



Original Contribution

INTERPRETATION OF CULTURE THROUGH HOUSING FORMATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Social mentality, beliefs and ethics originating from the nature and life styles have influenced the architecture. The most common product of architectural design is houses. Houses not only reflect the architectural understanding of a given period, but also the life styles of the people, socio-economic structure of the society and the material and the techniques of that period. Accordingly it can be said that the houses, reflecting the cultures they belong, maintain an educational nature for the people. In this study, the effects of culture on housing formations in architecture that meet the necessity of the lodging of the human kind and evaluation of cultures through housing facilities are examined.

Key Words:

INTRODUCTION

Houses are the representation of intersection of architectural culture and the daily life₁. Houses are at the point where pop-culture meets architecture (Güzer, 2001). Factors that affect shaping and the differences in shapes of the houses can be classified as topography of the land, use of local materials varying with geological formation of the area, climate factors, plant formation of the land, demography, socio-economic formation and life style in that area (Dağgülü, 1995). In this study, role of “the culture” that affects the shape of the houses are examined.

Concept of Culture, Its Scale and Significance

Culture is a word originally “cultum” in Latin and then transmitted as “cultura” in

western languages, then in Turkish as of sounding in French. The concepts of “knowledge” and “civilization” are confused with the notion of culture. Whereas culture and civilization, are to be handled like two parts of a whole. On one hand, culture and civilization have their different sub categories but on the other, they are the two basics of the civilized life: therefore it is important to emphasize that neither culture without civilization nor civilization without culture could exist (Özer, 2004).

Many researchers have attempted to explain the term of the Culture. For example, according to Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, “culture is a complicated medium which includes a person’s ability, knowledge, art, beliefs, traditions, habits in a society”, but McIver states that “culture is, the way of how we living, the way of how we thinking, our daily relations; the way we expressing our nature in art and in literature” (Özer, 2004).

Differences in various groups exhibit the characteristics of a culture. Similar environments, like mostly cultural or affected by the culture, depending upon their specific

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characteristics, may have different influences. Mechanisms that attribute mankind to the society are in relationship with or are changed with culture. That's why we could join this variety by the changes in houses and forms of the settlements. Furthermore, it could be said that the climate regions have effect on the materials and the construction techniques, those factors changes the action and in that action culture has a certain role. Shortly, life style and invisible side of a basic action in a first view, has shown upon the environment which has already had built (Rapaport, 2004). Specially, in the regions where different social-cultural groups are together, shape and the form of the houses which is a part of the physical environment are mostly affected.

Interpreting Culture through the Formation of Houses

Humankind was born and brought up in various cultures and that variation affects their lifestyle and behavior pattern. Culture is explained as the total of social heritage when cultural sustainability is leaned to learning and teaching capacities of men (Güvenç, 1984). The social organisms, confidence, economic conditions, believes, customs and usages and shortly lifestyles of families that form the society have some differences. These differences cause cultural diversity. In settlements, existing of different socio-

cultural groups or cultural changing within the group that have same characteristics affect the formation of houses and the space organization. With this view, it can be possible to read culture and its changing through the formation of houses.

Today, in a macro view, it can be told about the formation of the houses that reflect the Mediterranean, Anatolian, European and Far Eastern Cultures. In a micro view, it can be told about the samples of the houses in one settlement that reflect the cultures and their changes. In this study, with the aim of the restriction of the subject, the formations of houses that belong to Ottoman Empire are examined.

Simultaneous variations in houses within the same culture; climate and topographic data, family formation, role of family members and values; can be explained by changes in cultural values and social norms shortly (Gür Öymen, 2000). Examples of the houses belong to 19th and first quarter of the 20th century. Although the houses are belong to same period and are in the same territory, differences in shape characteristics are observed. That is for the evaluation of the cultural differences and cultural varieties.

The first sample group has gained its first characteristics in Ottoman classical architectural period and joined with the Turkish architectural elements (Table 1).

Table 1. Traditional House Samples Belonging to Ottoman Period

		
Edirne/ Turkey	Beypazarı/ Turkey	Kastamonu/ Turkey
		
Bursa/ Turkey	Amasya/ Turkey	Kula/ Turkey
		
Kütahya/ Turkey	Safranbolu/ Turkey	Cumalıkızık/ Turkey

The others belong to 18th century when Ottoman culture had inclined to western culture using the stylistic components of European architecture that go back to the antique era (Table 2).

Classical period houses are of the type and have a shape of necessities for Turkish family living culture, tradition and customs. Local features like climate effects, vegetation and materials have some minor differences but the way of the design is still for the Turkish family type and living style. Based on this situation, some researchers have offered the name as “Traditional Turkish Houses” for the explanation of Ottoman period houses (Yürekli, 2005).

Design of the traditional houses; all floor plans from ground to the top, with vertical and horizontal elements, the ratio of windows to walls are considered as a whole therefore facades have their characteristic shapes according to that idea. Ground floors usually include service units of two or three storied houses and they reflect the character of inner life with their walls without windows. But if there are existing intermediate floors, windows could be seen opening to the street. Without any windows rather than the yard door is the general characteristic of houses. Upper floors are for living purposes. That’s why windows are

mostly assembled on those levels (Günay, 1999).

It can be seen that, use of wood and iron fences for windows at the ground floor is to keep security; where the wooden fences of windows at upper floors are used to keep privacy (Küçükerman, 1996). Most common window type is basically a vertical rectangle. Furthermore, when the height of the house is above the norms, there exist ceiling windows for lighting and decorative purposes.

The most distinctive features of the traditional houses are the bay windows. These elements are generally placed on the street facade. They bring different views to facade, supply benefitting from the daylight in every time of the day and also at the interior space the room they belong would be valuable and have different lifestyles.

The bay-windows can be grouped as simple consoles, overlapped consoles, consoles with bracing, columned consoles. Simple consoles are formed by extending the beams. Overlapped consoles are made by stowing the beams and also they can be 2 or 4 steps. The consoles with bracing are strengthened with 2 or more braces (Evren, 1959). The roofs of houses are inclined towards four directions and have wide eaves. They are covered with traditional tile (Günay, 1999).

Table 2. Westernized House Samples Belonging to Ottoman Period

		
Ayvalık/ Turkey	Edirne/ Turkey	Milas/ Turkey
		
Ordu/ Turkey	Edirne/ Turkey	Cunda Adası/ Turkey
		
Izmir/ Turkey	Edirne/ Turkey	Istanbul/ Turkey

In 18th century westernization movements had started in Ottoman Empire. With that aim, life in the society, consumption, pleasure and trend systems are affected from traditional family to modern one; changing privacy in family and neighbor life causing a change in the shape of the traditional housing. Those changes in social life have also contributed changes in city and family life providing a suitable ground for shape and type of housing (Yücel, 1996).

19th century is a period in which the traditional houses exist, also points out the term that the usage of new houses is common. The big sized houses also were influenced by social changes and cultural / stylistic preferences. The house types that have been strongly marked by social changes have new and peculiar characteristics (Yücel, 1996).

The factors such as building systems, materials, user characteristics, topography, socio-economic factors and stylistic characteristics can create differences in the westernized houses. But changes in social structure have a great role on the rise of distinct characteristics on new house types. Among the distinctive properties of new houses; ground floor usage, opening of the entrance doors directly to the street and usage of European stylistic properties (Neo-Classic, Neo-Baroc, Eclectisist) called "Western" on facades can be told.

These buildings have rarely one storey but commonly two or three storied. There are some examples at which the entrance level is the same with street and others including changing numbers of steps of stone stairs like half of a circle or flat arced niche (Uçar, 2007).

Triangular frontons, plasters, capitals and stepped cornices are emphasized on the facades. In front of the windows, ornamenting facades, and entrance doors, detailed wrought irons are placed in order to obtain security. Generally, there exist plasters from ground to eaves along the street view. Although most of the houses are flat facaded, rarely balconies and bay-windows exist. However unlike traditional housing, bay-windows are narrow and balconies are used over them (Yücel, 1996). Usage of the wrought iron on balconies is common. Dis-used bay-windows are finished sometimes with only a cornice or a sloped roof with a triangular fronton on a cornice. Facades are restricted with a profiled eave cornice. Gable roof or hipped roof is a common form, sheltered with traditional tile in the houses

(Uçar, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Humankind has built various structures for sheltering and the other social needs. Different factors as history, culture, belief, tradition, geographic condition affect the formation of these structures. Reflection of the culture especially on housing is accepted as normal in case of the acknowledgement of connection between the regional life conditions and life style. It can be seen that, the time period which societies lived during, their lifestyles, the region they settle and all user necessities have a great role in the formation of houses. Consequently it has to be accepted that these factors, including the culture's sub-components, affect the forming of the houses and the hinterland that these houses are placed. In this context, forming of the houses in the same or different settlements reflects the socio-cultural characteristics of users on micro view and also their time period on macro view.

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Pictures

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