

## The Architectural Conservation and Restoration Problems of Mevlevihanes

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**Abstract :** Mevlevihanes are the dervish lodges of the Mevlevi Sufi Order of dervishes, which was founded on the teachings of Mevlâna Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) in the late 13th century in the Anatolian city of Konya, from which they were administered until 1925, when their activities together with all other sufi dervish orders, were legally prohibited after the founding of the Turkish Republic. On their closure in 1925 over 150 mevlevihane architectural complexes, which had functioned for over 600 years through the late Seljuk, Emirates, and Ottoman periods of Turkish history, were to be found in the geographic areas that had been once occupied by the Ottoman Empire. Unfortunately, because of the history of their prohibition and closure after 1925, the public developed confused negative reactions towards sufi dervish orders and their buildings occupied a nebulous political status so that their upkeep and restoration became neglected, they were used for different, inappropriate functions or were abandoned within the Turkish Republic, until a more socially objective, educated viewpoint developed in the late 1970's and 80's. The declaration of the Mevlevi Ayin-i Şerifi (the Ritual Whirling Ceremony of the Mevlevi Dervish Order) with its complex composed music and sema (whirling movements) performance, as a Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2005 by UNESCO and 2007 as the International Year of Mevlâna, started an increase in studies about mevlevihanes and a wave of restorations, especially of their semahanes (the large assembly whirling halls where the Mevlevi Ritual Whirling Ceremony was performed). However, due to inadequacies in legal procedures, socio-cultural changes, economic incapacity, negative environmental factors, and faulty repair practices, the studies and applications for the protection of mevlevihanes have not reached the desired level. Within this historical perspective, this study aims to reveal the particular architectural conservation and restoration problems of mevlevihanes and propose solutions for them. Firstly, the categorization and components of mevlevihane architecture was evaluated through its historical process. Secondly, their basic architectural characteristics were explained. Thirdly, by examining recently restored examples like Manisa, Edirne, Bursa, Tokat, Gelibolu, and Çankırı Mevlevihanes, using archival documents, old maps, drawings, photos and reports, building survey method, mevlevihane architectural conservation and restoration application problems were analyzed. Finally, solution suggestions were proposed for the problems that threaten the proper restoration of mevlevihanes. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the preservation of Mevlevihanes which have played an important role in the architectural, cultural heritage of Turkey, and that their authentic values will be properly transmitted to future generations.

**Keywords :** conservation, cultural heritage, mevlevihane architecture, reastoration

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