units surrounding this masjid. It is also seen that they also took external measurements as well.

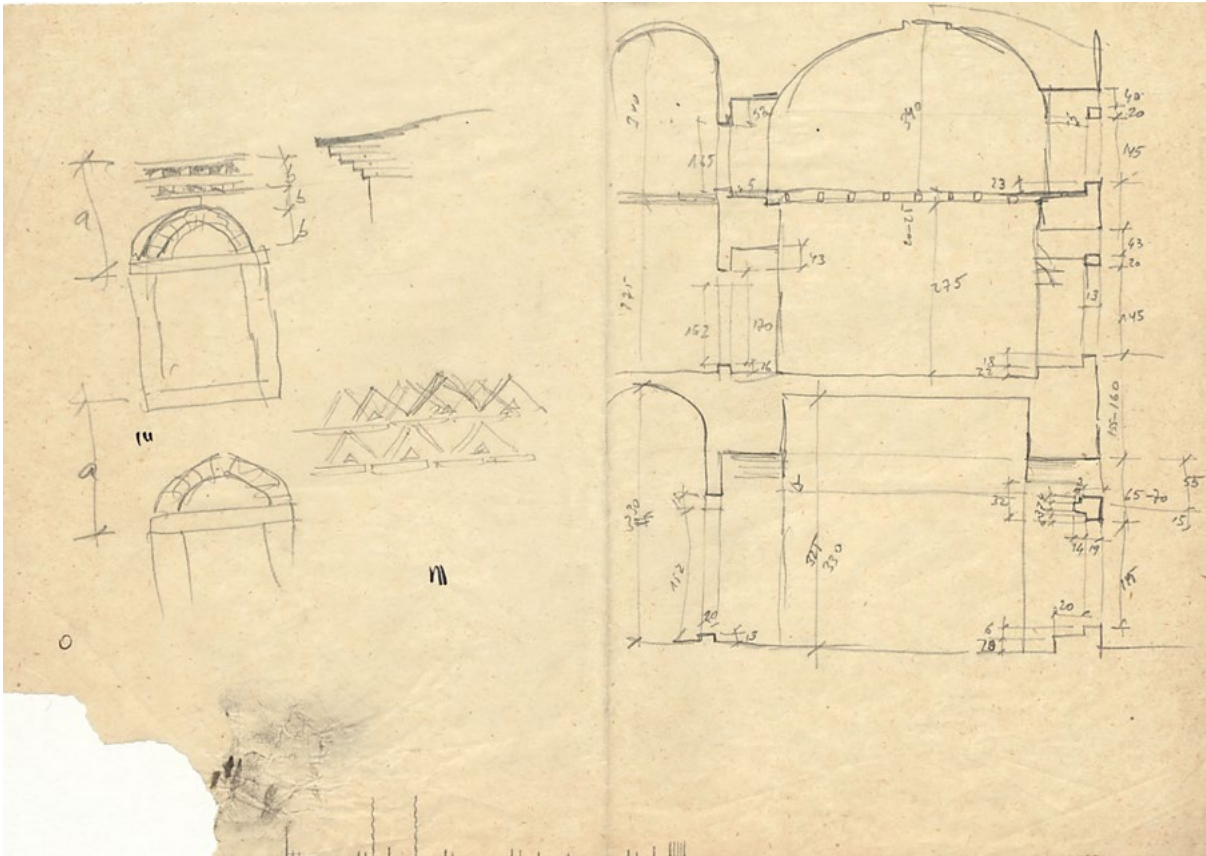


Figure 16. Istanbul. Simkeşane, architectural survey of the masjid's section survey. Koç University Digital Collections, Cahide Tamer Historic Buildings Restoration Projects Collection, Folder Album No: S005\_D01, Folder-Album Year: n.d., Identifier: CTA\_S005\_D01\_dra\_05. The expert architect committee's in-situ survey and their attention can be noted in these drawings. In these studies, one can note the intention to document the building. They studied the Simkeşane, especially its masjid in a very detailed manner not only to understand if its structural condition was dangerous for surrounding, but also to record it through architectural documentation. In this sense, it is possible to suggest that they had already foreseen that the building would be destructed despite their reports and for this reason, they wanted to at least document it.

In several next HC meetings, Simkeşhane and Beyazıt Bath were on the meeting agenda. The reports from both the Istanbul Archaeological Museum and the Directorate of Planning were also presented to HC. There were two options; the first was to construct one road passing in the front and another around the back of Simkeşhane<sup>75</sup>; however, this option would cost 32,774,500 Turkish Lira. The second option was to demolish 12 meters of Simkeşhane from the front façade. This second option would cost 11,971,300 Turkish Lira, almost one third of the first option. The committee went for the second option<sup>76</sup> (fig. 17), however, a counter statement by some members was also included in the decision. In the decision, it was stated:

«After the investigation of the reports, it was understood that by moving Ordu Avenue towards the south [*enlarging the road*] it would become possible to regulate the sharp curves of the road from Beyazıt Square to Topkapı [*Ordu Avenue*] in both its length and width and this way it would also become possible to value the old structures along the road, and to sustain the road standards on each point over the road, and to extend the sidewalk in front of Beyazıt Hamam and the University.

Even though these arms of Simkeşhane on the side of Beyazıt Square, which are to be removed, bound the square with an old structure and have a significant and distinctive character for urban planning, considering the above-mentioned aspects, it was decided by the majority of votes that its preservation shall be ignored and only the block on the back side of Simkeşhane, which is shown in red on the plan and proposed to be preserved, should be preserved due to its being a part of Simkeşhane and having the potential to give an idea about the architecture and the history of the structure»<sup>77</sup>.

Accordingly, Simkeşhane and Hasan Pasha Han were partially demolished (figs. 18-19).

The demolition started in January 1957 (fig. 20) and as the fragments of the Triumphal Arch began to be revealed, the Istanbul Archaeological Museum (which already knew that a triumphal arch was in the inner courtyard) started archaeological excavations in September and continued to November 1957 to save the artifacts of the forum and move them to the museum. The destruction also revealed that some pieces of the Forum Tauri were used as *spolia* in the foundations of Simkeşhane<sup>78</sup>.

As the museum continued its excavation, it also became possible to produce restitutive drawings of the Forum of Theodosius. One of the first hypothesis about the restitution was formulated by Paolo Verzone, the Politecnico di Torino based civil-engineer and architectural historian who was invited

75. When the Prost Plan proposed the destruction of Simkeşhane, this solution was decided in a joint meeting with Prost and EEKE. However, like many of Prost's projects, this was also left unimplemented.

76. TANYELI 2004, p. 521.

77. HC Archives, Meeting no. 54, Decision no. 661, July 8<sup>th</sup> 1957.

78. DUYURAN 1957. Rustem Duyuran was the director of the Istanbul Museum. Architectural fragments from the Forum Tauri are used as *spolia* also in the columns of the Sehzade Mosque which is located approximately 1km north of the Simkeşhane. See MULLER-WIENER 1977, p. 479.



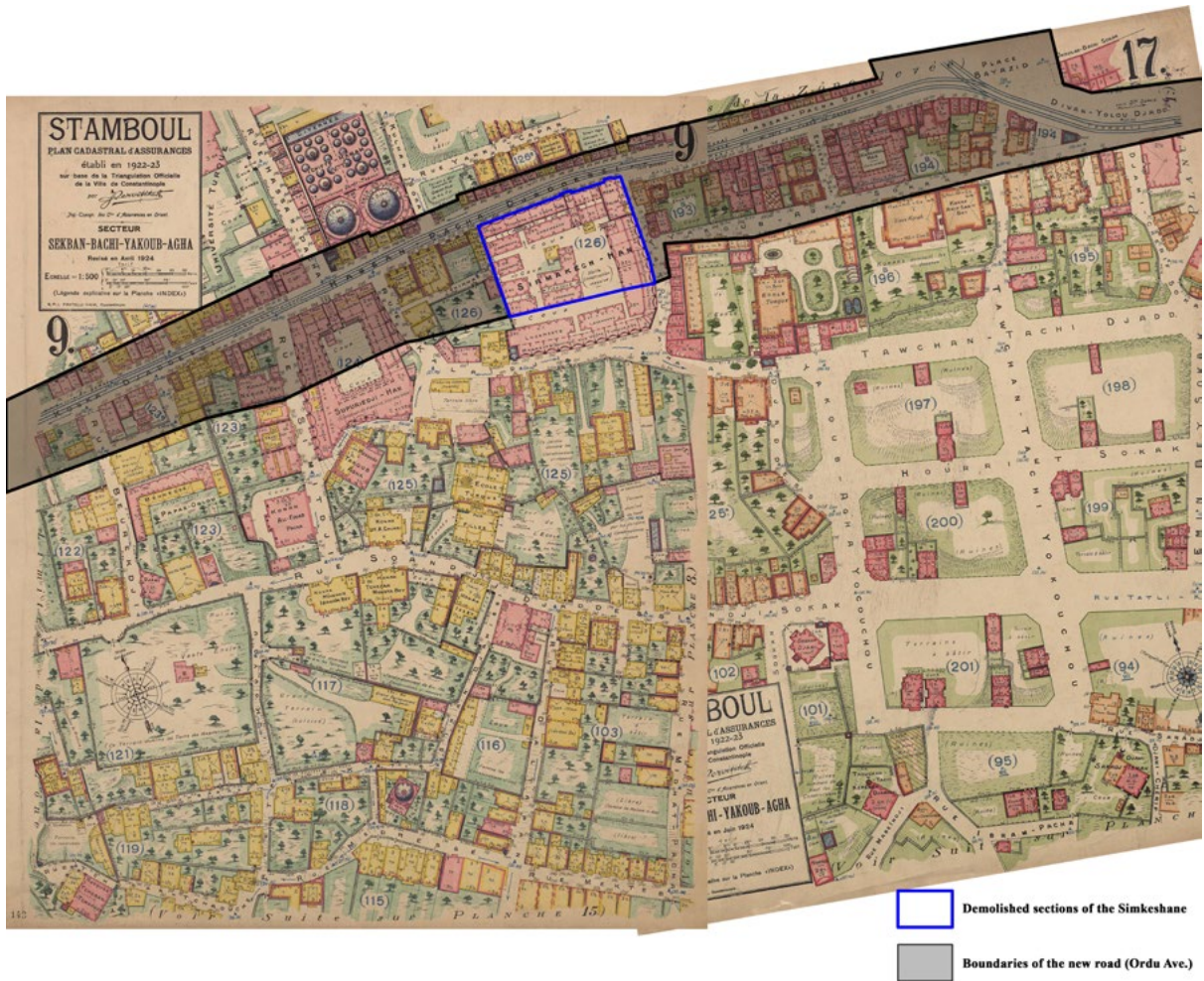


Figure 17. Demolished parts of Simkeşhane and the construction of the new road (Basemap: Pervitch Maps. Survey drawings are taken from ELDEM 1968, and digitally elaboration by the author).



Figure 18. Istanbul. Simkeşhane and Ordu Avenue before the demolition (UNSAI 1968, p. 33).



Figure 19. Istanbul. Ordu Avenue during the demolition (from *Istanbul'un Kitabı* 1957, p. 35).



Figure 20. Istanbul. Destruction of Simkeşhane. Salt Research Archive, Archive No. TASUH7029003 (<https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/76798>, access June 15<sup>th</sup> 2019).

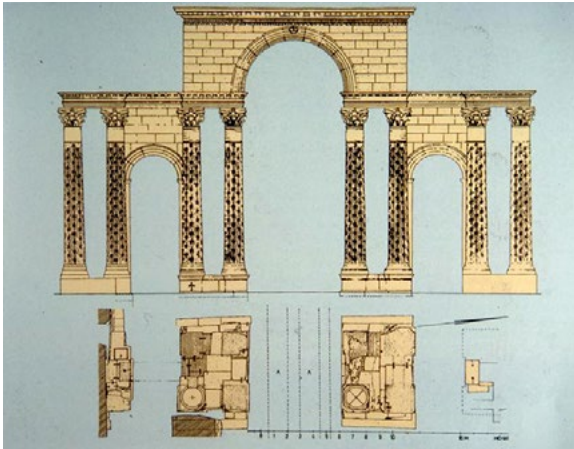


Figure 21. Istanbul. Restitution of the Triumphal Arc of the Forum Tauri by Rudolf Naumann ([https://cmc.byzart.eu/files/original/unibo/unibo\\_](https://cmc.byzart.eu/files/original/unibo/unibo_), access June 28<sup>th</sup> 2021).

to Turkey to teach architectural restoration at Istanbul Technical University from 1952 to 1957. He also launched the Hierapolis excavations for Italy in 1957, which was the first Italian archaeological mission in Turkey after the Second World War<sup>79</sup>. As a professor in restoration at Istanbul Technical University, he was already a friend of the museum director, Rustem Duyuran and for this reason, he was able to easily access the site<sup>80</sup>. Verzone immediately published his hypothesis that the remains were a part of a *tetrapylon* (*tetrapilo aureo*; a four-column structure) with a bronze roof. He argued that the tetrapylon was erected for Theodosius in 4<sup>th</sup> century CE<sup>81</sup>. However, as the excavations continued, it was understood that the ruins were the fragments of a Triumph Arch with two lines of pedestals (fig. 21).

### *Debates among Experts on the Destruction of Simkeşhane*

The demolition of Simkeşhane was a controversy among experts including those who were members of different preservation councils. As mentioned above, the 1951-founded HC was the most powerful preservation council, which had authority over all local and central authorities. However,

79. RONCHETTA 2005.

80. MIGHETTO 1999, pp. 127-128.

81. VERZONE 1957.

EEKE (founded in 1917 by the ottoman state and ratified in 1924 by the republican government) was still active in this period. With the establishment of HC, the authority of EEKE had already diminished<sup>82</sup>. It was planned that controversial and unsolved issues would be transferred to HC, since HC decisions were final. However, EEKE's role gradually diminished and in the 1970s, received almost no documents. The last director Feridun Dirimtekin, terminated EEKE completely and transferred all the files to HC<sup>83</sup>. During the destruction of Simkeşhane, it was the most vocal critic of HC. EEKE firstly presented a letter to the Ministry of Education requesting HC not to take any decision before obtaining EEKE's opinion. The ministry sent the letter to HC whose response was that according to law, they did not have any responsibility to inform EEKE, however, they would consider consulting EEKE if need be<sup>84</sup>. Reşit S. Atabinen, who was a member and the founder of the Touring and Automobile Club of Turkey (TTOK), also publicly criticized HC in an interview published in the contra-government newspaper *Dünya*<sup>85</sup>. In the November 1960 issue of the journal of the TTOK, HC was once more criticized, reminding readers of the demolition of Simkeşhane and how HC prioritized the Byzantine monuments (the Forum of Theodosius) over the Ottoman monuments<sup>86</sup>, an accusation which Prost had also suffered from less than a decade previously.

The construction projects of the İmar project were promoted as a national matter and for this reason, even the opposition party remained silent during many controversial projects. There were few instances where the reaction from the professional community was strong enough to be heard in the public sphere and the Simkeşhane project was one of these few instances. For example, when the destruction of Simkeşhane was proposed by the Istanbul Municipality in 1956, a group of eminent architects penned a statement and published it in a brochure. In this brochure, it was written «It will be a responsibility that no Turkish person will want to take [...] to confide to ourselves and to those

82. Today, all of the archives of EEKE are held together with the archive of HC at the archives of the Preservation Board No. 4 in Eminönü, Istanbul. A study of the EEKE archive is particularly important for understanding republican era institutionalization in the field of restoration.

83. EYİCE 1994.

84. HC Archives, Meeting no. 49, Decision no. 5634, February 16<sup>th</sup> 1957. The conflict between HC and EEKE was outlined in another HC decision which highlighted that the objectives of a department like EEKE had already been problematic since 1951, the year that HC was established. Thus, these objectives needed to be redefined and the new EEKE should function as a department supporting HC. See HC Archives, Meeting no. 196, Decision no. 5278, March 15<sup>th</sup> 1970.

85. TANYELI 2004, pp. 519-520.

86. TTOK 1960.



who will come to our country in future, in five or ten years, that we demolished one of our most significant works in an era where this idea [preservation] was particularly gaining more importance»<sup>87</sup>. However, the main reaction came after the military coup of 1960 when the power of the Demokrat Parti was no longer a threat.

In May 1960, power was seized from the Demokrat Parti rulers by the army. This was a shutdown and restarting of the state which restructured the government. The coup d'état brought an end to the centralized power. What followed was the establishment of a new constitution with improved citizen rights, to reach a stabilized state. However, towards to end of the 1960s, the situation was far from what was expected. Social conflicts, political radical movements, and economic instability dominated Turkish society. In such an atmosphere, the HC could function with increased authority to improve the standards of historic preservation.

Throughout the 1960s, Simkeşhane remained with no function with archaeological findings from the Arch of Theodosius displayed in-situ (fig. 22). Towards the end of the 1960s, a new project was created to convert Simkeşhane into a public library.

### *Aftermath of the Partial Demolition*

Following the partial demolition of the Simkeşhane, one of the first items on the agenda of the HC was the interpretation and exhibition of the remains of the Forum of Theodosius. In March 1958, the Istanbul Municipality requested HC to make a decision regarding the arrangement of the Arch of Theodosius. However, only in the summer of 1950 did the HC member art-historian Rıfki Melûl Meriç prepare a draft proposal for the rearrangement of the remains; this proposal was sent to the Ankara-based General Directorate of Museums and Old Monuments (Eski Eserler ve Müzeler Umum Müdürlüğü, operated under the Ministry of Education, Maarif Vekaleti) to ask their opinion about the rearrangement<sup>88</sup>. Subsequently, the director, Kamil Su, came to Istanbul to make in-situ observations and his arrival was also published in newspapers<sup>89</sup>. To be able to make a decision, HC also consulted

87. TANYELI 2004, p. 516.

88. HC Archives, Document no.: 732-222, April 21<sup>th</sup> 1959. Letter from HC to the General Directorate of Museums and Old Monuments.

89. *Tamir edilecek tarihi eserler*, in «Havadis Newspaper», 1959. The press cutting of the newspaper article with the headline «old monuments to be repaired (*tamir edilecek tarihi eserler*)» and sub-headline «The restoration project of the Triumphal Arch in Beyazit is prepared (*Beyazittaki zafer tak'inin tamir projesi hazirlandi*)» is included in the Simkeşhane folder in the HC archives.



Figure 22. Istanbul. Simkeşhane after the demolition in the 1960s (Istanbul, HC Archives).

Arif Mufit Mansel, Full Professor in archaeology in Istanbul University<sup>90</sup> and also informed the Istanbul municipality that they would make a decision after their consultation with the professor<sup>91</sup>. Finally, before the 1960 military coup brought an end to the Demokrat Parti regime, the Imar project was terminated, and the rearrangement of the Arch of Theodosius had already been completed.

In the late 1960s, a new idea was developed to convert the remaining sections of Simkeşhane to a public library. The first steps were taken in 1963 with the foundation of the Association for the Establishment and Sustaining of the Istanbul Public Library (Istanbul Şehir *Kütüphanesi Kurma Ve Yaşatma Derneği*). This association became successful at enacting changes in the master plan of the city for the designation of the Simkeşhane area as a public library. Subsequently, a public donation campaign was launched to realize this idea<sup>92</sup>. The restoration project was prepared for both Simkeşhane and Hasan Pasha Han, and in 1968, Sedad Hakki Eldem, an eminent Turkish architect and also a HC member, prepared a report of the restoration project of Simkeşhane and presented it to HC<sup>93</sup>. It is understood that a new building was also planned to be constructed between the two buildings, however, this project was not realized. In addition, the reconstruction of the fountain of Gülnus Emetullah Valide Sultan was also proposed and implemented; the fountain we see today is this reconstruction project (figs. 23-24).

The start of the restoration project was promoted in a newspaper article with these words:

«These days, people who pass from Beyazit are witnessing a rapid activity in Simkeşhane which is across Patrona Hamam. From morning until night, the workers are sweating inside this old building. Their masterful hands are shaping stones. The historic “Simkeşhane”, which has been standing as a “ruin” for a very long time is now getting a new form similar to its old form. There is a revitalization in the building, which carries the characteristics of the Turkish architecture of the 400 years ago. Soon there will be a true reincarnation in the dead building. Soon Simkeşhane will reach its ‘basü badel mevt’»<sup>94</sup>.

However, while the article referred to the historic character of the building, it did not refer to the fact that a huge portion of the buildings was demolished only fifteen years previously.

90. HC Archives, Document no.: 732-384, July 7<sup>th</sup> 1959. Letter from HC to Ord. Prof. Arif Mufit Mansel.

91. HC Archives, Document no.: 732-418, July 13<sup>th</sup> 1959. Letter from HC to the Istanbul Municipality.

92. SEHSUVAROGLU 1968. The press cutting of the newspaper article is included in the Simkeşhane folder in the HC archives.

93. HC Archives, Document no.: 732-418, Mach 15<sup>th</sup> 1968. The decision on Simkeşhane and Hasan Pasha Han written by Sedad Hakki Eldem.

94. *Historic Simkeşhaneis becoming* 1970 . The press cutting of this newspaper article is included in the Simkeşhane folder in the HC archives. The last phrase “basü badel mevt” is a Qur’anic reference. It refers to immortality after resurrection.



Figure 23. Istanbul. Simkeşhane, reconstruction of the fountain (©Ali Osman Dilekoğlu, <https://kulturenvanteri.com/wp-content/uploads/1-289.jpg>, access June 29<sup>th</sup> 2021).

### *Conclusion*

The Simkeşhane building is a seventeenth century building constructed as the imperial mint constructed over the Forum of Theodisus, or the Forum Tauri, which was the largest forum of Constantinople constructed in the fourth century. During archaeological excavations in 1927, a British team led by Stanley Casson of the British Academy received special permission to excavate





Figure 24. Istanbul. Archeological remains of the Arch of Theodosius under snow in front of the Simkeřhane (<https://blog.zingarate.com/vivereistanbul/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Teodosio-01.jpg>, access June 29<sup>th</sup> 2021).

and research the inner courtyard of Simkeřhane, where they found the architectural fragments of the Triumphal Arch that stood over the Forum Tauri.

In his master plan for Istanbul, the french urban expert Henri Prost had suggested to demolish Simkeřhane (together with Beyazit Bath that stood on the other side of Beyazit Square across from Simkeřhane) in order to reveal the Byzantine Forum Tauri under Beyazit Square. Prost had already been accused of favoring Byzantine monuments over ottoman ones, therefore this proposal created a reaction among local architectural communities and the project was cancelled according to the local Istanbul-based conservation board. It is noteworthy that Prost was the planner of the republican government that wanted to create a modern secular nation from an Islamic Ottoman society.

In the 1950s, another political group came to power replacing republican rulers and abandoning their goal of secularization. The new rulers either reversed or slowed down the secular reforms with a religious political discourse. The new government gradually gained more power with the support received from the US as part of cold war global policies and launched a new urban program in the second half of the 1950s. This program mainly included road constructions and as a result, many historic buildings, including Simkeřhane, were demolished. The destruction of Simkeřhane again

created many heated public debates in newspapers, architectural journals, and so forth. However, the new conservation board was not successful in stopping its partial destruction even though the members discussed the situation in several meetings. Ironically, this significant heritage site was demolished not by Prost who was accused of favoring Byzantine past, but by a power structure that embraced a religious-oriented nationalist political discourse and favored Islamic era buildings over Byzantine buildings.

In the Simkeşhane folder in the archives of HC, there is a hand-written letter of a citizen addressed to the High Council. In this letter from 1959, the author wrote:

«There is a rumor that construction will start for the restoration of the Triumphal Arch that is revealed with the destruction of Simkeşhane – against the will of the High Council – in 1957. It was not possible for me to learn if this rumor is true. According to the Prost Plan, after the restoration of the Triumphal Arch, it is necessary to open the lands until the sea as a public green space in the form of a Chinese fan [*cone*], and to demolish all the buildings over this area to make the Triumphal Arch visible to the ships that arrive to Istanbul passing through the Marmara Sea. As we are forced to ignore our own monuments that are in need of repair and restoration, with all due respect I kindly request the High Council to take action to stop this generosity we are showing to Byzantine monuments»<sup>95</sup>.

HC did not include the letter in its meeting agenda, yet, despite all the incorrect information (for instance, Simkeşhane was demolished with the consent of HC, not against their will), this letter is emblematic in demonstrating how urban heritage is defined based on a separation between “our” monuments and Byzantine monuments. This conflict, in fact, is embedded in the urban history of Istanbul.

95. HC Archives, Document no.: NA, January 9<sup>th</sup> 1959. Letter to HC.

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