



LEADING NEWS SOURCE FOR TURKEY AND THE REGION

[Login](#) | [Become a member](#) | [I forgot my password](#)[HOME](#) | [TURKEY](#) | [ECONOMY](#) | [WORLD](#) | [SPORTS](#) | [LIFE](#) | [ARTS/CULTURE](#) | [OPINION](#) | [VIDEO](#) | [PHOTO](#) | Sub Categories: » [HOMEPAGE](#) / [OPINION](#) / ARIANA FERENTINO

Wednesday, March 8 2017, Your time is 3:00:49 PM



ARIANA FERENTINO

Renovation vs. restoration

Like 37

Tweet

0

Share on Facebook

I do not know how many of the readers of this article have driven up the road next to the northeastern corner of the Theodosian Walls which encircle the old Istanbul. But if you have, I wonder if you noticed a dramatic change in the landscape recently.

For hundreds of years – since 1270 according to historians – a beautiful old palace was standing on top of the sixth hill of the old city. It was a masterly piece of masonry of red brick and white stone. Unlike its nearby palace of Blachernae and the other Byzantine imperial structures in the historic peninsula, which could not survive the time or human destruction, this one had miraculously remained standing on its four original walls. Only its roof and the inner dividing floors were missing and over the centuries it had inspired numerous travelers who have left us with its drawings. And for historians, archaeologists and art historians, it was the only relatively intact example of Byzantine palace architecture in Istanbul.

I used to drive up that road quite often and the relatively uninterrupted historical landscape of ancient walls, old mosques, and low, old houses used to put my mind at rest. At least in this corner of the old city, history was not being interfered with, I thought. And out of some kind of unexplained indecisiveness, I had never visited the

PREVIOUS ARTICLES

[Kardak versus Imia: Oh! Not again](#)[Economic crisis proving lethal](#)[What forebodes Europe's future for Turkey and Greece?](#)[Two more influential dailies fold in Greece](#)[Populism's uncertainty haunts the world](#)[A true journalist of past times](#)[Geneva: Any hope for a Cyprus solution?](#)['When Ankara sneezes, Athens catches a cold'](#)[Christmas carols in Greek in Beyoğlu](#)

MOST POPULAR

[Turkey, US, Russia stage surprise tripartite regional security meeting in Antalya](#)[Group attacks Women's Day demo at Istanbul Bilgi University](#)[Why do Muslims seek refuge in the non-](#)

But whatever strange feeling kept me back from visiting the palace of the Palaeologian dynasty, had to be put away the day I noticed from a distance that the beautiful old relic suddenly was fitted with a roof! I visited the place last weekend and talked to the responsible academic who is involved with the project.

"What is wrong with restoring the palace?" argued Dr. Ferudun Özgümüş, Associate Prof. of Byzantine Art at Istanbul University. "We decided to restore it and renovate it. The mayor of Istanbul, Kadir Topbaş, spent a large amount of money for the project. The building can be used perhaps for something." Prof. Özgümüş is very confident that everything was done in the best possible way. I asked him how the restoration was done. He told me that they had model examples of Ottoman architecture from the 17th century. "But this is 13th century Byzantine architecture," I argued, pointing out to the wooden framed glass windows that have covered the open spaces on all three floors. "And what about the aluminum railings that you now see on the very top on one side of the building?" "There is a terrace there for the visitors," said Prof. Özgümüş, who insisted that the red roof tiles are of "Byzantine style."

The building is now disturbingly clean and totally closed. Gone is a small balcony-like structure, as well as a small raised wall which was removed "for excavation." Entrance is prohibited "until the official opening" and I am in deep disagreement with the professor over the concept of restoration. My archaeology studies background increases my stubbornness that restoration is a very serious business and should be done with extreme care and total respect to the date and historical context of the structure.

But I think there is a deep misunderstanding about the approach regarding preservation work of old architectural monuments recently in Turkey, many of which are part of major costly "restoration" projects. They are seen more as opportunities for "renovation" rather than "restoration." That means that "filling up the historical gaps" is permitted even if dates do not match. The same trend one can see in the ongoing "Pantocrator Project" or Zeyrek Camii in the Fatih neighborhood. I also understand that the responsible architects working for contracting firms who undertake these projects are not specialized in the restoration of historical buildings. Just for the sake of interest, I am quoting the U.S. Secretary of Interior's standards, "Restoration is defined as the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time Restoration is the action or process of accurately revealing, recovering or representing the state of a historic building, as it appeared at a particular period in its history, while protecting its heritage value. Restoration work is performed to reverse decay, or alterations made to the building[s] ... includes preservation, leaving as much material untouched as possible, reconstruction to replace missing elements, and repair work to bring the building to a historically accurate condition in one particular time period."

Turkish, German FM's in 'tense but friendly' meet

Violence by far the biggest problem women face in Turkey: Poll

What is the Cyprus problem?

Turkey, Israel to work on practical issues at first, says Knesset head

Turkey should be ready for a tough Council of Europe report on charter changes

The power of the undecided

Turkish central bank signals more tightening possible, lira weakens

I can go on with many quotes from international practices, but I am afraid I am on the losing side.

May/05/2014

PHOTO GALLERY



Istanbul welcomes third bridge over Bosphorus



Life in Jarablus after liberation from ISIL through the lens of Hürriyet reporter Selçuk Şamiloğlu

Like 37

Tweet

G+1

0

Share on Facebook



TURKEY

Politics
Ankara Whispers
Rights
Green
Local

ECONOMY

Macro
Business
Finance
Labor
Energy
Tourism

WORLD

Europe
Mideast
Eurasia
Balkans
Caucasus
Asia
Africa
America
International

SPORTS

Football
Basketball
Volleyball
Tennis
Golf
Motorsports
Others

LIFE

Health
Science
Technology
Religion
Fashion
Eatery
Animals
Travel

ARTS/CULTURE

Cinema
Music
Stage
Arts
Books
Open Buffet

OPINION

VIDEO
PHOTO
BLOG

About the Newsroom
Letters to the Editor
Advertise in Daily News
Work With Us
Privacy Policy