

Southern Marmara Islands' Cultural Heritage Values Under Risk

Başak Emir

Cultural heritage elements are cultural products in which values are deeply embedded. Thinking of culture to be independent from its product yields a very limited understanding since “meaning” cannot be realized without understanding its “context”.

Cultural heritage is defined by a perception that is associated and characterized by subjective goals, which are filtered in reference to our time period. Scholars could not create a consensus on the definition of cultural heritage because its meaning, therefore the value given to it, is so subjective that it differs from period to period, from place to place, and from society to society.

Cultural heritage is generally considered ‘subjective’ (Harvey 2008, 20), hence it is ‘malleable’ (Lowenthal 1998, 226; Harvey 2008, 32). Moreover, the value given to a heritage element is ‘always attributed, never inherent’ (De la Torre 2013, 159); thus, it cannot be transferred but can be redefined by time, in other words by change. In a thousand years, a now-precious cultural property will change substantially with regards to its present value. Therefore, the only common quality of heritage is its subjectivity.

In today’s understanding, values constitute the framework in which we perceive cultural heritage. As these attributed values depend on how heritage is interpreted, it is important to recognize the viewpoint of each stakeholder. The value attributed to heritage is in fact a personal and/or communal interpretation. Since interacting with a heritage element is key to comprehending it, it is this interaction that constitutes the value of heritage for each individual and stakeholder, otherwise the attributed value is hypothetical. Therefore, understanding the present value of heritage elements in the daily life of the local community

in question, reinterpreting these values with them, and ensuring the sustainability of these heritage elements are of utmost importance for a holistic approach in heritage conservation.

Within this framework, along with the documentation and risk assessment of architectural heritage in the Southern Marmara Islands, a value analysis study was carried out to understand how the local community attributes meaning to this heritage. To analyse how the local community values the islands’ cultural heritage, people living in the Southern Marmara Islands were interviewed and information about local memory was collected. Consequently, the risk assessment reports emphasize the architectural and historical significance as well as the current status of the tangible immovable heritage in the region, while the following section on supplementary value analysis focuses on the heritage values that are at risk. This section aims to understand the islanders’ attitudes towards their heritage and the values they attribute to them, including the values that they have transmitted and/or reinterpreted.

Methodology

70 people were interviewed face-to-face during our visits to the islands as part of this study. In addition, 146 people answered the online questionnaire, which listed the major heritage elements in the region and asked the participants whether they have knowledge on them.

The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions about 22 structures. Most questions began by mentioning the name of a structure, then asking whether the participant knew the building with that name, if so, how important it was for them¹, and whether they believed that these structures were adequately preserved. The 22 structures in the questionnaire are the ones that are relatively at higher risk

¹ Value analysis was done by scoring the structures in the questionnaire as, 1: trivial, 2: mildly important, 3: neither important nor unimportant, 4: important, 5: very important.

and architecturally more valuable among the structures examined. In addition, 3 of these 22 structures were asked about again with their former names that have changed over time. The purpose of these 3 questions was to find out which name has been engraved in the collective memory.

Analysis

45 of the 70 people interviewed face-to-face are men and 25 are women. They live in Topağaç, Saraylar, Çınarlı, Gündoğdu, Asmalı, and Merkez neighbourhoods. The oldest person interviewed is 86, while the youngest is 16 years old. The average age of the interviewees is 55. Only six of them seasonally live on the island. The average time spent on the island by the remaining majority is 46 years.

Of the 146 people who answered the questionnaire online, 64 are men and 79 are women. Two people did not specify their gender. The oldest respondent is 84 years old, and the youngest 18 years old. The average age of the respondents, one of whom did not specify his/her age, is 49. The average time spent on the island is 37.7 years.

In both surveys, the time spent by the people on the island covers a long period. Moreover, the wide age range of the participants allowed us to observe the loss of the cultural heritage in the social memory through generations.

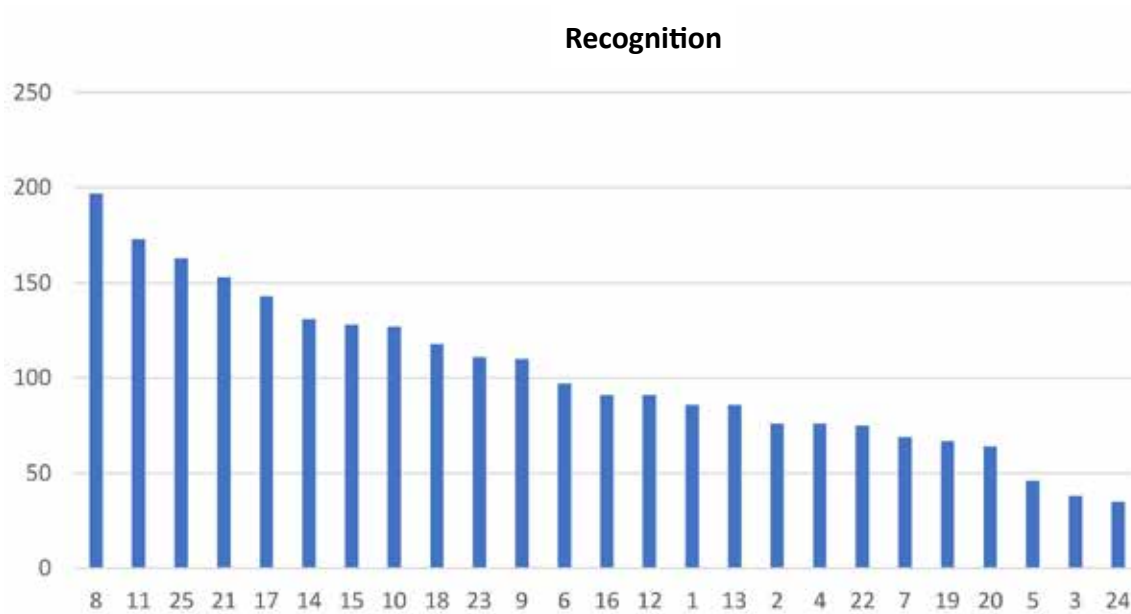
The structures asked in our questionnaire are listed below²:

1. **Asmalı, Kartal House**
(*'Yılanlı' House*)
2. **Paşalimanı, Winery Buildings**
(*Paşalimanı Winery*)
3. **Ekinlik, Houses of the Seven Brothers**
(*Tahsin Tutucu House and Ulu House*)
4. **Ekinlik, Church**
(*Church of Panagia, Koimisis tis Theotokou*)
5. **Ekinlik, Greek School**
(*Ekinlik Greek School for Girls*)
6. **Asmalı, Kastrella Monastery**
(*Panagia Kastrel(l)a Monastery*)

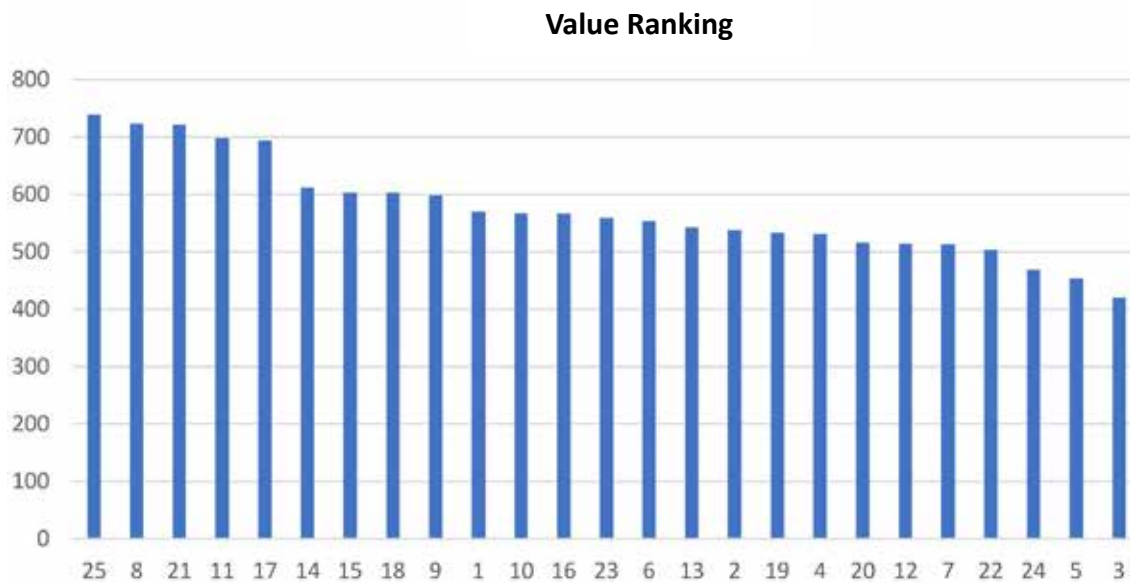
7. **Avşa, Aya Yorgi Monastery**
(*Agios Georgios Monastery*)
8. **Saraylar Marble Factory**
9. **Windmills on the Marmara, Ekinlik, and Paşalimanı Islands**
10. **Marmara, Greek School for Girls in the central district**
(*Pantelidia*)
11. **Marmara, Old Gendarmerie Station**
(*Pantelidia*)
12. **Gündoğdu, Monastery**
(*Agios Ermolaos Monastery*)
13. **Marmara, Taxiarches Church**
(*Church of Taxiarches*)
14. **Marmara, Old 'Jewish' Shop**
(*Internet Cafe*)
15. **Marmara, Old 'Jewish' Shop**
(*Ceramic Workshop*)
(not included in the Architectural Risk Assessment reports)
16. **Marmara, Greek School for Boys**
(*Kyriakidia*)
17. **Marmara Public Education Centre**
(*Kyriakidia*)
18. **House along the shore of Asmalı**
(*Tmaz House*)
19. **Synagogue in Marmara**
(*Marmara Island Synagogue*)
20. **Saraylar, Agios Nikolaos Church**
(*Church of Agios Nikolaos*)
21. **Saraylar, Church in the Genna Farm**
(*Church of Agios Nikolaos*)
22. **Topağaç, Monastery**
(*Agios Timotheos Monastery*)
23. **Monastery in Çınarlı**
(not included in the Architectural Risk Assessment reports)
24. **Greek School in Saraylar**
(not included in the Architectural Risk Assessment reports)
25. **Locations of the old cemeteries**
(not included in the Architectural Risk Assessment reports)

² The structures were specifically asked about by their local names. The names in parentheses are the names in the architectural risk reports.

The graphic below shows the order of these structures from the most well-known to the most unknown by the local community.



The graph below shows these structures' ranking of value attributed by the local community.



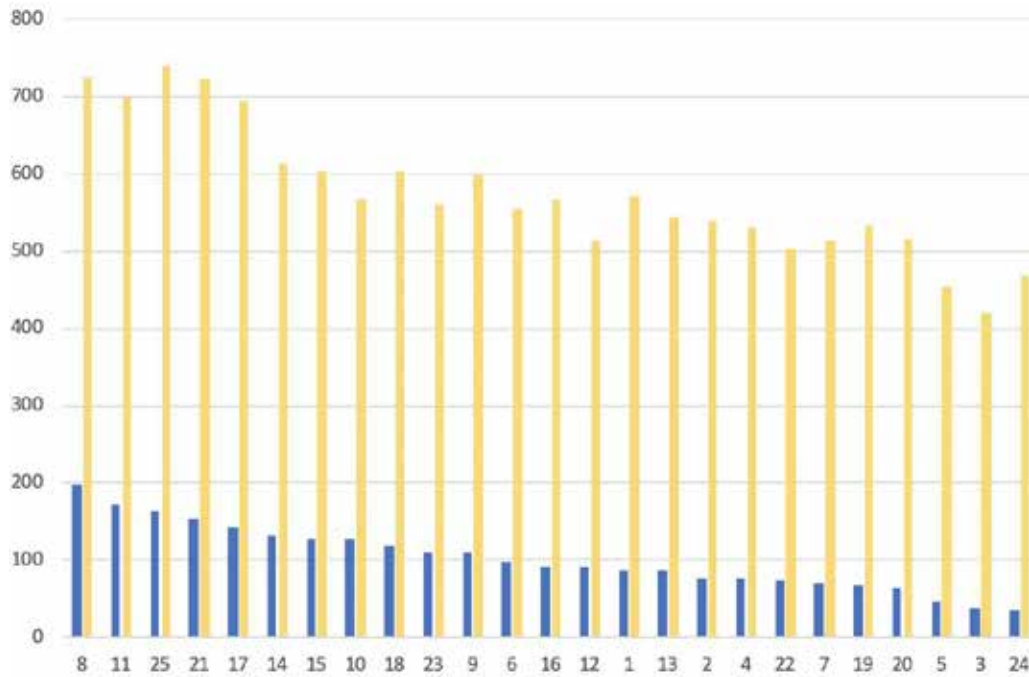
In general, the best-known structure by the residents that has the greatest importance—after the cemeteries—is the Marble Factory, which was also very important for the island’s economy. The building was founded in 1912 as Turkey’s first marble factory (see p. 154), and it is the best-known and the most important heritage asset according to the people interviewed in the Southern Marmara Islands. This factory, which was closed in 1974, is perceived by the islanders as a legacy of the Republic.

The structures that are the least-known and, therefore, least-valued by the residents are the Greek School in Saraylar that was visited within the scope of this project but not included in the risk reports, the houses of the Seven Brothers in Ekinlik that are quite visible in the island’s landscape but the names of which were lost to the collective memory (see pp. 93 and 126), and the Greek School in Ekinlik that was severely damaged in the 1935 earthquake and abandoned afterwards (see p. 131). It should be noted that

these results are from the analysis of the data obtained from all the Southern Marmara Islands. When only Ekinlik Island is considered, the awareness of these last two structures would certainly increase.

When the structures are evaluated in the Architectural Risk Analysis Matrix, the Mermer Taş Factory has the highest degree of importance

in the category of Industrial and Commercial Buildings. Ekinlik Tahsin Tutucu House and Ulu House, which are called “Ekinlik Houses of Seven Brothers” in the questionnaire, have equal importance and are in the second place. The Greek School for Girls in Ekinlik is ranked as the third most important and specified as the educational structure at the highest risk (see ‘Risk Matrix’ in this book).



In the table above, the blue columns represent the recognition of the building, and the yellow columns represent the sum of the degrees of importance attributed to the building. As the table indicates, the degree of importance has parallels with recognition of the structure since importance, which is the value attributed to the structure (meaning), is a parameter formed by recognition, that is, interaction. These attributed values are understood as representations, produced through the interaction of the mind with the rest of the world, which means that they do not exist in this world independently (Kyriakidis 2019, 33).

A cultural property is conserved relative to the importance assigned to it

In order to better illustrate the effect of collective memory on heritage assessment forms, a few examples from among the structures identified during the fieldwork are mentioned below.

When the Architectural Risk Matrix is evaluated, the structure that is at highest risk due to its degree of significance and vulnerability (36.00) is the Kartal House located in the Asmalı Neighbourhood of Marmara Island (no. 1; see p. 77). The house, thought to have been built in 1888, was named “Yılanlı” (Turkish for “with snakes”) after its fresco details and is locally known by this name.³ Only 86 of the 214 people reached stated that they remember, saw, or heard about this house. The overall value grade given to the building is 570 and it is in the tenth place on the list according to our questionnaire. The house is also considered to be quite ‘dangerous,’ especially by nearby residents, due to the risks it carries and its degree of vulnerability. It is also stated that children are not allowed to walk along this street.

Another important fact about this house is that frescoes cannot be appreciated by the

³ For a 360-degree tour and detailed views, see www.islandsheritage.org

inhabitants of the island. The double-headed eagle motifs in the house were a symbol of the initiative and success given to Rums of Asmalı in the Ottoman period as a result of their skills in seafaring (see p. 81). This meaning, however, has completely disappeared now. Due to these symbols inside the house, local residents even associate this house with a priest and also call it 'Priest's House'. Here, the interruption of the transfer of cultural values through symbols is attested in cultural differences.

As previously mentioned, three structures were asked about again in the questionnaire with their newer names. One of these was the Greek School for Girls (no. 10; see also p. 136) in the Merkez Neighbourhood of Marmara, which was later used as the Gendarmerie Station (no. 11). The building's construction was started in 1912 and completed in 1914.⁴ The building served as a school until the Population Exchange, after which it was used as the Gendarmerie Station by the new residents of the island. Its current place in the collective memory is still related to the latter usage. Among those who answered the questionnaire, the number of those who knew the structure as the Gendarmerie Station was 173, whereas the number of those who knew it as the Greek School for Girls was only 127. While the total value attributed to the building when it was called the Gendarmerie Station was 698, the same metric when asked, 'How valuable do you think the Greek School for Girls is?' was 567.

Another such structure was the Greek School for Boys, now used as the Public Education Centre in the Merkez Neighbourhood of Marmara (see p. 140). The building's construction was completed in 1910 and it served as a school until the Population Exchange. It has been used for different functions by the newer residents of the island. Among 214 people who answered the questionnaire, the number of those who knew the structure as the Public Education Centre was 143, whereas the number of those who knew it as the Greek School for Boys was only 91. While the total value attributed to the building when it was mentioned by its current function is 694, the same

metric when asked 'How valuable do you think the Greek School for Boys is?' is 566.

Both structures are very close to each other locationwise and are rather known by their current functions. The residents of the Merkez Neighbourhood of Marmara stated –especially in face-to-face interviews– that they responded positively when plans were being made to reopen the abandoned Greek School for Girls as a museum. They also requested the school's refunctioning as a museum accordingly, which ranks first with its importance among the educational structures in the Architectural Risk Matrix.

The last exemplary structure is Church of Agios Nikolaos (no. 20; see p. 57), known by the community as the "Church in the Genna Farm" (no. 21). While the number of people who know this structure by its own name is 64, the number of those who remembered the building as Genna Farm, which is the local name of the land where it is located, is 153. When the importance of the church in the Genna Farm is asked, the total value attributed is 721.5, and the total value attributed to the same building when asked as the Church of Agios Nikolaos is 516.

This building, which is the third most valuable building in our value analysis as the 'Church in Genna Farm', ranks as the most important among the religious structures in this project with a degree of 15.00 in the Architectural Risk Analysis Matrix. The structure is the least risky structure with a vulnerability degree of 12.00 (see 'Risk Matrix').

Since this building is a church and its original name is relatively foreign in the local Muslim culture, it is expected that the local community relate to this structure better with the name of the farm / land that has been part of their daily lives until recently. Moreover, the residents of the island know this church better than all the other churches in the region and have kept it in their collective memory since it is a place visited by Greeks from time to time. However, the enormous difference between the values attributed to the same structure when asked by two different names reveals

⁴ For a 360-degree tour and before-and-after views, see www.islandsheritage.org

how important collective memory is, and the values it attributes to heritage elements, to conserving cultural heritage.

Suggestions

As it is understood from face-to-face interviews, the residents of the islands value their historical heritage to varying degrees, and they do not have sufficient information about its conservation methods and content. Therefore, people are anxious about the registration of their houses as historical properties. This anxiety reaches to such an extent that the owners of some houses stated that they left their house to their own fate and wait for their collapse. Improper conservation interventions also continue to harm the architectural heritage of the islands. It is necessary to inform people and pursue capacity-building activities⁵ in the region. The anxiety levels can be reduced with these studies by showing people the conservation regulations, their legal rights, and proper conservation practices; thus, a new dimension can be added to people's relationship with the houses.

The study reveals that women's relationships to and memories of the buildings were mostly formed by the relationship they established with their spouses. Most women, who are not directly connected to the buildings, describe the structures and their stories as far as the stories and narratives they hear from men. Moreover, there is little knowledge among the residents of any one neighbourhood about the heritage of other neighbourhoods on the same island. This shows us that the geographical habitats of the islands' residents are quite narrow and even the interaction between the neighbourhoods is minimal. Therefore, it is thought that cultural heritage and capacity-building activities should be held locally, perhaps at a neighbourhood scale, even further than an island scale.

In addition to the questionnaire, the locals were asked if they wanted to add other heritage assets to the list in order to understand

which assets local community assigns significance to. The most frequent answers were Cin İzzettin Paşa Mansion⁶, which is located in the Merkez Neighbourhood of Marmara where hidrellez celebrations were held until recently and locally known as the mansion or castle; the fountains⁷ located in various parts of the island; centuries-old plane trees, which also has given the name to the Çınarlı neighbourhood; marble quarries associated with Marmara Island; Saraylar Open-Air Museum with marble works and sarcophagi dating from the Roman period; the non-existent Panagia Church once located in the cape known as Kole in the Merkez Neighbourhood of Marmara; some of the restored residences; and the Genoese fortress called the Marmara Fortress in the Kaletepe Locality.

Natural assets are also cited among the given answers. This shows that the value given to the island and its natural landscape by the community should be taken into consideration by all other stakeholders during conservation projects.

The preparation of integrated conservation plans that consider the importance given to heritage elements by the local community is of great importance for the sustainability of structures and heritage elements, which have been damaged due to the political history of the region. It should also be remembered that the same history was also a factor in the enrichment of this island's culture. For example, families coming from Crete after the Population Exchange brought the Cretan culinary culture with them as well as adding new and unique flavours to the island's culture by combining their eating and drinking habits with the local vegetation and agricultural products.

Conclusion

Keeping heritage alive means conserving it

In recent years, the concept of cultural heritage and approaches to heritage management are handled much more broadly. Creative-cultural

⁵ 'Historic Home Owners' training, organized within the scope of KORU Project by the Association for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (KMKD) may be given as an example. For detailed information, see <http://www.koruprojesi.org/?p=yetiskin-egitimi&id=2&title=tarihi-ev-maliklari> (date accessed: 21.03.2020).

⁶ This name is also given by the islanders. The actual name of the building is unknown. For a 360-degree tour, see www.islandsheritage.org

⁷ Some of these fountains were modelled in 3D by HERITAGE (Heritage Management Organization) within the scope of the Project, see www.islandsheritage.org

industries and cultural heritage have been recognized as essential tools for the development of societies. It is noted that sustainable heritage management and conservation are most effective with the mutual coordination of cultural heritage stakeholders. Therefore, while community engagement tools and mutual relations are vital for heritage professionals, values play a central role in the interpretation of the heritage.

Values that cannot be transferred accurately and effectively lose their integrity. Community engagement in the communication of these values is also important for all the stakeholders to contribute to a sustainable conservation. It is not the commodified, product-value of cultural heritage that needs to be conveyed through the proper means of communication, but its historical value that can vary from one stakeholder to the other. Community engagement is also an essential tool for interacting with the locals and understanding what heritage means to their communities.

Recognition of societies as a priority for the sustainable conservation and management of cultural heritage (Faro Convention - 2005;

Amsterdam Declaration - 1975) led heritage to evolve as a 'multi-layered' concept (Aksoy - Ünsal 2012, 8) that requires a 'multi-stakeholder and multi-vocal' management style (Aksoy - Ünsal 2012, 8). Today, both tangible and intangible cultural heritage is perceived as having values that can change and/or improve through new attributions by its heirs. Therefore, it is very important to understand what cultural heritage values mean to a society to achieve the holistic conservation that is aimed by relevant projects. Furthermore, with such an approach, the concept of living heritage can become a real and applicable practice.

As a result of the studies carried out within the context of the Project, it can be seen that the meaning of cultural heritage, and therefore the value attributed to it by society, can vary greatly between individuals, societies, and periods. This is a natural result of historical processes and an essential fact to be considered in heritage management. Defining the fractures in the relationship between the heritage element and the communities living around it, and making heritage elements part of these communities' daily lives will keep that heritage alive.