

ARCHAEOLOGY CONTESTED: WAYS TO REMEMBER ANATOLIAN CIVILIZATIONS

I would like to start by drawing attention to a statistical information that I think is intriguing in the history of Turkish museums. Thirty-eight archaeological and ethnographic museums most of which established during the Early Republican period all around Turkey were provided with modern buildings beginning in the 1960s [\[1\]](#).

Why and in what circumstances did the state sponsor museum constructions in the 1960s and 70s? What were the links between the ideals of the Early Republican museums and the museums of 1960s in their modern spaces? How did the ways to remember Anatolian civilizations vary from the Early Republican period to the 1960-1980 period? How was the politics of remembrance represented through the display of archaeology and ethnography?

National Development and Planning

The military coup on May 27, 1960 introduced a new constitution (1961 constitution) and planned development became a constitutional necessity in Turkey. The 1950s in Turkey was marked by an Americanization with a rapid development, and the military coup aimed to put an end to this process and introduce a planned development in control of the state. It introduced the idea that the national resources should be used in a rational way and thus development should be rationally planned. The State Planning Organization (SPO) was founded and it turned out to be the representative of the rational mind in the country. It was to determine the methods of development based on scientific knowledge with an aspiration for the lost modernist ideals of the Early Republican Turkey [\[2\]](#).

The military politics was interested in securing anti-imperialist ideals of national resistance and national independence. Within this political environment, socialist intellectuals gained power and a socialist publication "Yön" was established. This intellectual group formulated a socialist version of Atatürkism blending the anti-imperialist concerns of the War of Independence with the anti-imperialist discourse of

the 1960s and declared this in "Yön Manifesto" [3]. In this manifesto, Ataturk's ideals of Westernization and his statist ideas were widely emphasized. Westernization was readopted as the single way to reach the level of contemporary civilizations and the way to achieve this was a national development that can only be provided by state's control [4].

Historiography and Politics of Remembrance

Leftist intellectuals, some of whom had links to Yon community, developed the history thesis called Blue Anatolia (Mavi Anadolu Tezi), which actually started to emerge in the 1940s. Halikarnas Balıkcısı (Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı), a novelist who lived in Halikarnasos (modern Bodrum) in exile is mostly referred as the father of this thesis. The Blueists claimed a mediterranean identity by establishing links between today's Anatolia and Ionia [5]. Their purpose was to prove that the Turkish community is the actual inheritor of Western humanism which is based on the writings of Homeros.

Sabahattin Eyuboglu and Melih Cevdet Anday, whose signatures appear under Yön Manifesto, were some of the important figures of his thesis. Sabahattin Eyuboglu's documentary films reflect his interest in linking antiquity to modern Anatolia. In his film "Anadolu'da Roma Mozaikleri" (Roman Mosaics in Anatolia), he states;

"Latin realism introduced everyday scenes into the floor frescoes. While wandering in Antakya today, after 1800 years, you can come across similar scenes. [6]"

"Early people of Antioch were afraid of evil eye, just like the people of Antioch today. This mosaic should be protecting the household from the evil eye [Most probably zooming in a particular mosaic]. [7]"

Another aspect of the Blue Anatolia Thesis is to claim the Ottoman culture roughly before the 16th century by associating this period by Western culture and disclaim the Islamic aspects of it, which are believed to gain precedence after the 16th century by the territorial expansion to the East. In another documentary film entitled "Fatih Albümü" (Fatih Album) Sabahattin Eyuboglu describes the Ottoman sultan as a humanist. According to Eyuboglu, Fatih shared the Renaissance fashion that took Homeros as the basis of humanism and claimed a kinship between Turks and Greeks. He argues, no other leader between Fatih and Ataturk designed such a kinship because the Ottoman culture retired into itself after the reign of Beyazıt, who was Fatih's son [8].

The Blue Anatolia literature introduced and propagated the idea of visiting ancient cities and sea tourism in Turkey. Azra Erhat was another figure in creation of this

literature. In her famous book *Ecce Homo* (Iste Insan) Erhat makes an analysis of Homeros as the basis of humanism and tries to link these ideas to socialist and anti-imperialist ideals of the 1960s and to Ataturk. In order to do this, she needs to deal with the fact that this literature was already used by the enlightenment which led to the rise of bourgeoisie, which Erhat was strictly opposed:

"Everyone knows that after this revolution, only one class was able to gain their rights. French Revolution established and improved the bourgeoisie. ... They call it Third World: non-developed, underdeveloped or developing countries. Now it is not just a class but the whole world revolting because revolution left Europe and reached Asia, America and Africa. ... Our world started a war to secure human rights for everyone. ... Revolutionary war the Third World started is called War of Independence and Turkey is happy that it led the very first of these wars and won it. [\[9\]](#)"

Erhat makes the intended connection from Homeros to anti-imperialism and then to Ataturk's War of Independence through the idea of revolution.

While the memory discourse of the 1930s and 1960s differ with the civilization they chose to remember, the former chose Hittites and the latter Ionian culture, they agreed in forgetting the recent memories of the Ottoman culture. Both the Turkish History Thesis of the 1930s and Blue Anatolia Thesis of the 1960s chose to deny the multi-religious and multi-ethnic structure of the Ottoman tradition.

How were these selective remembrances represented in the museum?

After the foundation of the Republic, in addition to territorial justification, archaeology represented the pre-Islamic past of Anatolia and this was used to legitimize secularism. Archaeology became the representative of a secular and modern identity in the museum and both 1930 modernizers and 1960 modernizers adopted pre-Islamic Anatolian civilizations as the basis of Turkish culture.

Ethnographic collections on the other hand were comprised of the Ottoman everyday customs and tools. When the Ottoman Empire and its daily life was abandoned, their tools, furniture and other belongings were put in the museum. The ethnographers of the 1930s Turkey, defined the Ottoman everyday stuff as the traditional past of Turkey and put them on display as obsolete objects in the modern condition. As explained before, the Blue Anatolia Thesis in the 1960s pursued the same approach to the Ottoman culture and denied its living heritage. Therefore, it should be fair to say that ethnography continued to represent the Ottoman culture as a past and obsolete phenomenon in their new spaces in the 1960s.

In Turkish museums, archaeology and ethnography were displayed as two opposite notions. Archaeology, the pre-Islamic heritage of Anatolia, was to present the secular

and modern identity of the state whereas ethnography stood for the traditional past of the Turkish public. The role of archaeology was defined through its binary relation to ethnography.

- [1] O. Sade, Türkiye'de Tasarlanmış Muze Yapıları [Designed Museum Buildings in Turkey], unpublished MS thesis, Istanbul Technical University, 2005.
- [2] I. Tekeli, Akılcı Planlama'dan, Bir Demokrasi Projesi Olarak Planlamaya (Istanbul 2009) 2.
- [3] O. Laciner, Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi, (Istanbul 1983-1996) 775.
- [4] "Yön Bildirisi", Yön, no:1 (1961).
- [5] M. Belge, Genesis: Büyük Ulusal Anlatı ve Türklerin Kökeni (Istanbul 2008) 313-314.
- [6] S. Eyuboglu, "Anadolu'da Roma Mozaikleri" in Sanat Üzerine Denemeler ve Eleştiriler (Istanbul 1981) 211.
- [7] Ibid.
- [8] S. Eyuboglu, "Fatih Albümü" in Sanat Üzerine Denemeler ve Eleştiriler (Istanbul 1981) 194.
- [9] A. Erhat, İşte İnsan=Ecce Homo (Istanbul 1969) 165.

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This article should be cited like this: O. Sade-Mete, Archaeology Contested: Ways to Remember Anatolian Civilizations, Forum Archaeologiae 55/VI/2010 (<http://farch.net>).