

*Bekir Yüksel HOŞ\**

*Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences, Department of Geography. Elazığ,  
Türkiye*

### **Abstract**

*The Balkan Peninsula has a rich rural and urban history and a variety of Turkish civil settlements. As regards Turkish civil architecture, it is widely scattered around these geographic locations. Materials have been found from the city core of certain Balkan cities from 8 countries as follows: (Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro) where numerous examples of traditional Turkish urban dwellings still remain. These countries and 37 adjoining cities were visited by time and various materials were gained for the purpose of completing this project. In the course of this project, materials were collected from their respective municipalities about their city core and former photographs were compared with photographs and notes taken by travelers in Turkish history, as recorded by Turkish archives. While they have disappeared in many areas, there have also been attempts in certain locations to maintain and restore them back to their former condition. Undoubtedly, tourist developments can serve as a spearhead for such protective measures. However, some examples can be noted much earlier than the flourishing of tourism sector, and as such were initially discovered in the Balkan area. Consequently, protected samples are not only evidence of tourist interest and objective. In this research, thorough analysis of this landscape change in the Balkan geography has been carried out free of bias toward any idea or partiality in favor of any political opinion, free of any kind of prejudice or discrimination. As a result, analyzing the past can pave the way to building a harmonious future with regional diversity and to preserve cultural geography in their habitats.*

### **Keywords**

*Balkan, Turkish Dwellings, Urban Dwellings, Disappearance, Cultural Geography.*

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*\* Firat University, Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences, Department of Geography, Elazığ, Türkiye. (Turkey) hansoylu@hotmail.com*

## Introduction

Such comparative work provides an idea of the high numbers(density) of population dwellings in the course of history. In some areas buildings still remains and in some, they are about to be vanished. And a main question also a part of our research. What is Turkish Dwelling? To understand this, we must analyse what kind of components makes a building in a Turkish dwelling form. Where they was built, how disappeared and why they going on to disappear even today. Some old photographs, new projects and Street captions will be helpfull to analyse that. With such an analyse, all those change will be explained and underlined by the concept and essentials of Urban Geography. Additionally, certain published works were revised about policies in the Communist era of urbanization and their direct adverse effects on the area. Analyzing and evaluating the complete change in the region can be helpful in understanding any incurred changes and the possible reasons. In parts of this research, some difficulties arose in certain areas such as the Serbian controlled territory of Bosnia Herzegovina and in Bulgaria. The main issue was the safety care of the local population while their dwellings and streets were being photographed. Naturally, certain parts of the area continue to preserve and display traces of the wars and ethnic conflicts. And Urban Geography going on to change. This is an understandable development. Certain village traditions were the factor for distance from foreigners. For centuries, the Balkan dwelling style has always been in fussion with the culture of Turkish settlements, except for the areas neighboring buildings from other differing cultures. However, in spite of the widespread distribution around the Balkans, for some reason these buildings started to disappear in many locations in the course of the centuries, and especially in the last century following the first Balkan war of 1912.<sup>1</sup> Behind this reality, there are some reasons that can be explained. Those reasons are usually of a political and social nature, while some are also cultural, economic, industrial, infrastructural, educational and traditional reasons as well. In many places around the Balkans, the communist era affected not simply the political system of these countries, but also the structural design of cities and the landscapes of settlements. In this work, the emphasis has been to analyze how and why these widespread dwellings have deteriorated or disappeared. And which ones remained and by which kinds of efforts or works, or by which means, some of them left alive in city prefectures and landscapes.

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<sup>1</sup> HALL C, Richards.,The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913 Prelude to the First World War. Routledge Publications.p.21

## Major Reasons of Disappearance of Turkish Civil Dwellings in Balkans

Reasons of disappearance of a cultural existence also a topic of sociology, history or anthropology more than geography. But when this disappearance reflects itself as a change to the areas, prefecture and landscape of settlements, it must be analysed in geographical point of view. When a city gets in some processes of changes, not only city's itself, also their structures, civil, public and military architecture, infrastructure and Street systems and its environs changes drastically.

- Just fifty years ago, a large part of balkan geography was has got some samples of Turkish architecture in each twenty kilometers. But when we look back approx a hundred years ago, those was so common in entire Southern Tuna basin which scattered whole Balkan peninsula densely. Even today in many places those characteristic buildings may still can be seen. But the danger is, those remnants of cultural geography is under a genocide of ignorance or threat of constructions<sup>1</sup>

But the reality which appears on the big part of Balkan Peninsula is; the reality of disappearance of many buildings from various Balkan cities. Somewhere more and in some areas just sparsely. Cities still transforming with a furious speed. City prefecture, culture, urbanism and even ethnology changes against historical basis. And in many cities of Balkan countries a fierce fight happening between history and necessities. As the change goes on, remaining locational distribution of those characteristic houses holds a big importance as a topic of Urban Geography and also for Cultural Geography as well. Here are major reasons of this geographical transforming as:

1. Authorities lack of intellectual senses, lack of cultural diversity concept or education.
2. Nationalism, Nationalist policies and "Nation building era" in balkan countries.
3. Industrialisation and efforts to create big scale and mass housing projects in cities.
4. Cultural and Religious bias and prejudices, hostility and discriminative views.
5. Accusing the past as a "scape goat" for modernisation and to erase all traces of past.
6. To create Communist squares and large streets for the cause of 1 may parades.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Hakan Serbest . 20.04.2012 Editor and columnist of Balkan Günlüğü (Weekly Newspaper)

7. Efforts for modern city view and to gain open areas or to build monumental buildings.
8. Infrastructural works or renovations.
9. Needs of public and state buildings in city core.
10. Economic difficulties to preserve existing buildings and maintenance difficulties.
11. Deliberate policies to let the buildings in desertation or, to decay by themselves.
12. Lack of renovation after each natural or unnatural hazards or disasters.
13. Multiple heirdom on properties. And difficulties to seperate property rights by shareholders and by the claimers from next generation. (As the property did not taken at the time and as family members grows, unit share per person becomes insignificant by time cause of crowded members of families. And this makes people not to come in a conclusion to restorate or to invest their properties especially when the property is just a small house)<sup>1</sup>

### **What are Turkish Urban Dwellings?**

Turkish urban dwellings can be classified as houses that has got some basic structural elements which starts to seem in entire balkan Geography by Turkish conquests. Before this period the material usage of area was presenting quite different examples. And after this period, types of homes are in a good similarity with their counterparts in Turkey. Not regarding to any religion or ethnic diversity, Turkish dwelling model was has been the primar style of accomodation for centuries of the areas. Of course in some places as greek islands, where we can say as “isolated” those buildings doesn’t seems so much. Also centuries ago, those areas was has got less communication and trade density with mainland. Cause of this, cultural traffic wasn’t effected there so much. For a Turkish Dwelling, home residents doesn’t has to be Turks or Muslims. As we see in the house of Ivo Andric, home can be belong to a non-muslim or non-turkic ethnicity too. Also some mansions in Shkodra belongs to the Christian families even they were built in Turkish style cause of the longest era which effects residential culture. In those dwellings, there are some basic components or rules can be seen. For instance, “Cumba” a kind of jetty structure(ledged floor). Is one of the distinctive elements in Traditional Turkish Dwellings. In places where cumba doesn’t exists, sometimes a kind of bow windows appears called as “Kim Geldi” windows” which means “Who came?” Being used to see who is at the door hiding behind of the window.<sup>2</sup> (Bektaş, C.1996)

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<sup>1</sup> Observations and recorded interviews with some city authorities in eight Balkan cities during the Geographical trip in 18-31 May, 2012 with a group of academicians from Firat University Geography dept.(Elazığ, Türkiye)

<sup>2</sup> Bektaş, C. (1996). *Türk Evi*. İstanbul. Yapı Kredi Yayınları.



Figure 1: “Cumba” and “Kimgeldi” windows (Bektaş, 1996: 48,82)

Also integrity of those Ledged Floors, Oriels, Iron or Wooden Struts which are down of them, Indirect entrance to the home and importance of second floor as a living area can be counted as unique samples of Turkish Dwellings in brief. Sometimes we can see those elements all in one building and sometimes one can be absent cause of individual needs or local material usage of the settlement. Peoples(visitors or relatives or else)who wants to get in home, can not get directly in. In order to get inside first they must knock the garden door. Then to get in first courtyard. Afterwards they may get inside by the entrance to the home knocking the main door. So in this while, lady of the home may have an enough time to cover herself or to look at garden gate from above to open or not. Furthermore, there is also another unit in those houses.“Sofa”. This is the central alley inside Turkish houses. Anyway there can be seen also direct entrances in the end of 19.th century. Reaching to the home can be in two ways. From the garden door to the alley, and also direct entrance by the Street gate.(Aysu M. E, 1977) Also climatical conditions has been the key factor to build those oriel units and to decide entrance of those houses too. In those buildings, directions of wind and preferred sun directions has been the very leading factor in the planing of cities and dwellings in All asian territories from Anatolia till China.(Egli E, 1958) Also Street systems was shaped according to the shape of natural flow of the water. There is a law in physical flow of water as; “Water never turns with acute angle” So in all turkish streets, there are some curves of hospitality which provokes a person inside of it as “What is behind of this curve?” as a resource of curiosity( S. Oymael, H. Kiran Çakır, Ö. Sallı Bideci).



Figure 2: “Water flow” shaped streets in Fatih, İstanbul(Left)

and Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

- In the type of home which we see inside borders of “Turkish house” extension areas, basement is closed to the Street with a stone or adobe wall. (Figure 2: Right) Up floor sits on a heavy carrier Wall or wooden columns. Upfloors are wooden framed. If there is a middle floor, they must be low or half floor or complete. Up floor continuously gained an active Outlook by times with windowed or window pictured ledged floors. windows was formerly non-glassed and when glass has been a widespread material, windows got two wings of frames. After western effect, another type of window “railed windows in downwards closing” starts to seem. It is ensures a mutual rhythm and also an integrity not only in home view also in Street view which that the shapes and dimensions of windows has been uniform. Ceiling has been divided geometrically and sometimes decorated and ornamented with paints or paintings. Roof always got an inclination to the four sides and this speciality is the most distinctive one of the Turkish dwellings(Günay, 1998)

As another speciality of these houses are, their construction materials always used by the materials of closer environs. Stone basement and ledged floors rising with wood and “kâgir” or “Baghdadi” structure.(Beslagic, 1997) And oriels adds light and fresh air to the house atmosphere with their multiple sides speciality to the wind. Also Oriels has got a social effect on Turkish houses which has been explained above. Home and room to to have a command of street prefecture, to see and know, who is at the door and efforts to make up a living space according to the inclination of the area has been key factors in Turkish Cuma units.(Yıldırım and Hidayetoğlu, 2009). While those oriels was symbols of richness and noblety in european architecture by noble families or they may seem as an esthetical unit in government or public buildings and pallaces. Reflection of these units can be seen in much more different status in Turkish dwellings. It always has been a common unit in simple Traditional Turkish Dwellings. Not regarding to any richness or

social status, nobelty or else. Below there are some samples from Europe(Figure: 3) and Turkish civil architectures.(Figure: 4)



Figure 3: 1-2 England. 3 Netherlands, 4-5 Switzerland. 5 Czech Republic.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 4: 1 Greece, 2 Albania, 3 Turkey, 4 Macedonia, 5 Bosnia Hercegovina, 6 Bulgaria

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.buffaloah.com/a/DCTNRY/o/oriel.html>



*Figure 5: Old Houses in Tirana City Core(Rruga Dibres) An abandoned building in same area*



*Figure 6: Old Houses in Trikala(Left) and Ioannina(Right) city cores in Greece*



*Figure 7: A deserted house in Prishtina in Kosovo(left) and a protected one in Kavala in Greece(right)*





*Figure 8: Old Houses which collapsing(left) or partly remained in upper town of Thessaloniki(Greece)*



*Figure 9: Old House in center of Belgrad, Serbia in use as Cafe Bar.*



Figure 10: “Amidža Mansion” Now currently a museum in Kragujevac in Serbia(Left) On the right,Ex-Turkish Dwellings in19.thcentury postcard, Belgrad, Serbia Resource: Belgrad City Archive)

### Disadvantage of being situated in the city core

Usually all historical/traditional civil dwellings stands in the core of cities. Those places are usually central points of the cities where they first founded and flourished are also the places where they started to extended outwards. So, by time if the city overdevelops and overpopulates, city core becomes more precious for new buildings or skyscrapers. So the presence of traditional buildings always in risc. Also governments and city authorities chooses central areas to build their administrative units in the city core and so the situation makes two time hard to survive against modern structure for these Traditional dwellings.



Figure 11: Similiarities of Courtyards. (Biscevic House top left, Mostar. Museum House in Sarajevo top Right. Below Shkodra History museum)

As the photos shows, in many balkan countries, remaining Turkish Dwellings survived as a museum or art galleries. Of course this seems the only way to survive inside the city core where the prices of areas much more than any other places of

the city. It is evident that cities and cultural institutions need such those unique and traditional places for touristic culture to underline the originality of their cities. Mostly mansions which also called as “Konak” or “Köşk” had more chance to survive. The rest of the Turkish civil residences (which relatively smaller ones) wasn’t got such a vital advantage to appear in the heart of the city as a touristic attraction. So many of them doesn’t exist today. Today their numbers increasingly decrease because of their position in the heart of the cities where they were first built up hundred of years ago. For instance, “Alaca Imaret quarter” in Thessaloniki, Greece. (Figure 12)

Till 1924 population change between Turkey and Greece, Thessaloniki or Salonica was holding a significant presence of a local Turkish population with Jews.<sup>1</sup> Since the area depopulated by Turks, the Turkish quarters of Turks started to disappear increasingly. Today we just can find some Turkish type houses in the Upper Town of Salonica (*Anapolis*) The rest now doesn’t exist. But there are some signs still remain which show us an old part of a Turkish quarter. Normally in front of all mosques, there is a Turkish “mahalle” which means quarter. Today Turkish quarters around of Alaca Imaret Mosque is eventually destroyed and built up with flats. Even touristic causes wasn’t enough to save such a part of the city in a time while there was no significant touristic care. (Figure 12: below) Today even those dwellings doesn’t exist, their places still possible to be found.



*Figure 12: Remaining Turkish Monuments in Outer Citadel of Salonica and Turkish religious and public buildings which surrounded by flats. (Hastaoglou, 2010: 126)*

<sup>1</sup> Ermopoulos, E., Thessaloniki in Dreams. Past and Today. 2009 p.24, Athens.



*Figure 13: An old Postcard displays the Turkish style “Water Flow” shaped streets(which today doesn’t exists)with Turkish style dwellings in today’s Kassandra(Kassandrou)Street and a disappeared fountain near Alaca imaret(Kunduriotis Family Archive)*

As it seems from old pictures there is a big difference between Street systems of Turkish era and today. Usually Turkish street systems is under effect of many geographical and local conditions. And even sometimes “Qibla” direction of Kaaba where muslims prays to, can be one of the factors what shapes Turkish streets and quarters. Today direction of Alaca imaret was showing southeast where direction of Kaaba located. But streets in front of it lies along West-east directions. Above the old postcard shows how the area was a times. There was just direction of the Mosques certain. And a big majority of public buildings and front side of fountains was looking to the South. The rest, all dwelling areas was located next to streets in “Water Flow” shape all around of Salonica(In greek city also called as Thessaloniki). Today those Street systems significantly destroyed for the benefit of Grid-Shaped Street systems. And 1917 Salonica public fire has been one of the key reasons for the rebuilding of Salonica. Because to destroy all those buildings was an issue of resources and time and there was a large and autocton Turkish population till those years. And a mass blaze was burned majority of those cultural heritages of them and they were never rebuilt. As it mentioned above, when Turkish population left Salonica in 1924, Salonica drastically get in atmosphere of change. And shaped today’s view. Mosques remained lack of visitors and hamams used as cinemas. Despite all, there are some efforts to be appreciated in upper town of Salonica. Some renovation restoration and refashioning Works is ongoing. Those are usually backed by Salonican municipality and not takes a place in frontal view of Salonica but takes a big importance because of the only remaining Traditional quarters from times of Turks (Figure 14 below)



Figure 14: Facade Renovations in Turkish Square of Salonica.

(Source: Hastaoglu V, 2010:129)

in fact, touristic causes has got a limited power to keep and save those buildings from the destructive needs or effects of modern era. It is evident that it needs more politic and municipal protection to keep the rest of the buildings which remained up to date. To ensure that protection, intellectuality based multiple efforts and mutual efforts without any kind of religional and national bias and prejudices must be the pathlight of local authorities. Of course in non of any balkan country, cities wasn't got a political function as a capitol city. Since after independences of those countries, needs to have some public and state buildings inside city core has been a need. So the former Ottoman city core transformed as a heart of a new born country with all kinds of administrative units and infrastructure. As those buildings rises, traditional core of cities deteriorated, deserted and devastated. Some of the remarkable buildings remained as a historical monument to underline the history of the city. Sometimes they got used in touristic purposes and sometimes became just a logo or symbol of the cities. To protect historical monuments and structures means to protect historical core of urban areas. And this keeps the cultural geography and diversity as well. This shouldn't be just as a nostalgic effort, because protecting cultural habitat is a duty of humanity more than grographical or scientific concepts.

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## Other Resources

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