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The Case of Hagia Sophia's Opening to Worship As an Example of Political "Anamnesis"

Bir Politik "Anamnenis" Örneği Olarak Ayasofya'nın İbadete Açılması Meselesi

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ABSTRACT

Hagia Sophia has a history of 1500 years. It has been used as a church for nearly 1000 years and has become a crucial symbol of the power of the Byzantine Empire as well as being a center of worshipping for Christians. The symbolic power of Hagia Sophia, which was used as a mosque for 482 years and was conquered by Ottomans, is important. The conquest of Istanbul has been designated by Prophet Muhammed as a 'heralded victory' or 'chosen destination' and therefore, it has a very different meaning for the Islamic world. It was converted into a museum on November 24, 1934. This decision can be interpreted as neutralizing the space in terms of religion or as an effort to compromise. The issue of whether Hagia Sophia is to be reopened as a mosque or not is discussed from time to time in nationalist-conservative discourse. It has been a monumental place that has important symbolic meanings for different religions and empires throughout history and has caused victories, sadness, joys, losses and collective traumas. These old-world traumas are instrumentalized again in the new world. In this paper, the subject will be discussed in the context of political anamnesis.

Keywords: Hagia Sophia, Anamnesis, Psycho-political

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The past is never dead. It's not even past.
William Faulkner (2011)

1. Introduction

Hagia Sophia's transformation process harbours a profound psychopolitical journey in itself. The story starts with its construction period of five years, goes through its opening to worship as a spectacular church in 537 AD, follows with its conversion into a mosque in the wake of the conquest of Istanbul and completes with its transition to a museum from 1935 onwards. Having been recognized as a political symbol of Christianity throughout the Byzantine Empire, of Islam during the Ottoman Empire and of secularism at the time of the Turkish Republic, the political status of Hagia Sophia leads even today to heated discussions. While the subject of discussion is the reconversion of a building currently used as a museum, the public perception is highly different. This point of view is focused upon the transfiguration of an antique church, embodying great symbolic value in the eyes of Christians, from its neutralized status of a museum to a mosque open and ready to worship. However the evaluation of the monument's dismissal from its "museum" status, originally designed as a transitional phase, solely in terms of daily political and ideological dimensions, has a deficiency. For in all likelihood, psychopolitical ruptures and fluctuations on local and global levels may cause a higher than expected political impact.

First and foremost, the status of a museum has the feature of a point of equilibrium in an agreement where both sides neither win nor lose. The reconversion to a mosque can be defined as the most prominent psychopolitical attack within the story of the monument that started as a 'Patriarchal Cathedral' in the 6th century, and which then evolved first into the 'Great Mosque of Conquest' and finally to the 'Hagia Sophia Museum' in the 20th century. In case the re-conversion attempts of the museum to a mosque become a concrete action they will on one side create the psychological effect of a 'second conquest', and will on the other side awaken past traumas because like humans, societies are organisms 'conserving, forgetting, trying to forget, remembering and reacting'.

It must certainly be emphasized that however high the societal trauma to the Western and especially the Christian world is, caused by the 're-conversion to the mosque', there is yet another mass trauma on the opposite side. Changing the status of the mosque by reshaping it to a museum constitutes yet another psychological break when one considers that, following the conquest centuries ago, Hagia Sophia has been functioning as a prayers hall of high symbolic value over many years. In a sense, the loss of such a supreme symbol is equal to 'a loss of victory and of a conquest'. As regards the flag of conquest waving in the heart of Christendom for 482 years, the loss has been evened out and turned into everyone's defeat story under the protective secular identity, owing to its transformation in status from 'a mosque to a museum'. In short, Hagia Sophia resembles a sacred chest of history in which these two traumas were locked, and its opening bares the possibility of bringing about an impact far beyond any expectation since the collective traumas experienced in the past have political consequences as deep as their sociological and psychological roots. The remembrance of a conquest buried in the depths of history may on the one side be perceived as an anamnesis of a failure for both parties and may on the other hand turn into a 'chosen ideal' that arouses a re-winning motivation. Istanbul may turn into a keystone of building a current, anti-Islamic social identity by becoming a neo-Jerusalem for some marginal groups.

The re-emergence of a psychopolitical symbol buried in deep tunnels of collective memory as 'a notion of lost identity' will lead to its instrumentalization as a recalling apparatus, the so-called

anamnesis. As a matter of fact there are many artworks existing in the world that are displayed as monuments depicting the links between wars and their visual representations (Curtis, 2004, p. 303). The statues of commanders and fighters, the settings of battlefields, war memorials or triumphal columns were all built for the same purpose: to "recall". The political significance of art derives from its evacotary features, sometimes by narrating triumph stories building social identity, other times of a collective mourning, or at times of a rise of a leader or a victorious figure. The handling of places as *anamnesis* areas is an example of the positioning where 'art, politics and recalling actions are inseparable from each other' (Curtis, 2004, p.303). Thanks to memory, the past reproduces itself within the present. The rebuilding of production and design manifests that memory is not a storage where information is piled, rather a form of an active and dynamic process. Therefore the past is not passive (Güngör, 2015, p.71)

One of the most prominent thinkers of the 20th century, Hannah Arendt, identified *polis* as a realm of freedom, the highest sociopolitical organization of ancient Greece, while on the other hand described it as an "organized memory", in other words "an act of collective recalling" (Arendt, 1958, p.198). According to her, *polis* as a "locus of memory" and as such records the actions of the 'grand/supreme' so is able to convert a mortal actor into an immortal action.[1] In this regard commemoration -purporting the search for anamnesis- has a special significance and holds the power of shaping a political society's identity in a normative manner. In the eyes of Arendt, art and history reflect society's collective memory. The history of a community consists of statements and actions. The community determines its own identity by deciding on which statements and actions are worth remembering (Mullin, 2011, p.91). The chosen objects of anamnesis, turn into symbols of an identity narration constructed by the society for itself.

Societal identities are founded over memories, symbols, artistic and cultural carriers, traditions through values and habits, heritage and history, in short from recollections of all (Bilgin, 1994, p.14). The memory is not composed of the stories from the outer world but from processed narrations within our own past. The past is a pearl we shape from our experiences, thus it is not related to our existence but to our experiences. Consequently it is the collection of our stories, not of our experiences (Randall, 2014, p.218). This collection is processed, shaped and instrumentalized by our individual and collective awareness. Therefore the molding effect of a common 'social dream' in constructing a collective identity is undeniable (Bilgin, 1999, p.59). All anamnesis objects such as commemorative ceremonies, rituals, symbols and monuments act as building blocks in constituting this collective social dream.

When imagineering begins to be decorated with political adornments, we might possibly foresee the shaping of social psychology over 'chosen traumas' or 'chosen victories'. The 'chosen traumas', as conceptualised by Vamık Volkan, tell the passing down of the imagination of incidents of a large group's (ethnical, denominational etc.) subjugation by another group. The said incidents cause substantial losses, shames, humiliations, emotions of despair. In this way, this unconsciously chosen trauma becomes an inseparable part of a 'large group identity' (Volkan, 1998). As soon as large groups go into a regression, some historical symbols of early ages get reactivated and sometimes become an identity amplifier of a chosen triumph or a trauma (Volkan, 2000).

The loss of self confidence of the Chinese right after failure in the Opium Wars giving rise to the 19th century being remembered even today as a 'Century of Shame', may be considered as one

1 http://www.thearendtcircle.com/proceedings/2008-meeting/the-amnesia-of-the-modern-arendt-on-the-role-of-memory-in-the-constitution-of-the-political

of the motivations of legitimacy behind its efforts of growth and search of power. For a country which has defined herself as the center of the world as well as the only real state until the year 1840; and of which the identity has subsequently been humiliated after each lost war, the only way rehabilitation for its distressed perception of grandeur is possible is through restoration of the period in between. The source of national Chinese trauma, identified with shame, is based upon the conquest of the Japanese in Chinese territory in the 1930's. Throughout the invasion period from its start in Manchuria to its spreading to a larger territory, there were mass massacres and war crimes committed. The heavily suffered trauma experienced during the Japanese conquest, in which hundreds of thousands Chinese were captured, heavy tortures and rapes of the civilians happened, babies and pregnant women murdered by sabering, the biological weapons such as cholera and typhus used, reached its peak in the course of the Nanking Massacre. The extent of the sorrow and shame experienced by the Chinese population underlies the rearing ideology in Chinese state ceremonies taking place even today. The purpose of the voices in union was clear: "do not ever forget your national belittling and make the Chinese dream come true" (Lee, 2014).

Whereas nobody would adopt the victim role, they would undoubtedly rather make the logical representation of the case to a psychological and legendary one (Ismayilov, as cited in Volkan, 2015, p.113). However the politicization of a group's emotions such as defeat/ humiliation/ desperation / shame, starts with a political leader's selection of collective traumas as a vehicle for future building. The assessment of the Battle of Kosovo by Slobodan Milosevic as a selected trauma with the purpose of strengthening the national unity of Serbian communities during the dispersal process of Yugoslavia can likewise be considered within this context. The commemorations made on the occasion of the 600th Anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo that took place in 1389, were turned into an opportunity for the materialization of Milosevic's project. As a matter of fact, the Serbian leader, focusing on Kosovo, commanded the removal of Prince Lazzar's skeleton from his graveyard, to be paraded around the whole country. In fact he succeeded in making Serbians feel their ancestor's traumatized self image within themselves. Vamık Volkan expresses this transition as follows.

> *"When Lazar's body was shown around Serbia they cried, shrieked and promised never to allow such a defeat to happen again. Milosevic commanded an enormous monument to be built on a hill facing the Battle of Kosovo. The monument made of red stone was a representation of blood and was 100 feet tall above the "mourning" flowers. The monument had a platform. Around it there were "bullet formed concrete towers engraved with a sword and the dates 1389-1989". It was conjoining the associated emotions and comments about the Battle of Kosovo and the events in 1989. On the 28th of June 1989, the 600th anniversary of Kosovo, a helicopter brought Milosevic to the Field of the Black Birds. When he got off the helicopter he stepped on to a platform where girls in traditional attires were dancing on and raised the enthusiastic love of the crowd with a single message; "Islam will never again suppress the Serbians"* (Volkan, 1999, p.85).

The ghosts of history taken out from the moldy chest by Milosevic in late 20th century for the purpose of manipulating a political atmosphere, succeeded in gathering more than 1 million Serbians on the anniversary of Prince Lazar's death on the Gazimestan plain. Milosevic's ideas, folded from the 19th century Serbian thinkers, that position Lazar as a savior, impressed not only the public but also intellectuals, politicians and the Serbian Orthodox Church. On the monument, a symbol of Serbian nationalism built under the command of Milosevic, is a quote to be seen by the mythical figure Prince Lazar: "Whoever is of Serbian origin and does not come to fight against Turks at the Kosovo Fields; he will not have a child, neither male or female, and he will not have fertile land where crops grow." (Volkan, 2002, p.94)

In order to produce a homogeneous national awareness and to construct an integrative narrative for all Serbians at the time of disintegration of the multinational structure of Yugoslavia, the message by the Serbian leader is instrumentalized in the name of shaping the new world over the old world traumas. It is a proven fact that the 600-years-old ghosts of Kosovo Battle were not yet buried in minds, despite the bodies having long been in graves. Today the Battle of Kosovo is not only a defeat in battle for Serbians but also a heroical combat at which its seeds were buried to reblossom in the course of 500 years of Ottoman regime (Suber, 2006, p. 3). The sorrow, mourning, hatred of historical traumas are not easy to be appeased. They are accommodated in the actual, so much so, that they become a source of revanchist feeling of revenge. Indeed, the consequences of Milosevic's call beyond the ages are obvious. In the center of Europe occuring in front of the entire world, an ethnic cleansing operation caused hundreds of thousands of human casualties.

Arthur Neal describes the emergence of international traumas as "individual and collective reactions to the upheavals in volcanic proportions of the social order." (Neal, 1998). Collective trauma differentiates itself from personal trauma by being shared by other people (Neal, 1998, p.4). A defeat in a battle, a suppressed liberation movement, a collapse of an empire, erosion of religious values, weakening of traditional family norms or illegal acts by politicians can be assumed as a precursor of the beginning of a cultural collective trauma (Çevik, 2005, p.45). The use of past incidents evolving into collective traumas for current political objectives, requires a building process starting with actions of "recalling" and "anamnesis". Sometimes a defeat left behind centuries ago can provide a winning motivation for a large group. It could supply the most important aspect of the group's identity, the need to get a 'chosen target'.

'Megali Idea' (Great Idea) did not gain any ideological notion until the mid 19th century, but still played a significant role in procuring national Greek union. It is possible to say that the conceptualization of 'Megali Idea' as 'a chosen target' complies with all its criteria. In 1791 an idea was asserted by Rigas Ferreros for the first time that acknowledges the collapse of Constantinople in 1453 as a departure point. This idea aspired to compensate for the losses caused by the defeat, starting particularly with Istanbul. Ferreros, originally a poet, claimed that a great part of the Balkans, Crete, Rhodes, Cyprus, Thrace and Istanbul (of course called by him Constantinople) were all to belong to the Greeks. By doing so he tried to bring Greeks together around this 'idea of recuperation'. One of the pioneers of this sentiment and eponym of the Megali Idea description, Ioannis Kolettis, is known to have articulated these words in Greek Parliament:

> *"The Kingdom of Greece is not Greece, it is merely a part, a smallest, poorest part of Greece. The Greek is not only he who inhabits the Kingdom, but also he who inhabits Ioannina or Salonika or Serres or Adrianoupolis or Constantinople or Trebizond or Crete or Samos or any other region belonging to Greek history or the Greek race...There are two great centers of Hellenism: Athens is the capital of Kingdom, Constantinople is the great capital, the City, the dream and hope of all Greeks."* (Smith, 1998, p.2)

The conquest of Istanbul can be acknowledged as a collective trauma not only for the Byzantine Empire successor of Greeks but also for the whole Christian world. In fact, the conquest of Constantinople the holy city by the Turks was perceived as God's punishment for the sins of Christians. Because the conquest happened on a Tuesday, every Tuesday was labeled as sinister by Christendom. Although the Roman church refused to help protect Constantinople against the Turks, it could not believe the news of 'the fall of Byzantium'. Thus the victory of the Turks was perceived as 'a knife stabbed into Christendom's heart'. On 12th of July, 1453, Enio Silvio Piccolomini (later known as Pope Pius II) wrote to Pope V. Nikolas explaining that the Turks had killed Homeros and Platon a second time (Volkan, 1999, p.148).

It was easy to approach that by that time there were many ecclesiastics and historians commenting in a similar fashion on the psychology emerging in the Christian world, and were in dread of the capture of entire Europe by the Turks. Right after the 'conquest' described as the biggest disaster having happened to the Christian world, all Christians were invited to pray for the rescue of the city from the Turks' clutches. According to a Georgian historian, the 'conquest' aroused the feeling of "the sun darkening on the day Turks captured Constantinopolis" (Schwobel, as cited in Senlen, 2007). As a matter of fact Papa Pius the II invited the Christian world to a Crusade in order to regain the city. However, he did not receive a positive answer due to serious political and social turmoil in Europe. The conversion of Hagia Sophia was recognized as the biggest sign of the conquest of Istanbul by Muslims and the proof of superiority of the crescent over the cross. As soon as Mehmed the Conqueror entered the city he went to Hagia Sophia. On the third day of the conquest, right after imam Akşemsettin's sermon, he performed the first Friday prayer there and sermons were given on behalf of the young sultan (Yerasimos, 1993, p.445). In that period the greatest monument of the Christian world, the Church of Holy Wisdom, from that time onwards served as the most sacred among the conquest mosques and the most prominent worship place in the protocol of Ottoman Empire.

The conversion of Hagia Sophia from a church to a mosque is undoubtedly far beyond the conversion of an ordinary temple. Firstly, while the conquest, destroyed the last remnants of the sacred Roman Empire, on the other hand it announced the footsteps of the emerging world-wide empire. According to the historian Ilber Ortaylı, after the downfall of I. Roman Empire known with its Pagan characteristic, II. Christian Rome was founded. After its collapse, the last Rome with a different characteristic was born, III. Rome was the Ottoman Empire (Ortaylı, 2009, p. 107- 108).

Secondly, the downfall of the city was declared even though it had been known as unconquerable and believed to be protected by angels. The 'conquest' of the city was qualified as the greatest victory gained by Islamic armies against the Christian world. It must be emphasized that the Hagia Sophia myth played a particular role behind the scenes in the transformation of the conquest story adorned with legends and myths into a clash of faiths.

The Christians found a shelter in the church during the 53 days of siege and waited for the angel in Hagia Sophia to descend to the earth, with a sword in her hand, to save them and to take the revenge of God's people (Dukas, 1956, p.178- 179). Meanwhile, Mehmed the Conqueror's soldiers believed they were accomplishing a holy duty through the faith given to them by a hadith announcing Istanbul's conquest centuries ago.

Finally, the conquest of Istanbul means also the conquest of Hagia Sophia. Consequently it is a story of 'win and lose' adorned with sacred tales. The psychological climate emerging from it indicates all the features of a collective trauma. This psychodynamic process has to be evaluated, not only in terms of number of casualties or material losses throughout the siege and conquest of the city, but also the in terms of collective belief, trust and loss of identity. The 'conquest', as was analyzed with a Freudian point of view by Vamık Volkan, is in regard to Christians, a victory carried out by aggressive Turks and holds symbols of sexual character. Breaches opened on the city walls by a young sultan were considered a rape and stuck in people's minds as a complemental detail about Turkish image associated with harem/salacity. According to Volkan "the essential… is the passing down of the fantasies related to the oedipal motivation of Turkish victory." (Volkan, 1999, p. 150).

Even though there are actual discussions on the passing down of traumas through the genes, the cultural conveyance and transmission is a sociological notion we all readily experience. All life experiences and practices carried through narrations, memories and myths etc., can blos-

som over the collective memory preserved in societies even after hundreds of years. In Hannah Arendt's view, the act of 'recollection' became much more substantive in the nihilistic era we live in where nothing has any meaning left (Yılmaz, 2017, p.30), because antisemitism, totalitarianism and imperialism destroyed in collaboration the common world and public domain and obliged the mankind to live in a gap between past and future (Arendt, 1996). In such a universe, each person is in need of an object to hold on to in order for the individual to exist and for the society to sustain their temporal perception; and collective memory covers this need. The loss of Istanbul, and so Hagia Sophia, nowadays seems to be a memory buried in the annals of history. Nevertheless it has a property suitable to take over the role of being a 'chosen trauma' to build a new collective identity or to refresh the old one. It must be taken into consideration whenever the recalling and evoking the forgotten are shaped in reference to a politic anamnesis, they will always have political consequences.

2. The Symbolic Value of Hagia Sophia

It is a known fact that Hagia Sophia has a significant symbolic value not only for Christians, but also for Muslims. First and foremost this church/mosque/museum, is the sign of the greatest conquest of Islamic history and is the capstone of the Ottoman Empire's identity, which gained its motivation through victories. From the 7th. century onwards, and starting with Ebu Eyyub el-Ensari, the guide of the Prophet Muhammad, this place was dreamt of by Muslims as a 'chosen target' for almost 800 years - so much so that its authentication can be considered a monumental sign. From this viewpoint, it is not a temple but a monumental symbol.

At this juncture, it becomes clear that the reason behind the demands of Hagia Sophia's re-opening to worship is not due to the need of a place of worship. According to the historian Ethem Eldem, there are three main bases for the desire for the refunctioning of the museum as a place of worship (Eldem, 2015, p.7). "The first one is the intolerance of losing a mosque attributed to the conquest of Istanbul/Constantinople by the nationalistic and pious mass and later regarded as the cornerstone of the Ottoman Empire's Islamic identity." Hagia Sophia before its conversion into a museum, had been a temple and a sacred space for 1400 years in total, almost the last 500 years of it used as a mosque and it is at the same time a triumphal monument. There is a great mass believing that the loss of the mosque, and also its symbolic value, as it represents a historical victory for the Turks, was a counter invasion if not military wise so at least in a political sense. This sentiment flared up especially in 1953, on the conquest's 500th anniversary and shaped as a reflection to the new collective awareness formed as Neo- Ottomans since the early 2000's.

Since 15th century Hagia Sophia is not only for Orthodox world but also for Islamic world one of the most prominent centers. As a result, it was perceived not only in terms of conquest-victory but also in a theological context as 'a monument sacralizing the city' (Deringil, 2014, p.42). So the museumification gave rise to a defeat psychology in terms of faith. The speech on Hagia Sophia, presented in 1965 at the Turkish National Students' Union by poet Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, is recognized as a historical call reflecting the conservative national group's outlook to Hagia Sophia. At his speech, Necip Fazıl addresses the young generation in summary as follows:

> *"Hagia Sophia's symphony is neither a stone, a line, a colour, an object nor a matter; it is a sole signification, a bare one... Hagia Sophia is a unique monument in the whole world of an attack of a meaning to a counter meaning and rendering it impotent... All of the significations are related to Hagia Sophia... Hagia Sophia will be opened! It will open like a sacred book, a book*

> *encompassing all value systems, historical provisions, secrets reciprocally reckoned with in different worlds, its real canons about each and every related work."*[2]

After the 1960 coup d'etat, Hagia Sophia maintained its importance as a distinct reference point for Turkish right centered around nationalism-conservatism. In due course it was established as the common 'Red Apple' (an ideal dream) by Islamist and pan-Turkism movements though they developed in completely different directions (Özekmekçi, 2016). Therefore it can be considered not just as a religious place of worship or a historical architectural monument, but also as a chosen ideal and a political symbol. As a matter of fact, the issue of opening Hagia Sophia to worship is observed to be employed as an important motivation vehicle, in almost every anti-Western movement based on various motives. Since the latter part of the 1960's, problems arising between Turks and Greeks on the Island of Cyprus and their reflections on homeland Turkey, led the Hagia Sophia issue to be positioned as the banner under which the struggle against the Greek-Orthodox world be carried out. In that period, there were many articles published in the media (Istiklal, Fedai, Bugun etc.) addressing the nationalistic conservative community. Pope VI. Paul's prayer in Hagia Sophia within the scope of his Istanbul visit in July 1967, exacerbated the discussions. At the beginning of the 1970's, Hagia Sophia turned into a symbol for the historical and victorious struggle against the Catholic-Orthodox alliance, beyond its status of a token of triumph gained against the Greeks and Orthodoxy.

Following the calming down of discussions about the conversion to a mosque for a while, the issue was recently reignited. This flaring up can be asserted to be based on the one hand on intellectual discussions within the framework of Samuel Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations", and on the other hand on the new perception 'Islam and others' reared step by step in the wake of September 11th incident in the beginning of the 21st century. The oppressed Muslim society's response to the rising anti Islamic wave within that period's global power center representation, the 'Western' world, takes shape as a return to the old victories and narratives. No doubt, this is a 'psychology of a societal regression'. The reaction of Eastern Orientalism towards Western Orientalism is to take 'refuge in history' and Hagia Sophia is the most magnificent recalling/reminding object of this history. Moreover this monument is not only for Turkish society, but also in a global sense for all Muslims, a significant memorial of triumph gained over the Christian West. Consequently, it is a useful tool of populism and leadership for current politics and politicians.

As per the historian Eldem, one of the reasons of the attempt for a conversion to a mosque is *"Hagia Sophia is deemed to be the brightest symbol of specific struggle against Byzantium resulting in a conquest. Frequent references to either the notion of 'The right of Sword' or to the curse at the end of Fatih's endowment are due to this viewpoint of fighter/conqueror nature."* (Eldem, 2015, p.7). In the eyes of Ottomans, the erection of a minaret on an architectural structure is a strong symbol proving in a physical manner the victory of Islam and represents the Islamisation of that location. The first minaret in Istanbul, was erected at the most sacred church of Byzantium, in Hagia Sophia[3] and the 'Right of Sword' was established. As the greatest victory in Ottoman history was the conquest of the city of Istanbul, likewise Hagia Sophia was the most valuable booty, in other words 'Right of Sword', ever captured. *"In Islamic law, the right of sword comprises as far as the law allows some seizins in the territories occupied by non-muslims and captured*

2 This speech can be found on this video; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TfMfrVFtbg

3 http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/europeanamericanrelationship/content/articles/events/2010foufp/participant-papers/Hagia_Sophia_after_1950.pdf

through battles. The conversion of the largest sanctuary of the town to a mosque comes foremost among them. In case the number of worship places are large several others can also be converted along with the major one. However if that town is conquered not as a result of a battle but by the opposite side's surrender without any sword drawn from its sheath, there will be no implementation of right of sword." (Bardakçı, 2018) It is possible to see the transformation of a praxis of Islamic conquest followed since the 10th century to a custom during the Seljuk and Ottoman eras (Öztürk, 2005).

Beyond its divine status of a magnificent sanctuary, Hagia Sophia reborn with the identity of a mosque, gained a theopolitical meaning, by means of 'Right of Sword', symbolizing the empire's ideology of "Conquest and Victory". As the historian Halil Inalcik indicated, each military expedition and victory celebration, began and ended at Hagia Sophia, the grand mosque of the capital. The Sultan, dignitaries, military commanders and a large mass of worshippers used to gather there and prayed for the triumph (Inalcik, 2017, p.28). Just as Byzantine Emperors, Ottoman Sultans also utilized Hagia Sophia as a space to ensure the religious legitimacy of the state power. According to the official website of the Hagia Sophia Museum; Emperor Justinian at the completion of the monument is said to have exclaimed "Solomon, I left you behind!", thus enjoying a moment of pride at beating the first monument made in the name of a monotheistic religion. By the same token, the conversion of the church into a mosque is a symbolic representation of the triumph of Islam over Christianity. Furthermore this transformation in the same breath symbolizes the superiority acquired of the new empire over the old one (Özekmekçi, 2016, p.286)

One of the most significant credentials indicating Hagia Sophia's symbolic value for high ranked state officials was its role as a tomb for Ottoman sultans. In the temple's yard are situated, along with more than 140 graves of dynasty members, Selim II.'s, Murat III.'s, Mehmed III.'s, Mustafa I.'s and Sultan Ibrahim's shrines. Therefore this place is one of the most sacred sites for the Ottomans. The monument falls within Mehmed the Conqueror's endowments and his 'Right of Sword', hence is one of the most respected shrine locations in the eyes of the dignity. One of the paramount arguments put forward by the supporters of Hagia Sophia's opening to worship as a mosque is the following quote from Mehmed the Conqueror's endowment:

> *"Whoever... change this foundation's terms or alters any of its laws and orders; strives for its conversion or cancellation, attempts to eliminate or manipulates its purpose...would obviously make a huge misdeed, commiting a sinful act. May Allah's, his angels' and all the people's curse be upon them. Let them remain in hell forever and let their torments never ease and let no mercy be granted on them. Whoever changes after seeing and hearing these, let the sin and shame fall upon them. No doubt that Allah hears and knows everything."* (Akgündüz, Öztürk, Baş, 2015).

The blessing of the conquest of Istanbul and consequently of Hagia Sophia by several mythical and religious narratives, paved the way for this incident to be acknowledged as a cornerstone in Turkish history. In the first place Muslims believe that 'The conquest of Istanbul was a victory heralded by the Prophet Muhammad' (Ağırakça, 1996). Even though there are some discussions about its authenticity, the hadith adopted especially by Turks is as follows: *"Verily you shall conquer Istanbul (Constantinople). What a wonderful leader will he be, and what a wonderful army will that army be!"* (Kulat, 2001, p.5). Therefore the conquest was perceived as a 'chosen target' in the direction guided by Islam's prophet. Indeed this historical triumph is among the factors binding together a grand group identity over the line of 'Pan-Turkism/Islam'. It has the status of a memory carrier over many generations under the banner of the Hagia Sophia.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the complete collapse of the Ottoman Empire caused its

major defeat, constituting one of the most important breaking points of this journey. The downfall of 620 years' reign of Pax Ottomana, may be comprehended not only as a collapse of a state but also as a ruin of a major system and a huge loss of history. The grand empire, which ruled a territory of 24 million square kilometers when its borders peaked at the beginning of the 18th century and took hundreds of years to fall apart, has not yet been mourned in the embedded collective memory of Turkish society. The last century of the Ottomans was shaped in the lost narratives of 5 million war casualties and of compulsory deportation from their own lands of another 5 million immigrants. According to Vamık Volkan, large groups are stationary under a tent sheltering and binding them together by means of stories passed down generations, values, chronicles, sorrows and joys. Under that tent, there are occurences of coming together over exultation and mourning. After great losses, the mourning periods of large groups may go on for 30 to 40 years or even from 60 to 100 years. In this context the loss of the Ottomans is the heaviest trauma the Turkish society embedded in its collective hidden mourning and felt inside all the time. Volkan clarifies the rebirth of such mournings as follows:

> *"Imagine some pictures drawn on a tent's cloth. Each national, religious, ethnic group has his own patterns on their tent cloths. The most significant of the patterns is about the past of that society. After a shared historical disaster the image or the picture of this incident is printed like a stamp on the tent cloth. This historical incident may belong to only one group. Therefore its shared image is the symbol of the large group's identity. Sometimes years or centuries after this shared disaster, a political leader may attempt to re-paint this historical pattern and may try to bring forward to everybody's' attention for a political benefit*." (Volkan and Atabey, 2010, p.35)

The modern Turkish society had to continue its path holding on to a fresh republican ideal on the left over territories after the downfall of Ottoman Empire, without however, having a chance of either facing its past or mourning its losses. The loss of Turkish society via the museumification of the Hagia Sophia in 1935 is basically the story of its own loss. In a way it is the confrontation with the suppressed memories and hence implies the confirmation of a trauma. In fact, this is the symbol of the termination of a great triumphal evolution of Ottomans from a small scale seigniory to an empire, and hereby the last nail hammered to the coffin.

The third reference point for the supporters of the reopening of Hagia Sophia as a mosque, is; *"the conversion of the mosque is a manifestation of a kind of a showdown with Kemalism or sometimes with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in person. It should not be forgotten that, the intention here is not a conversion of a church rather a conversion of a museum into a mosque. Therefore, the main point was to defeat the mentality having led to the choice of a museum or having speculated to do so."* (Eldem, 2015, p.7). Within this scope, the conversion to a museum can be possibly interpreted for the new regime as the attempt of a secular registration of its potent power. (Özekmekçi, 2016, p.286) Indeed the recitals in Turkish of sermons since the end of the 1920's and of calls to prayer beginning for the first time in 1932, can be regarded as a supplementary package for the same intentions of the new regime. On the qadr night, February 3, 1932, first mawlid and then the Koran was broadcast live in Turkish on the radio (Dikici, 2006, p.81). The participation of foreign representatives to this night event was noteworthy symbolically.

The neutralization of the monument's sacred quality through its conversion to a museum, which had served as a church for 916 years and as a mosque for 481 years, may be comprehended as an initiative of the Turkish Republic to build a balanced relationship with the West. Moreover it may be perceived as an attempt to keep its distance with its Islamic and Ottoman background. Indeed, along with the museumification, the mosque turned into a museum/monument projecting

the past art forms, by abandoning its position of a place of worship (Agoston and Masters, 2009, p.245). It should not be forgotten that transforming it into a museum also means the 'acceptance of its aging in advance'. The thing that grows old at this point may be the decree of the Ottomans, the reign of Islam, the positioning of the West as an enemy or a story of a victory. However, this action at the final point holds the meaning of a burial of some outdated symbols and narratives. Republican Turkey has a claim for being founded on a new design and a foreign policy construction. It is determined to loosen, as far as possible, all its bonds related to the past.

The political decision of conversion to a museum, taken on the onset of the Turkish Republic, has among its rationales the emphasis that 'it would be a gladly received by the Eastern world and would bring in an institution of knowledge venture' (The Rebuplican Archive, 1934). The Kemalist establishment took over the mission of modernization of the society and headed towards the construction of a secular and a modern Turkey (Zürcher, 1998, p.341). The introduction of the principle of secularism into the constitution on February 5, 1937, was believed to have completed the process. Although secularism in the Western world, functions as a principal regulating democratic mechanisms, for the young Turkish Republic it contained the sense of leaving behind the Ottoman past and moving from one civilization to the other, along with the assurance of this transition period (Göle, 2010, p.83). The museumification of Hagia Sophia in this respect can be described as one of the many steps taken for a social architecture formed around secular principles.

Without doubt this topic can not be construed solely over the principle of secularism. The most substantial objective of the founding members of the republic, and of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk particularly, was to provide the new republic founded on the remaining territory with international recognition and acceptance. Right after the devastation of World War I, an economic depression in 1929 was experienced and thereafter in the beginning of the 1930's the system was forced to change shape by the consolidation of the nationalist and fascist regimes across the whole world, notably in Europe. Meanwhile rough winds blowing over Italy and Germany affected the founding members of the republic too. On one hand, the search continued for the identification of Turkish roots over the discourse of nationalization and homogenization, on the other hand voting rights as well as rights to be elected were granted for women in 1934 as a democratic step. Within the economic domain, the nationalization efforts were sustained with force over the 1930's and only Turkish citizens were allowed to work in some specific professions. The new political course of action was based on the compatibility of the Turkish Republic with the Western World and its structure was built on the assumption of similar political traits. In this framework, the founding staff paid great attention to building affirmative relations with the Western world, instead of situating Hagia Sophia as a symbol of the conquest or a symbol of former animosity, they rather preferred it to take the role of reconciliation and feature it as a symbolic gesture towards the West.

The origin of the flaming objections by the conservative and nationalistic groups, as of the time the museum decision was made, is to be found in the perception of this gesture as a concession. In their view, the withdrawal of this decision and the return of the identity of Hagia Sophia as a mosque is a must, because *"The continuity of its museum status means abiding with the punishment of the sacred within the course of the republic."* (Özekmekçi, 2016, p.303). In their opinion along with the reconversion of the museum to its past status, the recall of the conquest -as a second conquest- with all its grandeur and a true embrace of Turkey with its Ottoman history could become possible. In this way the cherished remembrance of the part of history will erupt from the collective memory. The subjugation of the Turkish society to the condition of 'obliged amnesia' by the republican staff in cooperation with the West will be over. The coercion to forget

as a typical implementation of revolution and reform periods is the consequence of the ideological pressures of the system. One of the most prominent practices put forward throughout the 20th century by fascism and totalitarianism is the case of suppressed social memory. It was conveniently instrumentalized in terms of rebuilding national histories. (Bakieva, 2007, s.96). The attempt of reopening Hagia Sophia to worship as a mosque is not related to gaining a new temple, rather, with 'the recalling of the forcefully effaced' during the revolution period, it seeks to rejoin with the lost history. In this sense, rather than a real or a mathematical need, a quest for moral and psychopolitical satisfaction lies in the foundation of this desire.

3. Conclusion

When the symbolical character of Hagia Sophia is analyzed in various dimensions, it preserves its function as a collective recalling object for both the Western world as well as the Turkish and Islamic community. Although it maintains its identity as a museum-like protective cover, this magnificent monument has a psychopolitical representative capacity and occupies a distinctive place in social dreams and memories.

First and foremost, Hagia Sophia is a memorial place where great achievements as well as major losses, joys and sorrows, collective traumas and historical victories have gathered. It is a memory trunk containing mythical, political and theological tales. At the transition times from one civilization to the next, it was confronted with attacks, devastations, plunders, disasters and conversion attempts throughout its 1500 years of history, yet it managed to survive With this aspect it prevailed as a fortress that stands forever defying time. Hagia Sophia belongs to history more than its existence as a monument, civilizations' symbol of social dreams and mystical memories, empires or regimes. It is the most valuable piece of the collective heritage of humanity.

The second most significant feature of Hagia Sophia is its standing for the end of an era and the gravestone of a "great loss" with reference to its unique meaning for the Christian world. It is an anamnesis object of the surrender of the sacred city of Istanbul in 1453 against the greatest Islamic Empire seen in history. In its mosque form, it continually represents a historical and moral trauma and as such creates a potential point of rupture through which the repressed memories in social recollection could leak. The most notable feature of political memoirs instrumentalized with their characteristic of 'chosen victory' or 'chosen trauma' is that they can never be forgotten and can always preserve their high temperature like a lava, ready to pop out of the earth from the first crack. For this specific reason the past pertains to today and to the future, so even if it is forgotten it never disappears, instead it waits to be remembered one day.

Like Milosevic's revenge in the 20th century of the Kosovo Battle that occurred 600 years ago, the Christian soul of Hagia Sophia awaits its wakening under the monument's vault of heaven. Politics may provide actual guidance to the effect when old narratives and traumas get reactivated in the memory. There are immense differences between the 15th century equilibrium of military-politics and today's world. A historical traumatic incident re-activated as a revanchist reaction may grow and develop to an unexpected extent. In the eyes of the Western world, the making over of Istanbul and Hagia Sophia into a chosen target, even symbolically, purging its enemies, may function as a binding element to mold a grand group identity. The re-conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque will undoubtedly be speculated as an act of provocation, especially in an atmosphere where the thesis of 'the clash of civilizations' is in high demand, where efforts are driven to spread the impression of radical Islamist factors representing all the Muslim communities.

On the other side of the coin lies the “great loss” of the Turkish-Islamic world. The decision of museumification purports the annihilation of the victory once and for all and hauls down the flag from the tower of sacred Hagia Sophia gained 567 years ago. Furthermore, for some groups, this flag is not only a symbol of the conquest, but also the turning down of the voice of Islam. Like a fortress being lost without any single shot, the re-opening to worship of a monument, can be qualified in this regard as a ‘chosen target’. It is obvious that Hagia Sophia is a very strong symbol to be used in the exploitation of the nationalistic-conservative policies to provide consolidation among their own constituency. Moreover it is clear that its conversion to a mosque will create the sentiment of a second conquest in mass psychology. Just for this very reason, a historical subject is employed as the leverage of current politics and is politicized by instrumentalizing ‘the recalling of the forgotten’. However some physical rules are relevant in the world politics too and each effect inevitably has an impact.

The case of Hagia Sophia’s opening to worship could send an intense reaction wave within the current political conjuncture. The determining factors for any political decision or action to be right or wrong are the capabilities at hand and the timing. The mistiming of any valid subject can be written down as another loss in history.

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