

The Construction of Hagia Sophia As An Imperial Space and The Process of Change*

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Abstract: The spaces that are affected by historical and cultural processes gather the political, economic and social transformations of the city in their structures. In relation to the space, power can be read over this issue. Political power shows its permanence and power using public spaces and structures. The symbols of the form of administration or of changes in power are moved or removed from places in this way. Therefore, monuments or monumental temples built in spaces assume the role of representing political power. While this representative role selectively determines the existence of political power, it also supports the effective retention of social memory, which will regenerate its values, through various spatial practices. For this reason, in public spaces, power transforms what it wants to reflect into the life of society into symbols that it will adopt first. Later, it embodies its power in public space with monumental structures. One of the most prominent examples of this is the Hagia Sophia structure. One of the important features of Hagia Sophia is that it is associated with the situation of Istanbul. Hagia Sophia, the most important structure of an important city that hosts many civilizations and empires, was built as an imperial place with its architectural features. With Istanbul being the capital of the Empire and its development, Hagia Sophia is an accompanying structure. This study will focus on how Hagia Sophia, a space of power, was shaped by many governments in historical periods. The relationship with the ruling will be evaluated while specifying the spatial characteristics that make Hagia Sophia important.

Key Words: Hagia Sophia, Space, Urban Space, Power

JEL Codes: R28, R32, R39

1. INTRODUCTION

Hagia Sophia is an important place shaped by many ruling hands from the past to present. What makes it important is its relationship with power and its architectural structure. Hagia Sophia, the most important structure of an important city that hosts many civilizations and empires, has been remarkable since its first construction with its architectural features. One of the important features of Hagia Sophia is that it is associated with the position of Istanbul. With regards to the change and development of Istanbul, Hagia Sophia is an accompanying structure. In this respect, Hagia Sophia is a temple during Byzantium period, a basilica in the form of Christianity during the Roman period, and the Eastern Roman Empire in the time of the largest rebuilt church (Akgündüz et al., 2006: 66).

In addition to its symbolic value, Hagia Sophia was used as a mosque for almost a thousand years from its inauguration to the conquest of Istanbul on December 25, 537, and for about five hundred years after the conquest (Teteriatnikov, 1998: 6). It is been used as a museum since 1934 after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. The first building of the Hagia Sophia was constructed in the fourth century, in the earliest period of Istanbul, on a high hill, in the form of a basilica with a wooden roof. The first building covered with a wooden roof in the form of a rectangular structure resembled a

temple. The first basilica-type Hagia Sophia was built on the temple of Artemis. Generally, it is known that the construction of the first Hagia Sophia building was started by the order of the Roman Emperor Velerius I. Constantinus between 324-327. However, this structure was completed by the first son of I. Constantine in the second Constantine period and commissioned on February 15, 360 (Akgündüz et al., 2006: 34-36; Eyice, 1991: 207).

The first Christian Emperor of the New Roman Empire, I. Constantinos recognized all the privileges of Ancient Rome to the new capital of Constantinople and built it as the center of the Empire. In order to increase the fame and richness of the new capital, it adorned the city with magnificent buildings and artifacts from many places. In particular, it placed the city in a Christian atmosphere from the beginning, giving great importance to the construction of the church. For the I. Constantinople, the establishment of Christianity and new capital on the historical peninsula was a victory. Hagia Sophia was represented as a symbol for Roman Empire thoughts, and remained a symbol through to the end of the Byzantine Emperors' Political thought and will (Lozanovska, 2010: 443-444; Ostrogorsky, 1986: 25-42).

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2. CONSTRUCTION PROCESS OF HAGIA SOPHIA

The first name of Hagia Sophia was “Mega Ekklesia” meaning “the Great Church”. In the beginning, only Sophia was used to make reference to Jesus as a part of God's wisdom or word. Later, this structure was called the Hagia Sophia, which means ‘Holy Wisdom’, ‘Great wisdom’ or ‘the Lord’s Wisdom’ (Harris, 2009: 353). Emperor I. Constantinos needed to portray his power with a splendid place such as Hagia Sophia. In 326, shortly after the consul of Iznik in 325, a new state ideology was born with the Emperor proclaiming Christianity as the official state religion. The Emperor being a Christian, stamped his authority. For the purpose of strengthening his sovereignty under one religion and might manifestation, the Hagia Sophia was to be constructed. This was because of the presence of churches and temples as a sign of dominance like Hagia Sophia in the Byzantium imperial power. Georg Ostrogorsky states, ‘the emperor was not just the commander-in-chief of the army, the supreme judge and the ruler of the law; he was also the protector of the church and of the right faith. He was the chosen person of God, and in this capacity he was not only the judge and master, but also the living symbol of the Christian state entrusted to him by God (Ostrogorsky, 1986: 28).

The Great Emperor of the Roman Empire I. Constantinos commenced the construction of Hagia Sophia together with the Byzantine city. At first, the building was planned as a long basilica covered with a wooden roof. Upon the collapse of this first building in an earthquake II. Constantinos rebuilt the Hagia Sophia in a larger way and its commissioning took place with a great ceremony. Hagia Sophia ceremony was adorned with gold and silver curtains, priests and poor people were given various assistance. This new structure was built, larger than the old small church, as a basilica with stone walls, five compounds and wooden roofs (Akgündüz et al., 2006: 38-40). In fact, the construction of Hagia Sophia as a large structure was important in terms of proving the political power of power and gaining visibility.

With the division of the Roman empire into two in 395, Istanbul became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Parallel to this development, the importance of Hagia Sophia also rose. Hagia Sophia was the focal point of the city, not only religious but also political events. Hagia Sophia became an important political place for various disagreements at that time. At the beginning of the fifth century, the patriarch's constant criticism of the imperial dynasty in Hagia Sophia led to a conflict between

the two. The exile of the patriarch who was loved by the people, for this conflict led to a great uprising. Hagia Sophia was also affected by the uprising. The first building of the Hagia Sophia, which lasted for 44 years, was destroyed in fire in 404 (Akgündüz et al., 2006: 42-43; Eyice, 1991: 207). The wooden structure of Hagia Sophia during the period in which wood played an important role in all kinds of architecture caused it to be burnt, half a century after its opening (Yılmaz, 1991: 12).

The second Hagia Sophia building was re-opened by II. Theodosios in 415 by making a wooden form with five compounds (Eyice, 1991: 207). II. Theodosios contributed to Constantinople as the imperial capital by building the walls of the historical peninsula, still standing until today (Akgündüz et al., 2006: 42). With the construction of the second Hagia Sophia, the city gained more religious and political importance. This second Hagia Sophia building was able to survive until the Nika Revolt, which began in the Hippodrome against the Emperor Justinian in 532. Many public buildings, including the Imperial Palace, were destroyed as a result of the Nika Revolt (Eyice, 1991: 207; Mainstone, 1988). Among these buildings were Aya Irene Church, Samson nursing home, and the Senate building as well as the Hagia Sophia (Kleinbauer, 2004: 9).

3. HAGIA SOPHIA AS AN IMPERIAL PROJECT

The Byzantine Emperor Justinianos, who finally built Hagia Sophia, he ruled within and outside its borders during a period of political turmoil. From this point of view, it is necessary to understand Hagia Sophia, which was demolished by the Nika Revolt and later rebuilt again, under the watch of the official imperial policies of Justinianos. “Justinianos, who was of the opinion that the imperial power came from God's Grace, laid the basis for the struggle for universal power, not just Roman, but also Christianity” (Ostrogorsky, 1986: 71). For this reason, he expanded the influence of the Empire in his time and attached many provinces to him in the East and gave great importance to the unity within the Empire. Beliefs such as paganism and Arianism were banned, and a single Orthodox belief was accepted under the leadership of an emperor (Kleinbauer, 2004: 12). The most appropriate place in this, Hagia Sophia as an imperial project, the idea of restructuring in a magnificent way has been formed. Emperor Justinianos made many innovations to consolidate his power and restore order after the Nika uprising, and wanted to visualize them on a splendid place like Hagia Sophia.

Justinianos was named as the priest king or even the appointed. This was an indication that the Empire was integrated with a spiritual leadership as a political power. In other words, the emperor blessed himself by integrating politics and religion (state and church), The Emperor was represented as the representative of God and his representative on Earth. This became parallel arms of the United Orthodox Empire. As a result, Justinianos initiated an empire-wide reconstruction program and built many reconstruction and churches in Constantinople, as well as cities in the conquered countries (Kleinbauer, 2004: 12-13).

The foundation of the Church development program of Emperor Justinianos, who had been building churches in many parts of the city, was the reconstruction of the Hagia Sophia in the capital. Restoring Hagia Sophia with its old design would not be enough for Justinianos. The great cathedral in the capital of the Empire had to be objectively reflected in the imperial ideology of Justinianos, along with the great generosity and visibility of the Empire in general. This was a project designed to create a religious center by an imperial administration that mediated between God and mankind. Hagia Sophia's function here was two-way; the first was to make religious ceremonies that would legitimize the power of the emperor, while the second was to make foreign visitors realise that he had divine rights in the form of the perfection of the power of the Empire (Kleinbauer, 2004: 13; White, 2004: 49).

The new Hagia Sophia should represent the imperial authority of Justinian. In a sense, the structure should have been glorified by the Emperor as a representative of the divine power in the heavens on Earth. As an architectural structure, it was intended to be superior to all other cities. It was important for the Emperor to rebuild Hagia Sophia immediately after the Nika Revolt to ensure harmony and unity in his country. Hagia Sophia as a structure, was important for the continuity of the power and the provision of order (Kleinbauer, 2004: 13). This was because unlike other structures and temples built by Justinianos in other cities of the Empire, Hagia Sophia was the peak of the church reconstruction program, which would crown the new capital of the Roman Empire and the center of the world, Constantinople. The new Hagia Sophia was to be a representative and ideological venue for power. In other words, Hagia Sophia was designed as a place that serves or reflects the ideology of power.

The size of the building was also planned to be greater than the size of the destroyed Temple. The

emperor made administrative arrangements for the area to be the appropriate size (Kleinbauer, 2004: 14). Structures such as Hagia Sophia actually fit into a style that stems from the ideological and formal values of power. Therefore, "the architectural form of religious buildings in urban spaces was shaped by the idea of showing itself" (Cerasi, 1999: 231-232) and always maintained its importance as an object of the visible seat of power. In the period of Justinian, when Christianity gained a certain power, the Emperor designed Hagia Sophia in such a way as to meet the needs of the people and to be the symbol of his power. In this respect, he saw Hagia Sophia as a place to please God (Akgündüz et al., 2006: 49).

Justinianos, commissioned for the construction of Hagia Sophia, orders all governors and Kings to send the finest and most valuable stone and column materials in their cities to Istanbul for re-use in the temple. Upon the request of Justinianos for the Great Temple, many columns, frames and windows were removed from the temples, palaces and baths all over the Empire and brought to Istanbul. The materials were obtained from the ruins and important monuments of many ancient cities in Anatolia, Syria and Egypt. The columns, polished marble and coloured stones obtained from these regions were sent for use in Hagia Sophia (Akgündüz et al., 2006: 50-51).

3.1. The Construction Of Hagia Sophia

The great monuments of the city were destroyed by the Nika rebellion in 532 in Istanbul, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. During the revolt, Hagia Sophia was burned completely. Emperor Justinianos, who had tried to escape during the rebellion, subsequently renounced it, saving his power by killing tens of thousands at the Racecourse (Pavlos, 2010: 14). Emperor Justinianos, who cared a lot about architecture, was aware of the propaganda power of architectural structures in the future based on the issue of what they do, performed a lot of reconstruction work in the capital.

After suppressing the Nika Rebellion, the emperor decided to make a new temple to show both the insignia of his victory and power. He had earlier chosen to build a different and larger temple than the previous buildings to replace the old demolished Hagia Sophia. The emperor tried to make this place, which he wanted to be the largest temple in Eastern Rome, in a greater way in the name of his success over the rebellion in 9 BC, the largest monotheistic structure in the world before the time. The temple of Solomon, built in Jerusalem

in the century, was an example to Justinianus. "Anthemios of Tralles (Aydın), famous architects of the period in western Anatolia, and Isidoros of Miletus were commissioned for the construction of this temple. Construction of the structure began in 532" (Cutler, 1966: 28; Schibille, 2014: 50). He was personally interested in the construction by bringing processed materials of old temples and monuments to use in this structure from all sides of the Justinianos Empire (Eyice, 1991: 207).

Hagia Sophia is a building that was built with all the facilities of its period and is a turning point in the history of architecture in the world. The final version of the plan and design of the structure was not related to the previous structure. In fact, the structure was not formed by the evolution of another source as intensive efforts were made for the realisation of its unique structure (Kleinbauer, 2004: 47). Precious stones and ornate columns belonging to various temples from many places were brought for use in the construction of Hagia Sophia. Some columns in the Temple Of Artemis of Ephesus were also used in important parts of the structure (Yılmaz, 1991: 14). In the construction of the structure, a total of ten thousand people were employed, with a hundred craftsmen working at their disposal. The construction of Hagia Sophia in five years and ten months constitutes an exceptional situation among structures of the period. It was interesting that a structure of such scale and complexity was made in a short time, particularly because the later structures of the Old St. Peter's Cathedral took more than eighty years to complete, the Gothic Cathedral of the Chartres in France was built in thirty-two years, and it took more than forty years to make Salisburg Cathedral in England (Kleinbauer, 2004: 14). Finally, Hagia Sophia, built in its present form, is located as the most magnificent temple within its precedents St. San Pietro In Rome. Hagia Sophia, which was the largest church in the world until the Churches of Paul and Maria of Art in Milan were built, is today one of the largest temples used as a museum (İnciciyan, 1976: 54).

3.2. The Architectural Structure Of Hagia Sophia

Hagia Sophia is a work of Christian mysticism combined with Roman imperial architecture and revealed through the characteristics of Early Byzantine art. It remained without connection to other developments and led to the development of true Byzantine art in other dimensions and plans. Unlike the architectural form seen in the main Christian temples, the architectural structure of

Hagia Sophia, the upper rectangular middle room was covered with a flat dome of about thirty-three meters in diameter (Eyice, 1991: 207-210). The large-scale dome has risen to fifty-six meters above the marble floor. Kleinbauer, in his study, described this magnificent state of the dome as follows: "it rises up to reach the sky, and faces the city from the hills by pointing from among the other structures, embellishes it because it is a part of it. But it is glorified by its own beauty because even though it is a part of the city itself, it is so high on the city that it can be seen as if it is being looked at from there by a watch tower" (Kleinbauer, 2004: 21).

The dome of Hagia Sophia was made of very light bricks. After the construction of the dome was completed, a golden cross decorated with precious stones was placed on its top. It is claimed that the bricks laid on the dome contained the inscription - 'God-made, God is the Guardian', and the inscription 'It is unshakable because God is with it'. After the construction of this magnificent dome, the emperor gave the entire people a banquet in Horse Square. In the construction of Hagia Sophia, the size of the dome, as well as the interior wall decorations were given importance. The size of the structure, as well as the size of the dome, and the design of the interior decorations were magnificent.

The dome structure, which is the most conspicuous symbol of Hagia Sophia, is to create a visual effect and give the illusion that a semi-transparent dome hangs in the sky with a golden chain. This is because the reason for opening windows in the domes and half domes is not associated with architectural design alone. The connection was established that a central crown-shaped light source was divine and that the multi-illuminated dome was the place of divine power. Kleinbauer, explains this situation; "When going to the church for worship, man immediately realizes that this structure was built in such a beautiful way, not with human power or ability, but with a divine effect. The visitor's idea is directed to the high heavens and feels that he is not far away. He feel glad being in this place of his choice" (Kleinbauer, 2004: 47).

Semavi Eyice stated that Hagia Sophia constitutes a didactic example for Turkish architects as one of the largest and most important monuments in the history of world architecture as a structural venue. The claim and understanding of the Christian world that Hagia Sophia is impenetrable is still continuing from past to present. The arrival of Hagia Sophia to date was considered as a unique example of success, as a miracle, and it was interpreted as a kind of challenge to Ottoman rulers and architects (Akgündüz et al., 2006: 91). From the past to the

present, through the structure of Hagia Sophia, a kind of power reading has actually been done. In this respect, the past powers have tried to put forward their contribution in this structure by adding some things to Hagia Sophia. However, they wanted to obtain both the sanctity of the structure and a share of power over the structure.

4. THE PERIOD OF THE HAGIA SOPHIA AFTER THE BYZANTINE PERIOD

Hagia Sophia, as in the tradition of the conquest of Istanbul, was converted into a mosque from the great church of the city. This structure and its surroundings were taken into the hands of the Turks in a neglected and devastated manner. Fatih Sultan Mehmet, prevented Hagia Sophia's by making it a mosque as the first work of his own foundation. By adding a minaret to this structure, he transformed it into an Islamic form and afterwards II. Bayezid and II. Selim added other minarets to this building and the building reached its present state. II. During the Selim period, more additions and formal arrangements were made in Hagia Sophia. Some houses surrounding the structure were eliminated by Sultan II. Selim. Many additions were made to the building by Sinan, the famous architect of the period, and the exterior part of the building was reinforced by support margins in order not to collapse (Emerson and Van Nice, 1950: 28-34; Eyice, 1991: 208).

Henry Matthews stated that Mimar Sinan's work on Hagia Sophia is as follows: "Sinan and his sons Suleyman and Selim, intend to expand the size of the Hagia Sophia and even make it larger. For this reason, Sinan spent his professional life struggling against this great Byzantine monument. Sinan examined the forces within the structure in detail, and explored the elegant and most effective methods to keep the large domes alive. That's why he became the full man of the work of reinforcing the ruined structure. First, an open area was needed around the mosque. He realized that the open the walls were weakened their foundations were already inadequate foundations and weak. Those living in these houses not only carved out the walls, they used them like quarries. Upon Sinan's advice, the Sultan ordered the removal of the buildings around the mosque and the opening of an empty area of a hundred meters wide and twenty-five meters wide on each edge. The Medrese, which was built by II. Mehmet in the previous century, was also built around it. After that, Sinan put the structural reinforcement plan into effect and upgraded existing pillars and built a series of enormous

archways along the Western Wall" (Matthews, 2004: 93; Sqour, 2016: 5-11).

The sacred acceptance of this temple with its surroundings has led to the burial of many dead Sultans and their families in tombs built in the garden of the temple. Therefore, after the conquest of the Ottoman Empire, the existence of Hagia Sophia continued. In another sense, it has become a sacred place of Ottoman authority. The fact that Hagia Sophia has come to our day is due to the importance of the Ottoman Empire to this structure. Another reason why Hagia Sophia stood up to the present day is the fact that the Ottoman Empire was the first mosque in the protocol. Although the Byzantine period was replaced by modest equality of Sultans and dignitaries in Friday prayers in the Ottoman Empire, Hagia Sophia has always kept its place of power in the material and spiritual life of the capital.

Hagia Sophia, which took its share of the Tanzimat's understanding of modernization, passed through a great restoration by the famous architect Fossati between 1846-1848. The foundation of the Hagia Sophia restoration was the important historical, religious and political reasons. While Fossati tried to provide an image suitable for the use of the building as a mosque, it was criticized for its approach to Byzantine examples rather than Islamic examples (Akgündüz et al., 2006: 256). Some new changes were made in the Hagia Sophia courtyard. The newly constructed "muvakithane" and "the medrese" built during the reign of Fatih Sultan Mehmet were restored as well as the Sultan mausoleums. The library in the Hagia Sophia was repaired and its doors and the fountain in the courtyard were completely repaired.

In the Republic period, Hagia Sophia was converted into a museum with the decision of the Council of Ministers dated 24.11.1934 and numbered 2/1589, which was not published in the Official Gazette. Upon this decision, Hagia Sophia has become a museum. In the decree, the buildings belonging to the foundation around Hagia Sophia were demolished by the General Directorate of Evkaf, and the other buildings were converted into museums in such a way that the restoration, demolition, repair and conservation costs were met by the Ministry of Finance. The medrese in the garden section of the Hagia Sophia, which is connected to the General Directorate of Museums, was destroyed and various items belonging to the mosque and plates and carpets were removed; eight large lines of these were hung only in later years (Çalışkan, 1976: 9; Eyice, 1991: 209; Yılmaz, 1991: 43).

5. CONCLUSION

The Hagia Sophia, built as a symbolic structure beyond its architectural value, has survived by integrating with the importance of the city it is located in. The first construction of the imperial palace was carried out by the symbolism beyond the architectural value. Its spatial and symbolic relationship with power has become evident both in its location and in its images. Hagia Sophia was originally designed as the architectural projection of a utopian structure that was difficult to access, and was also used for religious and political functions periodically. However, in the public sphere, it has conveyed the traditional legitimacy of power with architectural images. Therefore, the architectural fiction embodying the visibility of power in the public sphere of Hagia Sophia makes it different from all the monumental temples. As a result, Hagia Sophia remained in the middle of the power mechanism in political transformation with internal and external dynamics from past to present. To evaluate Hagia Sophia as a place shaped by political power and social relations in this context means the architectural additions and restorations applied on this structure. Due to its structure, Hagia Sophia has always been used as and remains a powerful symbol of reform and change as well as an effective tool.

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