

The Architectural Conservation and Restoration Problems of Istanbul's "Yalı" Waterfront Mansions

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Abstract : The Bosphorus is an international waterway in Istanbul city of Turkey connecting the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea. The Bosphorus, which has formed an important part of the silhouette of Istanbul throughout history, has also influenced the design of the coastal structures built around it. The waterfront mansions, which are located on both sides of the Bosphorus by the sea, and can be generally of two or three storeys, are called "yalı". The yalı buildings with their architectural characteristics of the traditional Turkish House are the most grandiose examples of Ottoman residential architecture. However, the classical Ottoman yalı architecture of the 18th century can only be seen in engravings, and today only the modest and smaller yalı examples from the 19th century can be seen because of their disappearance over time. The study aims to reveal the architectural conservation and restoration problems of waterfront mansions and propose solutions for them. Firstly, the development of the waterfront mansion architecture in Bosphorus was evaluated in its historical process. Secondly, the waterfront mansions and their architectural features were explained. Thirdly, the architectural conservation and restoration problems that caused the disappearance of waterfront mansions were discussed. These problems include disruptions in legal regulations and practices about the Bosphorus, dramatic changes in Turkey's socio-cultural life from the Ottoman Empire to the present, inadequacies in economic resources, negative environmental effects, and errors in restoration works. Finally, solution suggestions were proposed for the problems that threaten the protection of waterfront mansions. In the study, literature on waterfront mansions was reviewed using historical reports, photographs, maps, and drawings in archival documents. It is hoped that this study will contribute the conservation of the "Yalı" waterfront mansions, which occupy a particular role in the cultural heritage of Turkey, and to their transmission with their authentic values to the next generation.

Keywords : bosphorus architecture, conservation, heritage, Istanbul, waterfront mansions (yalı)

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