

A CONSERVATION APPROACH TO THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF TRADITIONAL BUILDING MASTERS*

Geleneksel Yapı Ustalarının Bilgi ve Becerilerinin Korunması İçin Bir Yaklaşım

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ABSTRACT

Traditional building masters have played crucial roles in both conservation and restoration processes and also in the production process of the traditional architecture. Building masters have produced traditional architecture as a result of a complex process handling environmental characteristics and the needs, expectations and values of local people and expressing their creativity. Nowadays, the building masters experienced on traditional techniques could not be found; and, we are confronted with the disappearance of the knowledge related to traditional construction techniques. In this respect, it is noticeably significant to document and transfer the knowledge related to the construction techniques of traditional building masters to future. Arising from this problem, the Living Human Treasures of Traditional Architecture Project (LHTTA) has developed several approaches to continue the knowledge, skills and experiences of master craftsmen by providing the inclusion of the students of fine arts faculties in conservation process in Selçuk University. Within the scope of this article, the experiences gained from the LHTTA Project, which has developed specific conservation approaches to the transmission of knowledge and skills of masters to the future, are analyzed. After the introduction of the theoretical background and legal framework of the project, the process of the LHTTA project will be summarized in three sections: preliminary studies, the experiences of symposium, workshop and exhibition, and the analyses of experiences for contributing to future studies focusing on traditional building masters.

Key Words

Traditional building masters, traditional architecture, master-apprentice relationship, living human treasures, conservation

Öz

Yapı ustaları, geleneksel mimarinin üretim sürecinin yanı sıra koruma ve restorasyon süreçlerinde de önemli roller üstlenmişlerdir. Yapı ustaları, çevresel özellikler ile kullanıcıların ihtiyaç, beklenti ve değerlerini değerlendirerek, yaratıcılıklarını gösterdikleri karmaşık bir sürecin ürünü olarak geleneksel mimariyi oluşturmuşlardır. Günümüzde, kültür varlığı olarak tanımladığımız yapıların restorasyonunda çalışacak geleneksel teknikleri bilen, uygulayacak usta bulunamadığı gibi, geleneksel yapım tekniklerine ilişkin bilginin de yok olması tehdidi ile karşı karşıyayız. Bu bakımdan, geleneksel yapı ustalarının yapım teknikleri ile ilgili bilgilerin kayıt altına alınması ve geleceğe aktarımı oldukça önemlidir. Bu sorundan yola çıkan Geleneksel Mimarinin Yaşayan İnsan Hazinesi (GMYİH) projesi, ustaların bilgi, beceri ve deneyimlerini, Selçuk Üniversitesi'nde Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi öğrencilerini koruma sürecine katarak sürdürmeye yönelik yaklaşımlar geliştirmiştir. Bu yazı kapsamında, ustaların bilgi ve becerilerinin aktarımına yönelik koruma yaklaşımları geliştiren GMYİH Projesi'nden edinilen deneyimler analiz edilecektir. Teorik ve yasal çerçevenin tanıtımından ardından, GMYİH Projesi süreci, hazırlık çalışmaları, sempozyum, çalıştay, sergi deneyimleri, yapı ustalarını konu alacak yeni çalışmalara katkıda bulunmak üzere deneyimlerin değerlendirilmesi olarak üç bölümde özetlenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Geleneksel yapı ustaları, geleneksel mimari, usta-çırak ilişkisi, yaşayan insan hazineleri, koruma

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Introduction

The conservation process of architectural heritage is a multidisciplinary area in which the conservation architect works with the people experienced in conservation from different disciplines with regard to the quality and problems of cultural heritage¹. Representing one of these disciplines, building masters have significant roles in restoration activities besides the production of traditional buildings. Nowadays, the building masters experienced on traditional techniques cannot be easily found; and, we are confronted with the disappearance of the knowledge related to traditional construction techniques. Therefore, during the restoration works, a variety of problems appears related to the implementation of traditional construction techniques. This article mainly aims to assess the experiences gained from the project of *Living Human Treasures of Traditional Architecture: Building Masters/ Establishing Master- Sculptor Relationship as a Conservation Approach* (LHTTA) for contributing to the conservation of building masters.

Traditional Architecture And Building Masters

Traditional architecture is the product of a complex process through which building masters handle environmental characteristics and the needs, expectations and values of local people by their knowledge and skills; and express their creativity (Karakul, 2012). The diversity in traditional architecture has been generated by the traditional knowledge and the skills of builders transmitted by the master-

apprentice relationship from generation to generation (Oliver, 2006; 159; Crouch and Johnson; 2001; 25). Actually, local building culture is constituted by the production process of the traditional buildings which can be evaluated as a communication system between craftsmen, apprentice and inhabitants (Marchand, 2007).

The term 'traditional craftsmanship' needs to be understood with regard to its intangible and tangible aspects in conservation studies. Besides the functional aspects of the activity of builders, like bringing building materials to construction sites, and after processing, putting them into their places in the building, techniques and tools particular to this process (Bingöl, 2004; 22; Blagg, 1976; 154; Marchand, 2007; 182), there are also expressive aspects, like the reflection of the cultural values, values judgments and the worldview of builder and society and the individual diversities and creativities (Aran, 2000; 122) to be considered. In historic environments, cultural expressions observed in the buildings have been transmitted to the present time especially by the information flow between master craftsman and apprentice (*usta-çırak*). Hubka (1979, p.28) investigates the methods of study of folk builders in the production process of traditional buildings, which are carried exclusively in the minds of builders and continued by tradition- the handing down of information by word of mouth, observation, replication and apprenticeship. Certainly, the transmission of the knowledge of masters to their apprentices assures the continuation of the local building traditions.

Anatolia has a long tradition in building crafts, which has continued for many years and exemplified on the variety of the traditional buildings in historic environments. Turkey's historic environments embody the variety of local building materials and cultural expressions on their physical characteristics. Especially the excessive use of stone and timber, besides other local building materials, like, mud-brick, brick, tiles, has created the various building types with the labor of master builders specialized especially on stone and timber craftsmanship (Bakırer, 1993; Eruzun, Sözen, 1992). The skilled use of local building materials by master builders has created various masterpieces of architecture, as observed both in a monumental scale, like in Divriği Great Mosque; and in a vernacular scale, like in Ürgüp, Mardin, Ahlat.

International Legal Framework: Unesco's Living Human Treasures System

"Traditional craftsmanship" is determined as one of the domains in which intangible cultural heritage is manifested in the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by UNESCO². The knowledge, skills and cretaivities of building masters concretized in traditional architecture can also be accepted as intangible cultural heritage as a branch of traditional craftsmanship. On the UNESCO's official website, the decline in the numbers of the practitioners of traditional craftsmanship is recognized as one of the biggest threats to the viability of intangible cultural heritage³. In this regard, Ar-

ticle 2.3 of the UNESCO 2003 Convention places "transmission" among the safeguarding measures aiming at ensuring the viability of this heritage. Because the conservation of intangible cultural heritage necessitates the continuous practice and the transmission of the knowledge to future generations, living practitioners need to be identified and the appropriate ways for practicing need to be provided. Therefore, before the 2003 Convention, in 1993, UNESCO launched a new programme introducing the concept of "Living Human Treasures"; and, afterwards, prepared a guide entitled Guidelines for the Establishment of National Living Human Treasures System (Aikawa-Faure, 2014). Since 1993, in many countries, the national studies of Living Human Treasures System have been established⁴.

After drawing up the general rules of this system, UNESCO also encourages Member States to establish their national systems of "Living Human Treasures" and formulates the specific "guidelines for the establishment of national Living Human Treasures System"⁵ to be followed by the States. Within these guidelines, a preliminary measure for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage is to ensure its identification by drawing up national inventories⁶. But, after this identification stage, it is significant to guarantee that the bearers of heritage, like master craftsmen, develop their knowledge and skills and transmit them to younger generations. In national contexts, these measures necessitate finding and organizing living builders, some of whom will be given

official recognition, creating appropriate conditions and institutions for practicing master-apprentice relationships and documenting their knowledge and integrating these practices and documentation into the conservation practices.

National Legal Framework: Turkey's National Living Human Treasures Systems

In Turkey, the awareness for the conservation of intangible cultural heritage, which has developed with the studies of UNESCO; and directed towards the holistic conservatory framework of tangible and intangible values recently, has not been accurately reflected to the national legal instruments yet⁷. Although Turkey ratified the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006⁸, the national legal instruments in the area of conservation have not been regulated according to it yet. In contrast, there are no implications of intangible cultural heritage in the definitions in the legal documents in the area of conservation. The conservation of intangible cultural heritage is carried out separately from tangible heritage with the limited inventory studies with a point of view of folklore by the Ministry of Culture.

By ratifying the UNESCO 2003 Convention Turkey has undertaken the mission for compiling and updating a national inventory of intangible cultural heritage. In this regard, in Turkey, the national version of Living Human Treasures System is entitled as the *National Inventory of Living Human Treasures*, and since 2008 the Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Cul-

ture and Tourism, within the scope of the UNESCO programme, has tried to identify living craftsmen and bearers of intangible heritage.⁹ So far, the selected masters are predominantly those skilled in crafts and music or are the performers of shadow puppetry¹⁰. Within these studies, an important lack is related to the representatives and enactors of building culture. There is only one master builder amongst them.¹¹ After the evaluation carried out in 2010, a stone mason from Ahlat, Tahsin Kalender, firstly entered to the list of National Inventory of Living Human Treasures in the area of building. After this identification stage it is important to ensure that the bearers of heritage, like master craftsmen, continue to develop their knowledge and skills and transmit them to younger people. Criticizing the lack of master builders on the list, this article mainly focuses on the transmission of knowledge of building methods, the know-how, the skills and techniques of master builders to new generations. In this respect, the experiences gained from the LHTTA Project will be analyzed for the contribution to the national studies related to the subject.

Nowadays, in Turkey, building masters have lost their active roles in creating environment. They are mostly continuing their activity in restoration practices. In Turkey, there are limited numbers of the building masters, who have information fully on the local building techniques and possess skills. Unfortunately, they could not find the appropriate working ground for the transmission of their information to the new generations. Thereby, cul-

tural expressions embodied by these masters in the traditional buildings by builders are forgotten in time in the collective memory. In this respect, the nationalization process of UNESCO Living Human Treasures System provide to form the appropriate platforms for builders to teach their knowledge and skills. At that point, for the conservation of traditional craftsmanship, the continuation of local building traditions and for growing up the skilled builders, an educative model based on master-apprentice relationship can be thought as a significant way.

The Holistic Conservation Approach Of Lhtta Project

Within the scope of the preliminary studies of the LHTTA project, which started in Selçuk University in 2013, certain studies had been done to raise consciousness among the students of Faculty of Fine Arts on understanding and documentation of traditional building craftsmanship. Within the scope of the LHTTA Project, the studies for awareness raising in society, the practices for development of master-apprentice relationship and the exhibition of studies for the presentation of the project.

The main aims of the LHTTA Project are (1) the holistic documentation approaches for traditional building craftsmanship, (2) the awareness rising about local building culture and building masters on the society, (3) the development of specific approaches for the revitalization of master-apprentice relationship as a way for the continuation of knowledge, (5) the development of specific approaches for the participation of the graduates of Fine Arts

Faculties into conservation process (6) the improvement of the active participation of the masters to building and conservation activities in historic environments.

The LHTTA Project followed a method involving a five-stage work program designed to understand, document, transmit and conserve traditional building craftsmanship considering its intangible and tangible aspects. The stages of the work program include the preliminary studies of the project, the symposium for raising awareness about local building culture and building masters on society, the workshop for developing master-apprentice relationships and exhibition. The participants in the work program are the conservation architect project coordinator, the author of this article, the students from the departments of Sculpture and Interior Architecture, the building masters experienced on stone and timber and academicians. The methodology of the work program included architectural and folklore methods together. In this respect, the methods used through the project included the preparation of drawings, photographic documentation, video recording, and in-depth interviews with building masters.

Background Of Lhtta Project | Preliminary Studies

Within the scope of preliminary studies of the LHTTA project, certain studies have been carried out to develop the consciousness of the students of Fine Arts Faculties about the conservation of historic settlements, the restoration of traditional buildings and the productions of traditional build-

ing masters. In this respect, specific courses have been designed for the students to include certain practices of documentation and conservation of traditional craftsmanship and of revitalizing the knowledge, techniques and working methods of traditional building masters.

The first from the preliminary studies is a specific conservation course of "Restoration of Stone Buildings" designed for the students of the department of sculpture by the author of this article in the 2012-2013 academic year. The course aims to raise general awareness about the conservation of the historic buildings among the students of the department of sculpture; and to teach about the knowledge and methods of the traditional building masters of Anatolia; and, to realize the significant role of sculptors in constructing historic buildings during history and the similar aspects of the working methods of sculptors and building masters especially on making architectural ornaments. Within the scope of the course, the students were clearly informed on the knowledge, skill and cultural expressions of building masters embodied on architecture, documentation methods and the revitalization and reinterpretation of the working methods of building masters.

Among the preliminary studies prepared for raising consciousness of the students of the department of interior architecture, interior design project studios were designed for teaching traditional craftsmanhips. In this respect, within the scope of the interior design studio focusing the project of "Museum of Intangible Cultural Heri-

tage", the students were informed on the relationships between traditional craftsmanhips and architecture and the significance of master-apprentice relationships for the sustainability of craftsmanhips. The students were expected to design specific spaces for carrying out traditional craftsmanhips; and specific classes for developing master-apprentice relationships in a historic building. In the projects, traditional craftsmanhips were revitalized in the museum by using interactive and digital media.

Experiences Gained From Lhtta Project

Within the scope of the LHTTA project, to develop awareness about local building cultures and building masters in the society, a symposium and workshop had been organized in Faculty of Fine Arts in Selçuk University in May 2013 for one week. The one-day symposium aimed to emphasize the activities of building masters in traditional architecture and the significance of master-apprentice relationships in the continuity of building traditions. During symposium, participants mainly assessed the knowledge, skills, and values of building masters embodied on buildings; documentation and conservation methods, the significance of the awareness-rising in society, training programs.

Development of master-apprentice relationships: Transmission of knowledge of masters to students

The educational and training programmes are significant for the transmission of the knowledge of builders to new generations in an applied way

and revitalize the master-apprentice relationship. Thereby, as a sample training programme, a six-day workshop¹² was organized in the studios of the department of sculpture. The workshop was planned to transmit the knowledge and skills of the building masters to the students of the department of sculpture; and to facilitate the participation of the students of Fine Art Faculties in the restoration process of historic buildings. The groups practicing in the workshop consisted of skilled master builders, particularly those experienced in stone and timber craftsmanship, from the Cappadocia region and Konya, and students from the Department of Sculpture working as their apprentices.

Throughout the workshop, the master builders transmitted their knowledge and skills to three groups of students through a variety of exercises. The study groups produced architectural elements and ornaments from traditional architecture using traditional techniques of stone and timber craftsmanship in a master-apprentice relationship. During the workshop, the students conducted in-depth interviews, previously prepared by the coordinator, with the master craftsmen about the processes of their education and apprenticeship, as well as their experience in both restoration and new building works. All the sessions of the workshop were recorded on camera by the students.

•Transmission of the Knowledge of Tuff Stone Craftsmanship

The first group¹³ was composed of three builders from the Cappadocia Region, highly-experienced in tuff

stone craftsmanship, and three students working with them as apprentices. This group worked on two architectural elements of a traditional dwelling from the Cappadocia region on a one-to-one scale and a small scale version of a carved-out settlement. This group first constructed an ornamented niche, including motifs carved in the shape of a cockleshell and circular shaped rosettes on a one-to-one scale. During the work, the students were taught about the traditional dwellings of the region and the meanings of ornaments and learned the carving techniques of master builders. Secondly, a traditional fireplace of actual size, embellished with geometrical motifs, was worked using an original stone block. Finally, the group constructed a small scale version of a typical carved-out settlement of the Cappadocia region. A photograph of a carved-out settlement was used at the workshop as a model for the students to produce the small-scale carved-out settlement and learn to carve tuff stone.

•Transmission of the Knowledge of Marble Craftsmanship

The second group¹⁴ was composed of a stone mason from Konya, particularly experienced in working with marble, and three students working with him as apprentices. This group worked on a small scale replica of an ornamental historic column. First, the stone mason shared his ideas about the general design of the column with the students, especially its capital, base and shaft, and described the process of the work including drafting and chiseling. The capital of the column was to be of the Ionic order and the base and

the shaft of the column included various geometric and foliate motifs. The students first drew the motifs on the marble block using tracing paper and then they carved them, using traditional techniques and hand tools.

•Transmission of the Knowledge of Wood Craftsmanship

The third group¹⁵ was composed of a master craftsman from Konya, highly-experienced in timber craftsmanship, and three students working with him as apprentices. Firstly, the wood carver gave some general information about his craft, particularly about relief carving.¹⁶ The work began with a discussion about the design, a geometric pattern was drawn on paper, and then it was transferred to the surface of the wood by the students with the help of the master. The carving process mainly involved removing wood from a flat wooden panel using traditional techniques and hand tools like chisels.



Figure 1 Traditional niche element carved in tuff stone (Karakul 2015a, 2015b)



Figure 2 The model of the carved-out settlement (Karakul 2015b)



Figure 3. Traditional fireplace (Karakul 2015b)



Figure 4. Carving motifs on the fireplace (Karakul 2015a)



Figure 5. Carving the marble column capital (Karakul 2015b)



Figure 6. Transmission of knowledge between master-apprentice



Figure 7. Transmission of knowledge between master-apprentice on wood carving (Karakul 2015b)

Sharing The Knowledge And Experiences

As a first step of analyzing experiences of LHTTA Project, to share the

knowledge of master builders with society, an exhibition organized by Fine Arts Faculty of Selçuk University and Turkish Folklore Research and Application Center, opened in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum of Gazi University in October 2013. Through the exhibition, the experiences gained from LHTTA project were shared via the graphic presentations and video show of the collaborative works of building masters and the students, prepared during the workshop and various student projects on museum of intangible cultural heritage, particularly, traditional craftsmanships.

The student projects and workshop were exhibited to express both their tangible and intangible aspects by using their physical documentation and video recordings. In this respect, the visitors of exhibition realized the details of the production process of building masters, their ways of application of traditional craftsmanship by using the digital tools besides the exhibited works. Thereby, the LHTTA exhibition presented an original displaying approach which is considerably different from the conventional ones.



Figure 8. View from the LHTTA exhibition



Figure 9-10. Models of student projects on Interior architecture in the exhibition

Conclusion

As evaluated the experiences gained from the LHTTA Project, it

can be stated that they considerably helped to increase public awareness about the conservation of the knowledge and skills of building masters in society. The methods followed in the project included a series of systematic practices which could be repeated and applied in other educational institutions, like fine arts faculties and vocational schools. The integration of such studies for safeguarding traditional craftsmanship into the curricula of fine arts faculties and vocational schools facilitates the participation of the graduates in the restoration of historical buildings to be developed. Thus the implementation of such studies provides a way of conserving both tangible and intangible cultural heritage in a holistic way.

The conservation approach of the workshop is mainly based on meeting building masters and sculptors for handing down the knowledge and skills in traditional craftsmanship. The workshop provided an appropriate way for the graduates of the Faculty of Fine Arts to join in the process of conserving and restoring cultural heritage. Throughout the workshop, the traditional architectural elements and ornaments were produced in stone and timber by the master builders and students together using traditional techniques and tools. In the process, the skills, knowledge and know-how of the masters were transmitted to the students through the production of actual architectural elements from traditional architecture. Thereby, this exercise raised awareness about traditional building methods and the need for their safeguarding in society, and

contributed to the national studies in Turkey.

The diversity and richness of traditional building methods in historical environments in Turkey necessarily entails the dissemination of the 'living human treasures' system from the national to the local level. In Turkey, there are only a limited number of master builders who are highly knowledgeable and experienced in local building techniques and possess the required skills. Unfortunately, they have not previously been able to find an appropriate forum for the transmission of their skills to the current generation. Thus, the cultural expressions that could have been transferred by these masters through traditional building methods are disappearing from the collective memory. The LHTTA project also contributed to developing localization process of the national studies of 'living human treasures' system.

NOTES

- 1 ICOMOS Convention of Conservation of Turkey's Architectural Heritage, 2013. http://www.icomos.org.tr/Dosyalar/ICOMOSTR_0623153001387886624.pdf
- 2 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>
- 3 <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/?pg=00061>
- 4 <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/?pg=00061>
- 5 www.unesco.org/culture/doc/src/00031-EN.pdf
- 6 See Article 12 in the UNESCO 2003 Convention
- 7 Holistic conservatory framework which is the main aim of this study, has started to be discussed in certain publications and scientific meetings recently. (BOUCHENAKI, M., 2003, "The Interdependency of the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage" (Paper at ICOMOS 14th General Assembly and Scientific Symposium, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, <http://www.international.icomos.org/victoriafalls2003/papers.htm>), (Isar, Y.R., 2004, "Tangible" and "Intangible" Heritage: Are they really Castor and Pollux?", INTACH Vision 2020, New Delhi, November 2-4, 2004), (Karakul, 2011).

- 8 <http://www.unesco.org.tr/kultur.php?gitid=1> (accessed in 17.12.2009) Law numbered 5448 about the approval of the UNESCO convention 2003 was published in 21.1.2006 in Resmi Gazete (<http://www.resmi-gazete.org/sayi/7599/5448-somut-olmayan-kulturel-miras-in-korun-masi-sozlesmesinin-onaylan-masinin-uygun-bulunduguna-dair-kanun.html>)
- 9 <http://aregem.kulturturizm.gov.tr/TR,12929/yasayan-insan-hazineleri-ulusal-envanteri.html> (Retrieved March 15, 2015)
- 10 See the web site of Ministry of Culture. (<http://www.kultur.gov.tr>)
- 11 Tahsin Kalender, a stone mason from Ahlat, is the only master builder on the list of Turkey's National Inventory of Living Human Treasures. (See <http://aregem.kulturturizm.gov.tr/TR,12929/yasayan-insan-hazineleri-ulusal-envanteri.html>)
- 12 The workshop was previously investigated in the articles of the author entitled 'An Integrated Methodology for the Conservation of Traditional Craftsmanship in Historic Buildings' published in International Journal of Intangible Heritage in May 2015; and, 'Geleneksel Yapı Ustalarından Öğrenmek' published in Yapı Journal in October 2015.
- 13 The master builders in this group were Adnan Açıkgöz, Salih Yaşar and Atilla Özyürek, and the students were Elif Dertli, Meryem Hüsnâ Çelik and Gülay Kaya.
- 14 The stone mason in this group was Mehmet Emin Kabakçı, the participating students were İbrahim Demir, Abdullah Bayru and Yunus İrice.
- 15 The master craftsman in this group was Ahmet Yılçay and the participating students were Abdullah Gümüş, Furkan Payas and Figen Demir.
- 16 Relief carving is a sculptural form in which figures are carved into a flat panel of wood. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relief_carving (Retrieved March 12, 2015)

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