

DOGAN KUBAN
ON THE DEVELOPMENT
OF AN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF
HISTORICAL MONUMENTS WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO TURKEY

My intention in presenting this non-technical paper is to explain a situation quite unique, which points out the necessity of an international cooperation as well as of a supranational understanding in the field of preservation of historical monuments. I would also like to help the cause of simple survey and preservation work against the elaborate restorations of monuments. My standpoint concerns especially the economically less developed countries where the conservation of existing monuments is handicapped by considerable limitations.

Daily problems of conservations in Turkey furnish us with numerous questions, the extent and characteristics of which are of enough urgency to draw attention on the necessity of an international cooperation. A rich variety of monumental remains of great esthetical and cultural value, from every period of Near Eastern history are abandoned to deterioration and death; the monuments are abandoned because of the indifference of both the national and the international public opinion, the prejudice about their historical values, the scarcity of technicians and as a result of limited financial possibilities of official agencies. The lack of material means is a main hindrance even for a decent survey. If an international organisation does not assist and support in providing efficient survey work and temporary protection, a great many monuments of ancient Anatolia, a treasure-house of human culture, are doomed to destruction.

This negative panorama does not mean necessarily the absolute lack of organisation and interest: govern mental agencies try to do their best; there are local and international efforts and contributions; there are extensive archaeological activities going on: several pre-classical, classical and early Christian sites are being excavated and some Christian and especially Turkish monuments are being restored. But even a richer country could not cope with the preservation of such a great number of architectural remains. And the inadequacy of the activities in this field is inherent in the prevailing cultural and economical situation.

In a country like Turkey, possibly the whole tactics of conservation should be redefined. In the following examples, in the frame of specific problems of different periods, common difficulties are presented.

One of the problems of the very early periods is the preservation of sculptured architectural elements and reliefs and sculptures themselves: the Hittite period already provides us with monumental and sculptural remains throughout Central and Southern Anatolia. But even in the most illustrious and visited sites the preservation was hardly considered. The important group of remains at Bogazköy was already known in the 19th Century. To my knowledge, the famous rock-reliefs still remain under the destructive influence

of the elements. Neither the government nor the foreign institute working and excavating at the site have provided a secure covering for the conservation of the sculptures. All over Anatolia many of these old rock reliefs decayed and were destroyed.

The effect of the natural elements, the peculiar nature of limestone blocks composing the colossi are the main causes of destruction of the famous sculptures of Nemrut Dag. The site being a very remote one, no attempt for the preservation has been made so far; and we may probably see if an efficient conservation program is not carried out.

In contrast with this dark background, how an enthusiastic campaign by a professor of archaeology can save a monument is well illustrated by the preservation work in another Hittite site in Southern Turkey: at Karatepe the remains of monumental orthostates with figural plastics are protected under a roof of concrete shells, very carefully planned. In this case, a one-man campaign aroused official as well as private interest and collected the necessary sum for the protection of the monument.

At Bogazköy we witness a situation, caused probably by the existence of two responsible authorities: the excavating mission and the officials. The mission was concerned mainly with the new finds and the authorities were expecting everything from the excavators. In some cases government officials did not insist forcefully enough on protection. This still remains an obligation for the working team.

The problems arising from the incredible amount of classical sites are not the outcome of the excavations or the partial restoration of excavated monuments solely; for the moment, even more important is the urgent need to protect the already existing monuments and sculptures, precious fragments of mosaics on the surface of the soil, and to prevent the hazardous and illegal traffic of small and large antiquities. So we need, at least, an extensive survey of the area and the establishment of a fund and organisation for this purpose. Without being based on a well documented survey, researches and soundings are carried on in a haphazard way. The example of Aphrodisias may convey what I mean:

Aphrodisias, once the most important city of Upper Caria, has been a well known site. It is easily reachable. Until recent years the famous and well preserved stadium, city walls, temples, baths, agoras, architectural and sculptural fragments of superior quality were lying on the surface, among the houses, vegetable gardens, fields of the local village and nobody ever tried to save what existed there, except for an early attempt by a French expedition, which was barely more than a sculpture hunt, and that of the Italian team, the work of which consisted in tracing down the plans of existing remains. Before a decent excavation began on the site, in 1960, everything was open to pillage and destruction. The early stage of excavation provides us with highly instructive and attractive material. In Aphrodisias some hundred pieces of sculpture, among which quite a few would be most enthusiastically welcomed in every major museum, are kept in a barn. While rich museums spend fantastic sums for the purchase of a single piece of painting or sculpture, the World of art seems unaware of the existence of these sources of esthetical and cultural value.

In some cases the entire ruins are under the auspices of a single guardian: such is the case with the sites of the famous and wonderfully preserved temple

of Aezani or the theater at Aspendos. Sites like Sagalassos, Termessos have only the protection of distance, the barrier of lonely mountain chains, in short, nothing but the protection of the Providence.

Since the 19th Century the scholarly world has been aware of the existence of the important remains of Christian monuments in Anatolia. A large quantity still survives and awaits the interest of the scholars and of the public. I would like to mention two important groups of remains with their respective problems:

The city of Ani, capital of the medieval Armenian kingdom, occupied for several centuries by different local political structures, is an extremely interesting site, a rather unique example of a Near Eastern city of the early Middle-Age with very handsome buildings. It was the subject of several studies of different value, and of a partial excavation which left the place exposed to easier eventual destruction. This city is on the Turkish-Russian border in Eastern Turkey. Near it is a small and poor village. Until a few years ago the villagers were free to take away the cut stones of the monuments to sell or use them. In order to prevent them from destroying the buildings day by day, the authorities placed a military post in the city itself. But, certainly, one cannot prevent destruction by putting an old city under the surveillance of a few soldiers. However, this is the only thing a governor or military commander can do. The rest is the responsibility of more interested members of local, national or international art circles.

The problem of the preservation of a city like Ani has other aspects: Ani is a border city, in the military zone; until very recently, probably even now, you could only visit it by special permission; it was practically close to scholarly research for obvious security reasons. Distant from every important center, it has no attraction for tourist organizations. And finally, there is another aspect regarding the prospect of preservation of Ani: its historical connections. In spite of its having many remains of Muslim period, it is not accepted as a part of the cultural heritage of the Turks. So, most probably, the authorities would prefer to restore or protect monuments of the Turkish period, before anything would be attempted in Ani. And this again shows the necessity of international cooperation if we believe in the importance of medieval Armenian monuments.

Another region of monumental wealth, Cappadocia with its well-known rock-cut monasteries and churches, has never been a subject of systematic survey, except for the early work of G. de Jerphanion which deals only with a part of the region. Everyday brings out a new discovery and every single find necessitates the revision of old theories and chronologies. One of the most recently studied rock-cut church at Eski Gümüş in Central Anatolia, which has a rich painted decoration of high quality and a very original rock-cut facade has been ignored for years until a local teacher informed some interested persons of its existence. In fact everybody in this field knows that thousands and thousands of unknown chapels, dormitories, churches, refectories are being used as pigeon-houses or barns.

Such a rich province of Byzantine Art has become only recently the subject of aroused public international interest. But no conscious effort of survey and preservation, except for a very well known area, has ever been considered. Thus these numerous monuments which are not only important for their iconography

and paintings, but also for the understanding of a whole period of Central Anatolian architecture, are at the mercy of ignorant men without a strict policy of extensive survey, the sporadic trips of scholars or tourists will not protect them from destruction.

Recent researches in Cilicia, Lycia and elsewhere proved once more the importance of this area for the early Christian art. Yet many remains of the early Christian period have collapsed recently, their only chance of survival being to be discovered fortuitously before final collapse.

I should also like to mention the existence of the medieval Byzantine and Turkish castles which probably would yield a great deal of information and about which there hardly exists a single study; there are not a few dozens but many hundreds of them. In their case no actual restoration is probably needed. But their preservation is strongly connected with survey work.

To conclude these examples, one has to mention the monuments of the Turkish period of which there are several thousands. A large part of these monuments are still used. But especially buildings from the 13th and 14th centuries, such as invaluable caravanserais, are abandoned.

In the case of Turkish monuments, the administration is more alert; but, except in big cities, or in the case of well-known buildings, this alertness is very limited. One should also stress the fact that the policy of complete restoration — which is the case in Turkey — is extremely harmful to the monuments. First, the technicians of restoration are a handful; therefore the control of the works is, in many cases, practically non-existent. Secondly, there is scarcely a specialized enterprise for the restoration of old buildings. The restorations are carried on as normal constructions. It is also common to observe that monuments of secondary importance are being restored, because of some political or even personal reason, while admirable buildings decay in some corner of Anatolia, or in the less exposed parts of the cities.

Is not this last and very unhappy attitude similar to the general Western approach to the problem of restoration? In Western countries, the municipalities or private institutions spend huge sums for new acquisitions to the museums or for the restoration of buildings of local importance; it is understandable that every country is much more interested in the protection of her own past. The boundaries of cultural sympathies are still extremely limited. But is it less important or of lesser consequence for human history, to have some extra interest for the protection of richer sources of esthetical enjoyment and cultural knowledge whether they are expressed in foreign forms and in the atmosphere of different cultures? One should differentiate between an approach of universal cultural interest and an approach for chauvinistic historical reasons.

The discussion can be thus summarized:

In a country with very limited financial means, even the most drastic measures would not prevent the destruction of important historical sites and monuments, the common heritage of humanity. We should no longer expect that the loneliness of a site, distances or chance will protect the historical remains; population growth, with the addition of transportation facilities has immensely increased the danger of total destruction. In a world of unbounded materialism, there would be no hope, if there would not be an effective international cooperation: but this will not be effective unless based upon the conscious

help of local authorities which is only possible, if both sides can have a supra-national historical view. That is to say, to evaluate material remains of the past, for their intrinsic qualities, beyond their limited historical and cultural connections.

Whatever the prospect is, some kind of international organisation, making a cultural propaganda for the preservation of historical monuments, can provide survey groups with local help, and technicians when needed, can collect money or channel funds for urgent protection work. I think that this cooperation should be considered part of a large scale aid program, which would show the universality of artistic culture, and the solidarity of present generations in preserving the remains of this culture.

DOGAN KUBAN

**SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT D'UNE COOPÉRATION INTERNATIONALE
POUR LA PRÉSERVATION DES MONUMENTS HISTORIQUES,
AVEC RÉFÉRENCE SPÉCIALE A LA TURQUIE.
RÉSUMÉ.**

La préservation des monuments historiques, en Turquie, nous pose de nombreux problèmes dont l'étendue et l'urgence sont tels à éveiller l'attention sur la nécessité d'une coopération internationale.

Des restes hittites aux innombrables sites classiques, tout a besoin d'une opportune protection, qui n'est possible d'ailleurs sans un examen bien documenté. Les importants restes de la période chrétienne, des monuments ciliciens aux églises cappadociennes taillées dans le roc, ou les cités médiévales, telle que Ani, ont leurs problèmes spéciaux à résoudre.

Plusieurs milliers de monuments de l'époque turque sont en danger d'être transformés, ou bien abandonnés à leur sort.

Dans un pays aux moyens financiers très limités, les mesures les plus radicales ne peuvent souvent pas prévenir de la destruction les sites et les monuments historiques importants. L'accroissement de la population et l'augmentation des facilités de transport ont accru considérablement le danger de destruction totale. Nous ne voudrions pas compter éternellement sur une protection fondée le plus souvent sur l'isolement, l'éloignement, ou bien le hasard des restes historiques. Seule, une organisation internationale, faisant une propagande culturelle pour leur protection, organisant des groupes d'études avec l'aide locale, et fournissant des techniciens, ou destinant des fonds dans le but d'une protection urgente, peut prévenir le désastre.

Mais l'efficacité de cette sorte d'organisation internationale dépend de l'existence d'une perspective historique supranationale et supratraditionnelle: les restes du passé doivent être évalués pour leurs qualités intrinsèques, en dehors de certains limites imposés par les liens avec l'histoire et la culture du pays.