

# Approaches to Byzantine Heritage of Istanbul in Early Republican Turkish Newspapers

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**Abstract.** After the pronunciation of the newly founded Turkish Republic in 1923, the capital was moved from Istanbul to Ankara. Value attributions toward Istanbul, a strong symbol for the Ottoman Empire as its former capital, has changed during this period, along with the redefinition of a Turkish identity and a new Turkish state. Investments were directed to the new capital and to other designated centers of industrial development. Istanbul, on the other hand, was deliberately redefined as “the historic city”, and this became vivid through the promotion of selected Byzantine landmarks and archaeological sites. The meanings held by this architectural heritage were re-narrated and secularized, disregarding attributions to both of the former empires, medieval Christian and early modern Islamic alike. Newspapers covered an abundance of news on the Byzantine architectural and archaeological heritage of the city, hinting the new state policies towards them with the intent of creating a new image for Istanbul. Covered news included archaeological surveys, visits of scientists, opinions of prominent figures on the evaluation of this heritage, and repair works done on Byzantine monuments, including detailed reports of resurfacing Byzantine mosaics. The refunctioning of Hagia Sophia as a museum in 1935, its transformation and preliminary archaeological surveys before and during the rearrangement have capaciously found their reflection in the newspapers, appearing almost daily. This paper aims to portray the coverage of Byzantine heritage related news in the newspapers of early republican Turkey, and explain how this portrayal served to create a public opinion compatible with the state policies of the period.

**Keywords.** Early Republican Turkish Archaeology, Hagia Sophia, Great Palace, Chora, Istanbul.

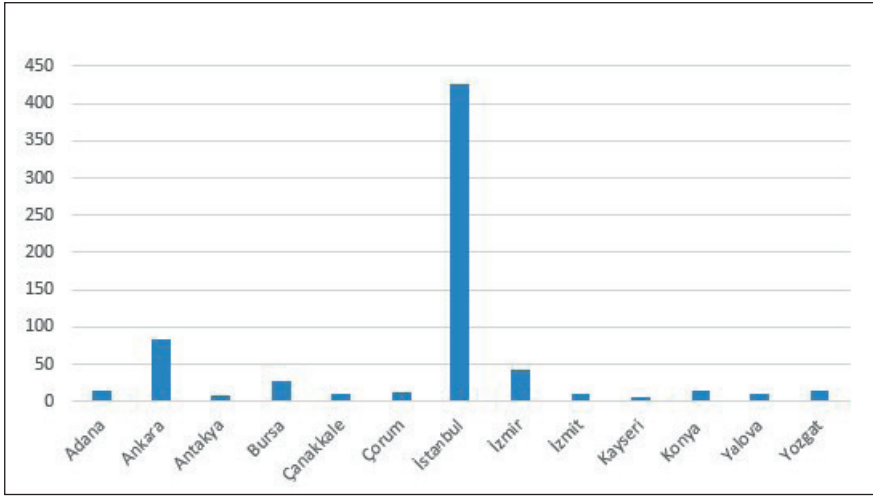
## Introduction

Archaeological activities and foundations of new museums have certainly played an important role in the re-narration of Turkish history in the newly founded Turkish Republic after 1923. “Türk Tarih Kurumu”<sup>1</sup> [Turkish History Foundation] was opened in 1931, students were sent abroad to get educated on archaeology, foreign scholars were invited, and departments of related disciplines were being founded in the universities. Within the hardships of economy after the Independence War (1918-1923), a considerable budget was spared for archaeological field work and studies. In search of the reflections about these activities on early republican newspapers, and how they were shared with public, a research had been conducted in 2018-19 on the news articles concerned with archaeology (BAŞARAN 2019). There are numerous studies and publications about the building of the new nation, construction of identity, and re-narration of history in early republican Turkey<sup>2</sup>. While referring to the archaeological activities of this period, these publications majorly focus on the excavations of prehistoric, protohistoric sites, and especially on Hittite archaeology, mostly initiated as government incentives in search of the roots of the “Turk” in this geography as a product of nationalistic discourse. In our examination, press articles concerning the Hittites and Anatolian and Thracian archaeology were numerous, as expected. However, the astounding result of our analyses was the extreme density of the press articles about Byzantine archaeology in Istanbul, appearing more numerous than the sum of the archaeology articles from all the rest of the country (fig. 1). News about Hagia Sophia, its conversion and repairs, and archaeological activities about the Byzantine heritage in Istanbul were frequently recorded, and articles about prominent site works took their part in newspapers on a day-to-day basis. In contrast with most research on early republican Turkish archaeology, this study focuses on the importance given to Istanbul’s Byzantine archaeology during this era. The study presents an overview of these news and examines the approaches to Hagia Sophia and Byzantine heritage in Istanbul in the early republican media, investigating the motives for their prominence.

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<sup>1</sup> Institution founded for the re-narration of Turkish history and the origins of the Turkish race in relation to the new nationalistic discourse. The congress papers in the early years of this Foundation focused mainly on prehistory and archaeology, while most of the speakers centred their theses through nationalism. According to this approach, almost all speakers defended that the origin of the Turks was in Anatolia starting from prehistoric eras.

<sup>2</sup> For a few examples see: BAYKAL 1971: 531-540; ÇETİN 2004: 347-365; KOCA 2012; DOĞAN 2008.



**Fig. 1.** The distribution of the number of news related to archaeology in relation with the mentioned cities in Cumhuriyet newspaper (1929-1946).

Our examination handles the period between 1929 and 1946. The period chosen starts when the newspapers started to be published in Latin letters after the revolution concerning the alphabet and ends with the era affected by World War II. The majority of news articles referred in the study are acquired from *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, which started to be published on 7 May 1924 with the renowned Turkish journalist Yunus Nadi Abaloğlu (1879-1945) as its first director. The choice of this specific newspaper is particularly important since it was the prominent media source that used to serve as the official organ for the state's ideals. Despite short penalty closures, it was continuously published without interruptions throughout this period, and it had the largest circulation nationwide. Examining the articles from this specific media allows an understanding on how these were used by the young republic to create the intended perception in public opinion. Other media occasionally presented opposing or critical ideas about the decisions of the state concerning Byzantine monuments, but these were very limited as a result of press censorship<sup>3</sup>, which cannot be neglected. Thus, despite occasional oppositions, compatible reflections can be followed in them.

<sup>3</sup> Law concerning press and media was initiated in 1931 for the early Republic. In accordance with this law, the government put the press under strict control. Administration held the power to censor, shut down and recall publications. Sensational or provocative titles, any news in conflict with the Turkish regime and its ideology were not allowed. News handled in this study must also be perceived considering the impact of this law. For more information, see: EROĞLU 2012: 95-96; TOPUZ 2003: 167-168.

After the pronouncement of the newly founded Turkish Republic in 1923, the capital was moved from Istanbul to Ankara, located in central Anatolia. Value attributions toward Istanbul, a strong symbol for the Ottoman Empire as its former capital, has changed during this period, along with the redefinition of a Turkish identity and a new Turkish state. The built environment played a major role in this definition. Investments were directed to the new capital and to other designated centers of industrial development. Istanbul, on the other hand, was deliberately redefined as “the historic city”, and this became vivid through the promotion of selected Byzantine landmarks and archaeological sites. Photography albums were prepared for the international promotion of the new republic showing the emerging new centers with their modern buildings and newly built factories, whereas Istanbul, which could not be excluded, would mainly be portrayed with its historic monuments (For a recent examination: ATALAY TALEBAZADEH 2022).

## **1. News articles on the Archaeological Excavations in the Historical Peninsula of Istanbul**

In the newspapers, articles about Istanbul are numerous. However, in accordance with the reasons mentioned above, they are not about administrative issues, but rather on archaeological excavations and on physical and functional interventions at prominent Byzantine monuments and sites. Between 1928 and World War II, there were several and continuous excavations on the historical peninsula. Even in case of interruptions due to weather conditions newspapers gave short notifications. The newspapers of the period spare an extraordinary amount of space in their columns to the Byzantine architectural and archaeological heritage of the former capital, hinting the new state policies’ utilization of them for the creation of a new Istanbul image. These include archaeological surveys, visits of scientists, opinions of prominent figures on the evaluation of this heritage, reflections of these activities in international media, and repair works done on Byzantine monuments, including detailed reports of resurfacing Byzantine mosaics (fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** An article published in the Cumhuriyet Newspaper on 22.02.1934, giving information about Hagia Sophia mosaics.

Among the related news, mosaic restorations and repair works on Chora (Chora Monastery Church/Kariye Mosque) and Hagia Sophia, refunctio-ning of monuments into museums, and archaeological excavations centered around the Great Palace and Hippodrome occupy the largest space. A considerable amount of Istanbul news articles is conspicuously concerned with the Byzantine heritage of the city.

The excavations of the Great Palace have found great attention in the newspapers, documenting every step taken. The earliest articles announced that James Houston Baxter (1894-1973), a Scottish researcher from Saint Andrews University, had permission from the government to make excavations in the Ishakpaşa and Çatladıkapı neighborhoods of Istanbul (*CUMHURİYET* 3.5.1935).

In the early 1930s a series of excavations were carried out in search of the Hippodrome structures in Sultanahmet by local and foreign archaeol-ogists (A series of news informs about the intended Hippodrome excava-

tions of the directorate of museums and the discovery of a Byzantine bath: *CUMHURİYET* 22.1.1932; id. 20.1.1932; id. 19.6.1934). In 1935, as excavations were held in the atrium of Hagia Sophia, these were also reflected in the news. On 28 January 1935 *Cumhuriyet* announced that the German Archaeological Institute would conduct excavations under the directorate of Kurt Bittel (1907-1991), who was also directing the Boğazköy excavations. Articles on 7 and 8 February 1935 describe the finds and date them to be a predecessor of the currently standing building (Some other news on this excavation shows the frequency of its appearance in media: *CUMHURİYET* 10.2.1935; id. 11.2.1935; id. 13.2.1935; id. 14.2.1935; id. 17.2.1935; id. 19.2.1935; id. 20.2.1935; id. 27.2.1935; id. 5.3.1935; id. 11.3.1935; id. 21.3.1935; id. 25.3.1935; id. 4.4.1935; id. 14.4.1935; id. 17.4.1935; 8.5.1935; id. 10.5.1935).

A striking article about the Hippodrome titled “Ayasofyanın Altında Bir Hazine Gizlidir, Prof. Mambury, Hipodromun Meydana Çıkarılması İçin O Civardaki Bütün Binaların Yıkılmasını İstiyor” [A Treasure is Hidden Under Hagia Sophia, Prof. Mamboury Suggests the Demolition of All Buildings in the Area for Unearthing the Hippodrome] published in *Cumhuriyet* on 19 October 1936 concerns with the management of the urban area around it. In the article, Ernest Mamboury (1878-1953)<sup>4</sup>, a professor in Galatasaray high school at the time, made a radical suggestion for the demolition of all buildings around the Hippodrome area. (fig. 3) The article is also interesting about his criticism for the assignment of James Houston Baxter for the Great Palace excavations. Mamboury worked in his excavations, but his remarks shed light on some general opposing opinions, as he affirmed that such important excavations should not be given to Christian clergymen such as Baxter. Three days later, Aziz Ogan, the director of Istanbul Archaeological Museums, published an article explaining that Mamboury’s criticism was due to a personal conflict with Baxter, and his urban suggestion for the area was exaggerated (*CUMHURİYET* 22.10.1936). However, in the following years, the well-known urban master plan prepared for Istanbul by the French architect and urban planner Henri Prost (1874-1959) spared the area between Sultanahmet and Hagia Sophia all the way to the coast line as archaeological territory (BILSEL 2010: 101-165). In November 13th 1942, *Cumhuriyet* published an article by

<sup>4</sup> Swiss professor, teacher at Galatasaray Highschool in Istanbul starting in 1909. Worked on Byzantine monuments of Istanbul and historic buildings at Ankara. For more on Mamboury’s background and contribution to the archaeology of Istanbul’s Byzantine monuments and sites (whithin and outside of historical peninsula) see also: EYICE 1953; RICCI 2022.

Alfons Maria Schneider<sup>5</sup> about the unearthing of the church of St. Euphemia around the Hippodrome area. Examples of such articles are numerous and the developments of the ongoing archaeological works were published on a daily basis.



**Fig. 3.** First half of the article about the Hippodrome titled 'A Treasure is Hidden Under Hagia Sophia, Prof. Mamboury Suggests the Demolition of All Buildings in the Area for Unearthing the Hippodrome' on 19.10.1936.

## 2. News articles about the Great Palace Excavations

Two months after the articles about permits, on 4 July 1935 *Cumhuriyet* announced the beginning of Baxter's excavations with a title "Sultanahmedde İngiliz Mühassısı Hafriyata Başladı" [British Expert Started the Excavations in Sultanahmet]. Baxter's initial aim was to search for the remains of the Hippodrome, and his exploratory excavations in Arasta Street were planned to

<sup>5</sup> German archaeologist, priest, professor of Byzantine and Early Islamic art and architecture (1896-1952).

last 3 months (*CUMHURİYET* 5.7.1935). Just two days later, the newspaper announced the finds of some marble pavements and a possible two-year extension to the field work (*CUMHURİYET* 7.7.1935). In a few days, some mosaic pavements were reached and an issue of funding arose for the expropriation of the buildings over the remains (*CUMHURİYET* 11.7.1935). The photos of the mosaic floor spreading over a 10 m long and 5 m wide area were published. (fig. 4) The finds were identified as the Great Palace of the Byzantines and Baxter suggested the area to be arranged as a museum of Byzantium (*CUMHURİYET* 8.8.1935). Baxter's meetings with the directorate of museums for the removal of buildings over the archaeological area (*CUMHURİYET* 9.8.1935), the protection measures for the unearthed mosaic floors (*CUMHURİYET* 29.8.1935), information about the finds, and a translation of Baxter's article in *The Times* newspaper (*CUMHURİYET* 18.12.1935) are also reflected in the news.



**Fig. 4.** First half of an article about the excavation of the Great Palace mosaics, published in the Cumhuriyet Newspaper on 25.07.1935.

The second campaign of the excavations started in April 1936<sup>6</sup> and was completed in September (*CUMHURİYET* 9.9.1936). During the third campaign (April-August 1937)<sup>7</sup>, Baxter applied to the government for the initia-

<sup>6</sup> Announced earlier in 15.3.1936 in *Cumhuriyet*.

<sup>7</sup> For the dates: *CUMHURİYET* 19.3.1937; id. 24.5.1937.

tion of a museum on the site (*CUMHURİYET* 24.5.1937). News about the fourth campaign also mentioned the master plan of Henri Prost arranging a vast area, including the Great Palace ruins, as an archaeological sector and the demolition of unqualified buildings (*CUMHURİYET* 12.7.1938). The extension of the excavation area caused some conflict about the possible structural damage it might cause to the Sultanahmet Mosque (1616). Examinations were held by Arif Müfid Mansel (1905-1975), one of the pioneers of Turkish archaeology, and the expansion of the site was determined accordingly (*CUMHURİYET* 17.7.1938; id. 15.7.1938; id. 9.8.1938, id. 29.7.1939). However, despite the precautions, the excavation came to a halt in 1939 due to the mentioned problem. The press announced that Baxter left the excavations on 9 September 1939, most likely because of the beginning of World War II. During the years of the war, news about other excavations in the historical peninsula also decreased.

### **3. News Articles about Conversion of Hagia Sophia into a Museum**

Articles about Hagia Sophia were frequent and occasionally occupied the newspaper's front-page, which often included photographs of the monument. The refunctioning of Hagia Sophia as a museum in 1935 plays a prominent role reflecting the tendencies of the period. There are several thorough publications on the dynamics of this function change so its details will not be the main concern in this chapter. Instead, examples from the several and very detailed news articles about the conversion process will be presented.

Hagia Sophia's transformation and preliminary archaeological surveys before and during the rearrangement have capaciously found their reflection in the newspapers. All the steps taken in this process, all the parties and scientists involved, took their part daily in the pages. Earlier discussions about a possible conversion started to appear in September 1934 (*CUMHURİYET* 4.9.1934; id. 5.9.1934; id. 9.9.1934; id. 10.9.1934<sup>8</sup>; id. 20.9.1934<sup>9</sup>). Ideas opposing the conversion were also published even during this decision period (*CUMHURİYET* 2.10.1934; *AKŞAM* 10.10.1934; *AKŞAM* 11.9.1934<sup>10</sup>). On 11 December 1934, the media announced that the administration of Hagia

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<sup>8</sup> News where the decision is announced with two photographs of Hagia Sophia.

<sup>9</sup> News of a committee of architects is formed for the repair and conversion arrangements of Hagia Sophia.

<sup>10</sup> This article gives news about an opposing group's incentive saying that a scientific report is being prepared on why Hagia Sophia Mosque cannot be converted into a museum.

Sophia mosque had been transferred to the directorate of museums. Museum director Aziz Ogan explained to a reporter that all Byzantine artefacts in the city would be classified and brought to this institution, and the sarcophagi of the Byzantine emperors, now in the garden of the Archaeological Museums, would be transferred to Hagia Sophia, where they would be exhibited (fig. 5).

**Ayasofya müze oluyor**

**Cami dün Müzeler idaresine devredildi. Burada Bizans abide ve eserleri teşhir edilecek**



*Dünden itibaren Bizans eserinin tahsis edilen Ayasofyanın içinden bir görünüş...*

Ayasofya camisinin müze olacağını evvelce yazmıştık. Bu işin tetkikile Müzeler müdürü Aziz'in riyasetinde bir heyet uğraşıyordu. Heyet hazırladığı bir raporu Kültür Bakanlığına göndermiş, rapor Kültür Bakanlığınca muvafık görüldüğünden iki gündenberi tatbikine geçilmiştir. Bu hususta Müzeler müdürü Aziz bir muharririmize şu izahatı vermiştir:

«— Ayasofya dünden itibaren Müzeler idaresine geçmiştir. Mabed, Bizans devrine aid abide ve eserleri ihtiva eden bir müze haline getirilecektir. Bizans devrine aid şehrimizde neka'at eser varsa ilmi bir tasnife tâbi tutarak Ayasofyada teşhir edeceğiz. Bu eserlerden şehrimizde pek çok vardır. Bilhassa müze bahçelerinde mevcud asari atikaden lâhizler, bu meydana Ayasofyanın içine nakledileceklerdir. Müze idaresinin hazırladığı proje mucibince evvelâ mabedin içi tamir edilecek, düzeltilcek, bundan sonra da eserlerin yerleştirilmesine başlanılacaktır. Binanın dışarısında poyraz tarafındaki sıvaları tamir edeceğiz. Bazı ecnebi gazetelerinde yazıldığı gibi esaslı tamire şimdilik lüzum yoktur.

Bir kısım eserleri de mabedin et-



*Ayasofya parmaklıklarına asılan ilân rafındaki bahçede teşhir edeceğiz. Bu sebeple bahçeye beton döğenecek, etrafı çimenlerle bezeneyecektir.*

Bu yeni müzeye şimdilik ayrı bir memur kadrosu yapacak değiliz. Yalnız gece ve gündüz muhafazası için diğer müzelerde olduğu gibi bekçiler koyacağız. Amerikalı mütehassıs tetkikatını şimdilik bitirib memleketine gitti. Belki ileride tekrar gelecektir. Onun tetkikatile bizim kuracağımız müze arasında münasebet yoktur.»

**Fig. 5.** The news about Hagia Sophia becoming a museum, titled 'Hagia Sophia is becoming a museum, the mosque was transferred to the museums administration yesterday. Byzantine monuments and artifacts will be exhibited here,' published in Cumhuriyet Newspaper on 11.12.1934.

An article from 28 January 1935 dated the opening of the museum building to 1st of February, while the exhibition of the artefacts was to begin in August of the same year. The carpets were removed, the marble floor uncovered some annexes and furniture of the mosque removed, the excavation in the atrium was reported to be still going on, and the last prayer hall was temporarily kept closed. On 2 February 1935 *Cumhuriyet*'s front page announced the opening of the museum with a photo of foreign visitors. The newspaper's following period includes numerous articles about the arrangement of exhibitions, the ticket office, the photo purchasing area, and positive, legitimizing remarks about the monument's conversion and prominent visitors of the museum (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. News titled 'Hagia Sophia was opened' on 2.2.1935.

## 4. News Articles about Unearthing the Mosaics of Hagia Sophia

Besides the numerous articles about its conversion, an equally great amount of newspaper pieces specifically focused on the mosaic restorations of Hagia Sophia. News about any development and new image that was brought to light from under the plaster were given on a day-to-day basis.

Activities about the mosaics of Hagia Sophia started to be recorded in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper on 3 August 1931 with a translated article from *The Times* titled “15 Asırlık Ayasofya Yeniden Gençleşecek! Amerikan Bizant-en Enstitüsü Mabedi ve Mozaiklerini Tamir Edecek” [15 Century-Old Hagia Sophia Will Become Younger! The Byzantine Institute Will Repair the Monument and its Mosaics]. Although it can be confirmed that the necessary permits were provided (*CUMHURİYET* 4.8.1931) to the Byzantine Institute of America at this date, actual work started in 1932 with the arrival of Thomas Whittemore (1871-1950)<sup>11</sup>, the founder of the Institute, in Istanbul (*CUMHURİYET* 11.2.1932). Following his arrival, Whittemore made the preparations, waited for the Ramadan to end, and started the works on 17 February 1932 (*CUMHURİYET* 18.2.1932)<sup>12</sup>. Just two days later, an article with a photograph announcing that Whittemore started putting up the scaffolding was published (*CUMHURİYET* 19.2.1932)<sup>13</sup>. With the news about the mosaics, Thomas Whittemore became one of the most prominent mediatic figures for a period. He had been in Istanbul during the Independence War, and he had acquaintances with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as well. The press describes him and his work in detail. Articles dated from 14 April 1932 announce the arrival of Luigi Marangoni (1872-1950), an Italian expert on ancient artefacts, to Istanbul, to work with Whittemore. Almost every week, articles giving information about Whittemore’s work throughout the restoration process were published. These include scientific reports about the findings (*CUMHURİYET* 4.8.1932; id. 20.11.1933 ...), as well as information about the work process, such as the training of Turkish workers to become experts in mosaic restoration and work with Whittemore (*CUMHURİYET* 5.8.1932; id. 31.7.1933; id. 1.8.1933).

Whittemore’s background as a priest caused some opposition against

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Whittemore is a prominent figure of the era in relation with the restoration works of significant monuments. For more information about his background and the course of his works on especially Hagia Sophia and Chora see: KLEIN 2022; KLEIN & OUSTERHOUT 2004; TETERIATNIKOV 2004; TETERIATNIKOV 1998.

<sup>12</sup> News specify that Whittemore started to work “yesterday”.

<sup>13</sup> In 6.3.1932 another photographed news article in *Cumhuriyet* focuses on the firm that produced the scaffolding and the visit of the American ambassador to Hagia Sophia.

his work. Marangoni had also become a target. There was some public criticism that he was using this work to provoke Christian groups and raise money (*CUMHURİYET* 20.10.1932). A *Cumhuriyet* article dated from 17 June 1932 criticized the removal of the Ottoman plaster that bore “Turkish artistic decorations” with oil paintings in order to uncover the cross and human figures of the church. According to these news, Ottoman layers of the building were damaged to uncover the Byzantine ones. These criticisms were not only targeting people or facts but also might have been the reflection of an opposition against the unearthing of the Christian identity of the monument. As the unrest became intense, newspaper articles were prepared to educate and convince public opinion that these mosaics were “no longer religious” but represented elements of the museum that should be perceived as scientific findings. One article published on 14 November 1932 by Halil Ethem Eldem (1861-1938), the Istanbul member of the parliament and an archaeologist, emphasized Whittemore’s identity as a scientist, and referred to him as one of the most skilled people in mosaic restorations, while separating his work in Hagia Sophia from Christianity. *Cumhuriyet* articles on this issue are representative of the government’s tendencies to benefit from historic monuments in a secularized manner. They also respond to other more conservative media that resisted these changes despite censorship.<sup>14</sup> In the same issue with Halil Ethem’s explanations, Yunus Nadi published the main article titled “Ayasofya’nın Mozayıkları: İlme Hürmet Lazımdır!” [Mosaics of Hagia Sophia: Respect for Science is Mandatory!], in which he stated that Whittemore should be thanked for his hard work instead of being criticised for it.

The news about mosaic restorations were so detailed that any step Whittemore took found its way in the press. When he made a public speech, or even whenever he left the country for holidays and came back was recorded in the newspaper. Whittemore probably became one of the most mentioned people in the news about Istanbul in this period (fig. 7).

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<sup>14</sup> In terms of oppositions to mosaic restorations in other newspapers see also: *MİLLİYET* 23.10.1932.

## Ayasofya mozayıkları

**Mühassas M. Vitmor bu seneki muvaffakiyetli çalışmalarında elde edilen neticeleri anlatıyor**



*Ayasofyada meydana çıkarılan mozayıklardan birisi*

Ayasofyanın mozayiklerini meydana çıkarmakta olan Amerikalı profesör Vitmor gelecek nisanda tekser faaliyete baslamak üzere birkaç güne kadar Paris'e gidecektir. Bu münasebetle M. Vitmor dün gazetecilere şu izahatı vermiştir:

— Ayasofya camisinin mozayikleri her yıl olduğu gibi bu yıl da kış dolayısıyla sonraya bırakıldı. Birincikönümün birinden itibaren nisana kadar bu karunk günlerde camide çalışmak hem güçtür, hem de faydalı olmuyor. Şimdiye kadar olduğu gibi senenin çalışılan ayları nisandan teğininin sonuna kadardır. Bu geçen sekiz ayda narteksin tonoslarının son temizleme işleri bitirilmiştir. Narteksi kaplıyan mermerler tamamlanmış, birçok yerleri tamir edilmiştir. Narteksin büyük yüksek pencereleri yıkanmış ve birçok kırık camları tamir edilmiştir. Şunu söylemek isterim ki mermerlerin temizlenmesinde yapma bir parlaklık verilmeyip ancak anıtlardaki zengin rengin ve damarların görünmesine, korunmasına dikkat edilmiştir. Narteksin içine girilen kapıları üstündeki sekiz büyük haç simdi bütün parlaklıklarla görünmektedir.

Hazreti İsa, Meryem Ana, Ceb-rail ve İmparator Altınçı Leonun mozayik resimleri aylarca dünyanın dikkatini üzerine çekmiştir. Narteksin mermerleri, mozayikleri, mozayikli resimleri ve çiçekli nakışlarla dünyanın en büyük altın şaheseridir.

Bütün ilkbahar, yaz ve sonbahar



*Mühassas M. Vitmor çalıştığı yerden izahat verirken*

her mevsimlerinde cumadan maada her gün sabah saat sekizden öğleye kadar ve öğleden sonra birden beş kadar caminin kible tarafında çalışmıştır. Bunlarda çok tazyik üzerinde yürür tekerleklerle bindirilmiş teleskopvari sahanlık ile kibledeki tabakamın tonoslarına ulaşan ikinci iskele ve her yere ulaşan ve yürüyün başka bir merdiven kullanılmıştır. Bunlar tonoslara ve duvarlara yetiştiriliyor ve sıvaların altında hâlâ mozayik bulunup bulunmadığı yoklanıyordu. Kible batıdaki vestibülden bulunan mozayik resim nisanda, bu resmin tarifi yapıp basılınca açılmak üzere hazırlanacaktır.

**Fig. 7.** News published on 22.11.1934 stating that Whittemore gave information about what he had uncovered that year.

Prior to any official news about Hagia Sophia's conversion into a museum, the extent of mosaic restorations hinted this possibility. This was reflected in the press. *Cumhuriyet*'s 25 December 1933 issue involved a discussion about the talks on the possible conversion of Hagia Sophia into a museum of Byzantine artefacts, indicating that it was a religious building and had always been so, thus such a conversion was out of question. However, soon after, the new function was given to the building. Following the conversion, Whittemore's activities kept being recorded in the media (*CUMHURİYET* 22.11.1934; id.

3.4.1935; id. 26.4.1935; id. 31.5.1935; id. 9.6.1935)<sup>15</sup>. Whittemore's conferences abroad about his works were also followed by the media in the form of news and translations of his conference papers<sup>16</sup>. The latest news about Whittemore and his mosaic restorations appeared on 17.5.1940 and 1.2.1941. These articles mentioned the scientific report Whittemore was preparing for the Byzantine Institute in Boston, after whose presentation he would return to Istanbul to pursue his work. However, this work was probably interrupted due to World War II. With the coming of the war, news about Hagia Sophia started to decrease and even disappeared from the newspapers.

## Conclusion

Most of the news about Istanbul in the early republican period were about archaeology and historical buildings. Byzantine heritage played a prominent role within this picture. The meanings held by this architectural heritage were re-narrated and secularized, disregarding attributions to both former empires, the Byzantine and the Ottoman. Monumental religious buildings of the past, re-narrated and stripped off from their religious identity, were used as a showcase for Istanbul. They served to portray the former Ottoman capital as something from the past.

Monuments survive with the values attributed to them. A political, religious, or utilitarian value given to a building can avoid the abandonment of historic buildings and help with their maintenance, thus allowing their survival. Remnants of the Byzantine-built environment took a different role for the recently founded Turkish Republic in the new portrayal of Istanbul. In the case of Hagia Sophia, there was a continuity in terms of the values attributed to it by its changing rulers. As a Byzantine church, it was the cathedral of the empire's capital. With its conversion into the first Friday Mosque of the Ottoman capital, its religious, sacred values were kept intact. In the early republican period, its artistic and scientific values were emphasized, providing it with a new secular identity. Newspapers served, with extraordinary effort and propaganda, to shape public opinion and legitimize these new identities for historic monuments. Despite being the most prominent example, Hagia

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<sup>15</sup> *Cumhuriyet* 2.6.1935 announces the opening of the mosaic over the emperor's gate (central gate from the inner narthex to the nave), with a photograph, and describes the scene with a praise to it as "a 10<sup>th</sup>-century marvel".

<sup>16</sup> *Cumhuriyet* 21.1.1936, 20.3.1936 include news about Whittemore's conferences in several venues in the United States. The methods Whittemore uses for the removal of plaster, his methods for determining the locations of the mosaics are presented in detail.

Sophia was not the only example of this treatment. Other monuments such as Kariye Mosque (former Byzantine monastic church of Chora) also went through this process of reassigned values and conversion. Considering the new secular identity constructed for the young republic, symbolically these new secularized functions and values were certainly no less powerful than their former religious ones.

There are some differences between the archaeological news from Istanbul and the rest of the country. Most of the news about archaeological excavations outside of Istanbul supported the search for origins of the “Turk” in the newly founded nation. Apart from the way archaeological findings were reflected in the media, no distinction was made between foreign and Turkish archaeologists in the surveys and excavations. It was not the director of the excavation that was important, but rather the findings and the conclusions reached. The news articles aimed to give to the reader the feeling that the nation’s history was coming to light and the finds were magnificent. However, in the case of Byzantine archaeological works, the identity of the excavation supervisor seemed more important. Only regarding these works did news articles occasionally reflect oppositions and suspicions about the Christian identity of some of the scientists directing them. Newspapers also served as a vessel of the state to shape the public opinion against these oppositions.

This study presented examples of numerous newspaper articles concerned with Byzantine heritage in Istanbul during the early years of the Turkish Republic and described the nature of its new narration. In this portrayal, Istanbul did not appear as the Ottoman capital anymore, nor as an administrative center. It was rather strictly portrayed as “the past”, as the historical city symbolized with a growing emphasis on Byzantine heritage. This demonstrates that Byzantine memory was more acceptable than the representation of Istanbul as the administrative symbol of the collapsed Ottoman empire.

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