

## ANCIENT CENTERS AND THE SURVIVAL OF TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS: TEST CASE — SAFRANBOLU

In 1071 the Turks reached Anátolia and by 1263 were in Europe. Even after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 they continued to extend their occupation, pushing west as far as the gates of Vienna and conquering the whole of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. To the east they reached Persia and India in the 16th century.

Their empire was made up of a number of different races, languages and cultures. The intermingling of the different peoples naturally meant that all sorts of influences were at work; but the most striking thing of all is nevertheless the resemblance between the various architectures. Of the wooden settlements which are the subject of our report little unfortunately survived. In particular, the buildings which have remained standing on the

Safranbolu Général view.



2. Safranbolu. A street

Black Sea, in the Tarsus area and in Western Anatólia (Trabzon Rize, Kastamonu, Safranbolu Kula, Birgi, Havran and Tekirdag) are in absolute need of protection. In the Balkan countries, as we are most happy to note, such buildings are being very carefully looked after. In our own country the ancient centres built with the aid of traditional techniques which are still in existence owe their survival to the complete lack of social and economic progress and also to the absence of any increase in the population. It is absolutely certain that, had there been demographic expansion and a greater degree of industrialization, speculation would have destroyed this part of our heritage. Moreover, under modern conditions further survival of these historic settlements is barely possible.



Safranbolu. A house

We discovered, for example, in the course of our investigations, an ancient building in which there remained just one old couple but which was in any case in a ruinous condition and completely uncared-for. The old people were without financial means and could carry out only the most urgent repairs. It would not be in line with our conception of things to consider historic buildings as mere curiosities. If they had a more functional and practical use there would doubtless be more general acceptance of their right to exist.

Ancient buildings can be destroyed in any one of the following ways:

1. By the action of such natural agents as wind, violent storms, torrential rains or fire.
2. By speculation.
3. Through lack of facilities for technical assistance and control of development projects.
4. Through financial difficulties.
5. Through ignorance on the part of the population.

If these historic buildings are to be protected at the present day, the following measures must be

I.a. They must be buttressed to withstand earthquake risks.

b. Fire precautions must involve:

i) A fire-extinguisher in every house without exception.

ii) A municipal fire-brigade constantly on call.

iii) An adequate number of hydrants.

iv) Absolutely flawless electrical installations.

v) Automatic fire-extinguishing equipment.

vi) Conventional central heating in all houses to preclude accidents.

II. Control of speculation can be achieved through comprehensive planning. The traditional character of the town can be protected provided no alterations to the style of the ancient buildings are permitted and the following conditions are adhered to: Permission to put up new buildings to be granted only provided certain special conditions are observed. Streets not to be widened. Where an old house has been destroyed permission for a new one to be given only if the ancient style is adopted. However, a preliminary condition is that the individual ancient buildings must be surveyed, together with the street vistas typical of the district,



Safranbolu. A street.

and all these buildings must be officially listed. Before they are surveyed there must be an assessment of their value and a formal decision to list them. We would also like to add that the building of new districts beyond the limits of the protected area will be unavoidable.

II. In Turkey controls and authorizations must be the business of the Directorate of Museums, which come under the Ministry of Culture. In this connection a great many problems can be settled by specialists in various branches of the visual arts. Failing this we should achieve perfectly barren results — as unfortunately has often been the case. If there existed a State-run school coming under the Directorate of Museums, trained specialists would be readily available, in which case those who needed their services would have a qualified body of experts to call on.

IV. As regards the solution of the financial problems, we have the following alternatives to suggest:

1. The owner must bear the cost himself.
2. The cost is borne by the State (by the Ministry in charge of culture which in Turkey is the Ministry of Tourism).

3. Tax-relief for owners of ancient buildings can be instituted through legislation.

4. Banks or other bodies can finance restoration and repairs, or else ancient buildings can be made State property by law.

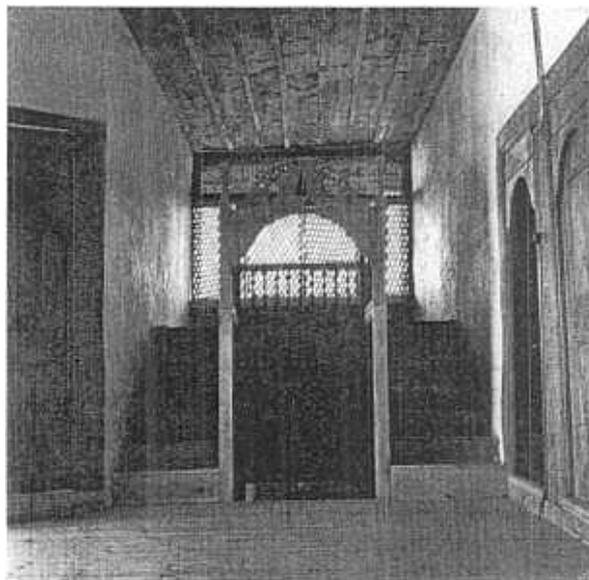
5. Buildings thus made over to the State can be placed at the disposal of the public.

V. It is urgent for the population and authorities to be enlightened through the mass media, and interest in ancient buildings must be maintained. An answer is rarely given to the question as to why they should be protected; it is a question which is particularly unfamiliar to the population in economically backward countries, and there is complete ignorance as to why people should protect their own culture and their own heritage. We will now venture to explain more precisely the close connection between Safranbolu and the subject of our report. The Council of Europe issued invitations to 500 small towns and received answers from 300. Safranbolu is a highly typical example in that it still today harmoniously unites Turkish building technique with traditional Turkish ways of living. It is a small town built on steep

slopes overlooking the Black Sea, 10 kilometres from Karabük. It has a population of 12,468 and covers an area of 1,013,000 square metres, 315 metres above sea-level. The town possesses an active trading centre with good connections with the surrounding districts. The population practises vine-growing and possesses orchards. The area was inhabited, successively, by the *Hittites*, the Dorians, the Paphlagonians, the Iranians and the Lydians, each of whom brought their own civilization and left numerous works behind. Until 1284 Safranbolu came under the same jurisdiction as Kastamonu, which after that date became an independent small town.

In 1461 the town was brought within the Ottoman Empire by Sultan Mehmet ("The Conqueror"). The buildings which survive today date back no further than the time of Candarogullari. Of those which belong to that period only such works as bridges, mosques, mausoleums, *hans*, (or old Anatolian inns) and *hammams* (Turkish bath establishments) are still standing, all of them built entirely of stone.

Over and above its archaeological treasures Safranbolu possesses three *konaks* — *konaks* are villas in which in other days the very rich Turkish families lived with their enormous households — three *mescits* or small mosques, twenty-two big mosques, forty-two fountains, five Turkish baths, six mausoleums, two libraries, two theological colleges, one *han*, one bridge, a palace which doubtless must today be considered no more than a ruin, and a long row of shops, as well as a citadel. The private houses, which are no more than 100 or 150 years old, are wooden. Safranbolu is particularly interesting for its special building technique; typical features one notices are the balconies on two sides, the rich interiors, the harmonious proportions, the elaborate facades and the interiors elegantly decorated in none but natural colours, as are the outsides. For these reasons Safranbolu is one of the foremost Turkish historic centres qualifying for protection; it has preserved its traditional building methods down to the present day and still retains its characteristic personality. We may note, in this connection, that the buildings belonging to the State or institutions enjoy better protection than those which are privately owned and whose landlords, with their inadequate means, are unable to provide sufficient maintenance. Our problem today is how to arouse public interest to good effect in programmes for the conservation of old houses. The *Schnoor* in Bremen is a perfect illustration of this problem.



5. Safranbolu. Interior of a house

In 1975 the Safranbolu city council held a festival week on the folk traditions and architectural works of Safranbolu which achieved very considerable publicity.

We may say, in conclusion, that if the historic buildings of Safranbolu are to be preserved it must be brought home to the population that they are genuinely worth protecting, and those who live in them must likewise be persuaded of this. If we are to find the way to a proper solution we must always keep national statistics in mind. As an aid to further progress in this direction it will perhaps be well to found a cooperative to help solve the financial problems, while at the same time obtaining assistance from the appropriate institutions. It would also be a good thing to develop a tourist industry and institute for small handicraft activities. On the level of social utility, it would be an enormous advantage for the miners from Karabüyük ten kilometres away if Safranbolu could become a holiday village for their use. At the same time small workshops should be opened on the ground floors of the old houses for the making of wooden crates for the export of fruit or other packaging, and these houses could thus serve as bazaars. Those buildings which were in the best state of repair could accommodate a library, a cultural centre and a museum.

Turhan GIRITLIOGLU, Turkey

## RESUME

*Dans l'immense empire ottoman, embrassant de nombreuses populations de races et de cultures différentes, maintes influences réciproques se sont exercées. La plus grande partie des constructions anciennes des XVIème et XVIIème siècles, sur tout celles de bois, a disparu. Il conviendrait de prendre les mesures nécessaires pour assurer la sauvegarde de ce qui reste:*

- 1. Protection contre l'incendie;*
- 2. Lutte contre la spéculation par une législation spéciale et des mesures planifiées;*
- 3. Contrôle de l'état des monuments par des spécialistes de musées et des institutions culturelles;*
- 4. Prise en charge par l'Etat de la restauration des monuments, pour résoudre les difficultés financières;*
- 5. Utilisation des moyens modernes d'information pour faire connaître ce patrimoine historique.*

*Safranbolu est une des agglomérations turques les plus caractéristiques de l'Anatolie du nord. Ce bourg*

*a été fondé en 1461 et conserve encore de nombreuses constructions anciennes: 3 conacs, 22 grandes mosquées, 42 fontaines et puits, 5 bains turcs, 6 mausolées, 2 bibliothèques, 2 écoles de théologie, 1 auberge, 1 pont, les ruines d'un palais et une rangée de magasins. Tous ces édifices sont en pierre mais l'on voit aussi à Safranbolu de nombreuses maisons de bois.*

*Il sera nécessaire de constituer une entité pour assurer la sauvegarde et l'entretien de ce centre historique, pour y ressusciter certains métiers et y limiter la circulation. On pourrait en faire un centre touristique, créer de petites entreprises dans les sous-sols, organiser des bazars, transformer certains bâtiments en musées, bibliothèques, etc. . .*

- 1. Safranbolu. Vue générale.*
- 2. Idem. Une rue.*
- 3. Idem. Une maison.*
- 4. Idem. Une rue.*
- 5. Idem. Intérieur d'une maison.*