

Ali Saim Ülgen: A Dialectical Frame of the Republican Mind

© Serra Akboy İlk

Collin College, Faculty of Architecture and Interior Design

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A Prodigy of Early Republican Turkey

Ali Saim Ülgen (1913-1963), a prolific preservation-architect, historian of architecture, author, educator, and a bureaucrat, became a central figure of heritage conservation in early republican Turkey. Resonated with the revolutionary zeal, idealism, and sacrifice of Kemalism, Ülgen committed his life to bring a rational understanding of historic architecture and to develop a scientific preservation¹ discourse.

Ülgen adhered to the nationalist discourse and constructed an idealist reading of architectural heritage. Enmeshed with the Turkish History Thesis (*Türk Tarih Tezi*), Ülgen grounded the idea of the nation in terms of adherence to architectural heritage. In the Thesis, the origin of the Turkish nation was rooted in the Turkic people and tribes of Central Asia. As a consequence of droughts and wars in prehistoric times, Turks migrated to India, China, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Europe, and even regions in Africa carrying their civilization.

Resonated with an existential commitment to locate evidence for the architecture of Turks in the migration routes of the Thesis (Figure 2), Ülgen amplified the purity of design,

From periods of moderate [architectural examples] to the days that had delivered exceptional masterpieces;

although different materials, climates, and social institutions were in effect, the unity of Turkish architecture has never weakened and has made history across various religions, contexts, governments, and reputations² (1938, 1).

Ülgen coded architectural monuments integral to self-define the republican mind. The built heritage embodied the formative power to represent the past of Turks and included unique codes of the Turkish collective mind. Protection of the historic architecture, therefore, would offer the possibility of maintaining tangible contact with the history of the nation and keeping the social continuity.

Ülgen formulated architectural documentation as the scientific basis to safeguard historic buildings to future. Architectural documentation, in the abbreviated sense of compiling measured drawings,³ photographic records, written histories would touch on the degree to which representations of history, culture, and heritage organize the act of preservation (*Akboy-İlk, 2016a, 17-18, 2016b, 30-31*). Presentation of the timeless architectural patrimony through repairing, restoring,⁴ and reconstructing antiquities would foster the authenticity and cultural grounding of the new country.

Upon graduation from the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul in 1938, Ülgen began

Abstract

Ali Saim Ülgen (1913-1963) was a prominent architect-scholar, educator, author, and bureaucrat in early republican Turkey, yet has remained an unusually under-studied persona in the historiography of Turkish architecture. Resonated with a republican pride of national heritage and aspiration for a nation searching for its cultural roots, Ülgen zealously studied the architectural heritage of the country. His prolific work, from preservation interventions to documentation drawings and publications, exhibits an architectural dialogue to establish a scientific milieu for the artistic creativity of Turks in the modern history. Focusing on Ülgen's textual materials, this essay addresses the evolving relationship between historic architecture as a form of national identity and an academical subject.

Öz

Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nin önde gelen düşünürlerinden Ali Saim Ülgen (1913-1963), mimar, bilim insanı, eğitimci, yazar, ve bürokrat kimliğiyle öne çıkmıştır, ancak Türk mimarlık tarihi yazımında çok yönlü çalışmalarına yazık ki yeterli yer bulamamıştır. Cumhuriyet gururunun verdiği şevk ve kültürel köklerini arayan bir milletin arzusuyla, Ülgen üstün bir gayret ile ülkesinin mimari mirasını korumaya ve belgelemeye çalışmıştır. Tarihi koruma çalışmalarından rölöve çizimlerine ve akademik yayınlarına, Ülgen'in üretkenliği, Türklerin sanatsal yaratıcılığına bilimsel bir çevre tesis etmek ve yurt genelinde akılcı tarihi koruma anlayışı yerleştirmek için mimari bir diyalog sergilemiştir. Bu yazı, Ülgen'in kaleme aldığı metinlere odaklanarak, tarihi mimarlığın bir milli kimlik biçimi ve akademik araştırma konusu olarak iç içe gelişen ilişkisini ele almaktadır.

Keywords: Ali Saim Ülgen; early republican Turkey; historic architecture; Turkish History Thesis

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ali Saim Ülgen; Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye; tarihi mimarlık; Türk Tarih Tezi



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Figure: 1
Ülgen during a field trip in 1950s. Ali Saim Ülgen Archive, SALT Research, Istanbul, Turkey.

Figure: 2
A map drawn by Ülgen demonstrating Central Asia (TASUPL016). Ali Saim Ülgen Archive, SALT Research, Istanbul, Turkey.

his career teaching at the same institution and working as an architect at the Istanbul Archaeological Museums. In 1944, with his new position as the director of the Office of Monuments in the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums in Ankara, Ülgen initiated a preservation doctrine across the country. His succes-

sive work as a preservation-architect in the General Directorate of Pious Foundations, distinguished with his dedication to methodical documentation and physical interventions. Besides, Ülgen ceaselessly taught art and architectural history classes at the Ankara University.

Concurred with the swelling architectural scholarship in the early republic, Ülgen extensively contributed to the formation of preservation theory. Ülgen's collection of published articles, proceedings, books, and reports along with his unpublished manuscripts, class materials, and correspondence mark the beginning of historic preservation in the nation-state (Table 1). This assembly of materials also resonates with the development of Ülgen's theory of architecture and his selection of methodical tools to put into service when addressing built heritage.

This essay is an exploration of the evolution of Ülgen's ideas on historic architecture, how he developed elements of a preservation doctrine and how he elaborated his concepts and ideas. What were the key influences in his education at the Academy of Fine Arts as a student-architect? How did he come to an early adoption of Turkish History Thesis, giving rise to an architectural narrative throughout his lifetime?

There are several reasons examined in this essay for why Ülgen wrote: to construct a language of national architecture; to encourage a new generation of architects and professionals in the craft of protection of built heritage; to initiate a grass-roots movement of historic preservation; and to defend his positions at the governmental agencies and overcome the obstacles set in his path. A quote from his essay, "Turkish Architecture," we find the claim, "Our aim includes providing general information to allow the new generation to form an opinion about our architecture and to credit its glorious place in the world of civilization..." (1938, 1).

Materials examined in this essay encompass the writings of Ülgen from 1933-1963; texts written between the age of

Name of the work	Ülgen's position during the task	Line of study	Date
Istanbul ve eski eserleri [Istanbul and its antiquities]. Istanbul: Milli Mecmua Matbaası.	Student at Istanbul High School.	Book.	1933.
Köprülü Konağı (Köprülü Mansion) in Vezirköprü, Samsun.	Student-architect at Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul.	Unpublished reports accompanied with measured drawings, written histories, photographs, and proposed historic preservation treatments.	1936.
Albert Gabriel. Monuments Turcs d'Anatolia, third volume.	Student-architect at Academy of Fine Arts and further collaboration in the following years.	Book.	1936-onwards.
Türk mimarisi [The Turkish architecture]. Youth (Gençlik), 2 (38).	Student-architect at Academy of Fine Arts.	Journal article.	1938.
Şemaki Evi (Şemaki House) in Yenişehir, Bursa.	Student-architect at Academy of Fine Arts.	Unpublished reports accompanied with measured drawings, written histories, photographs.	1939.
Anıtların korunması ve onarılması [Conservation and restoration of monuments]. Ankara: Maarif Matbaası.	Faculty at Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul.	Book.	1943.
Mimariye dair - mimarlık felsefesi ve tarihi gelişimi [On architecture: Philosophy of architecture and historical development].	Director of Office of Monuments, General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums.	Unpublished book manuscript.	1947.
Laleli Mosque in Istanbul.	Preservation specialist at General Directorate of Pious Foundations.	Documentation and restoration work.	1957-1961.
Süleymaniye Mosque Complex in Istanbul.	Preservation specialist at General Directorate of Pious Foundations.	Documentation and restoration work.	1957-1963.
Mimar Sinan yapıları [The buildings of Mimar Sinan]. Filiz Yenişehirlioğlu and Emre Madran (editors). Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu.	Various positions, between 1935-1963.	Book.	1989.
Tarihi anıtların korunması ve onarılmasına ait prensipler [Principles of preservation and maintenance of historic monuments].	Unknown.	Unpublished manuscript.	Date unknown.
Türk mimarisi [The Turkish architecture].	Unknown.	Unpublished manuscript.	Date unknown.
Türkleşmiş bir Bizans abidesi, Aya Sofya [A Turkified Byzantine monument, Hagia Sophia].	Unknown.	Unpublished manuscript.	Date unknown.

twenty and fifty.⁵ Ülgen's explanation of theories and his pledge to protect historic buildings open the territory before us for exploration. The question remains profound and extremely personal: why Ülgen felt the need to produce such a torrent of words?

Finding An Intellectual Path That Led to the Academy

Born a year before World War I (*WWI*), on 28 October 1913 in Istanbul, Ülgen was a close witness to the transition from the imperial patronage to the nation-state. In a childhood marked with long wars and

predicaments, he saw the revolutionary transformations in building modern Turkey and the nationalist leaders' zealous dedication to Westernize the country.

With the proclamation of the republic in 1923, the nationalist leaders embarked on a rigorous modernization campaign, which abolished the Sultanate, religious institutions, as well as Islamic titles including the Caliphate. The founding leaders moved the capital from Istanbul to Ankara; replaced the Arabic script with the Roman alphabet, adopted the metric system of measurement, and declared Sunday as the official holiday instead of the Islamic Friday. They

Table: 1

A list of Ülgen's projects and textual materials, which are addressed in this essay.

- ¹ "Historic preservation" defines the effort to preserve, conserve and protect buildings, objects, landscapes or other artifacts of historical significance. The focus of historic preservation is the built environment, which is formulated with treatments of preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. Historic preservation is also coined as "architectural conservation," "heritage preservation," and "heritage conservation." It is referred as "tarihi koruma" in Turkey. The author uses the term "historic preservation" to maintain a consistent terminology in the text (Akboyand Thys-Jenocak, 2009; Akboy, 2011).
- ² The author translated all the textual materials, unless stated otherwise.

abolished the outlawing religious rules of marriage and inheritance, granting political equity to women.

Interwoven with the utopian vision of the Kemalist revolution at its height and accompanying reforms, republican intellectuals pursued epic proportions to implement an official discourse of national architecture. They extensively studied built heritage to ascertain architectural culture of the Turkish civilization. The noteworthy republican architect-scholar, Sedat Çetintaş (1889-1965) writes,

We all know, our Republic is secular. There is not an individual [citizen] left [in our country], who has still not inscribed this to their head and heart. Even a modest building is a page written on stone, [representing] the Turkish history and civilization; our secular Republic protects all these buildings with utmost respect. In the eye of the Republic, a class difference between a mosque, a tomb, or a madrasa does not exist, but prevails "Turkish monuments," which represents separate patronages in the history of the Turkish culture..." (2011, p.15)

In retrospect, Ülgen pays tribute to the founding leaders' commitment to modernization in *Istanbul and its Antiquities* (*Istanbul ve Eski Eserleri*), which was published while he was a student at Istanbul High School (*Istanbul Erkek Lisesi*). Ülgen (1933, 4) states that his work could only flourish due to "the scientific milieu of the republican enlightenment." He dedicates *Istanbul and its Antiquities* to the nationalist and secular revolutionaries who saved the country from the superstitious minds and cultivated a culture of scientific learning.

Istanbul and its Antiquities marks a deep structure imprinted in Ülgen's cultural awareness of the Turkish past. At the age of fifteen, Ülgen (1933, 3) pursues his passion for archaeology by collecting literature on the history of Istanbul and inscribing his observations through his strolls in the city. Reviewing the existing architectural historiography, mostly written in foreign languages, Ülgen (1933, p. 8-9)

regrets the lack of native scholars committed to archaeology and history. To provide a contemporary voice, Ülgen conducts a comparative analysis of the existing conditions of buildings with historical anecdotes. Chronologically organized, Ülgen compiles the history of the stratified architectural heritage in the scale of neighborhoods. The resulting *Istanbul and its Antiquities*, becomes the first book to be printed in the new Latin alphabet in the early republic (*Eyice, 1994*).

In the book, the exquisite image of Istanbul is a result of a young high-school student's endless wanderings in the city. Permeated with architectural appearances, historical chronicles, and folk stories, Ülgen portrays individual buildings within the context they were achieved. The urban history, however, is interwoven with a tribute to the glory of Turkish history and self-confirmation against the critical eyes of the republican culture, "...each work of art erected in Istanbul is a monument of virtuosity that reflects our art history. By preserving them with fidelity, like an ever-lasting shield, we will guard our glorious history against the darkening eyes of the spiteful authors." (1933, p.3)

Not surprisingly, Ülgen's historical plot of Istanbul is infused with the Turkish History Thesis, with the Turk as the key protagonist. Ülgen explores the stratified architectural landscape of Istanbul, from the Greek colonists led by King Byzas during the 7th century B.C., to the era of the republican Turkey. Interestingly, Ülgen emphasizes the migration of Turkic tribes from Central Asia in the B.C. 1400-1200, to civilize Anatolia. In the route to the Aegean Sea, Ülgen (1933) notes some Turkic people plausibly resided in the region of Istanbul and civilized the region before the Greek colony.

In this plot, Ülgen specifies the names of tribes and nations habituated Istanbul and its surroundings, while strikingly excluding the rule of the Ottoman dynasty,

In 1453, Ottoman Turks conquered Istanbul (İslambol). [The city] has prevailed as a center, until the 1919 military occupation of the imperial-

- 3 "Measured drawing" is the translation of three-dimensional qualities of an existing building into two-dimensional plans, sections, and elevations. The term is interchangeably used with "architectural survey drawings" and "measured surveys."
- 4 A restoration activity includes the process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time. The process includes removing features from other periods in its history and reconstructing of missing features.
- 5 The study extensively rests on documents located at the Ali Saim Ülgen Archive, SALT Research, Istanbul, Turkey.

ist nations. NEVERTHELESS, THE PRECIOUS CITY OF TURKS SAW THE MOST JOYFUL DAYS WHEN RETURNED TO THE BORDERS OF OUR ALMIGHTY REPUBLIC [Ülgen's own emphasis] (1933, 197).

Istanbul and its Antiquities, also, distinguishes Ülgen's prospering interest in historic preservation. Although a high-school student, Ülgen comfortably bears the vanguard task of restoring Turkish architecture,

All eastern nations restore their ruins to attract travelers and protect their historic monuments from the destruction of time. We have to pursue the same route, pledge not only to preserve Istanbul, but all the significant antiquities across our country and consider perpetually working for this cause (1933, 7).

Searching for a Preservation Discourse As a Student-Architect

In 1934, Ülgen entered the Academy to pursue a degree in architecture. The Academy was founded in 1882 as the "School of Fine Arts" (*Sanayi-i Nefise Mekteb-i Âlisi*) under the Ottoman patronage. In 1928, with the centralization of educational institutions in the republican regime, the school was transitioned to an academy, "State Academy of Fine Arts" (*Devlet Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi*).⁶ Working with professors at the Academy lent Ülgen's voice to the formal analysis of the epistemological grounds for Turkish art and architecture.

Celâl Esad Arseven's (1876-1971) influence on the intellectual formation of Ülgen is evident. An art historian, critic, and professor of architectural history, Arseven's categorization of Turkish art and architecture established the quintessential nationalist view of architectural scholarship. Arseven, in 1909 published *Constantinople de Byzance a Stanboul*, which distinguished Turkish art and architecture as a separate school. Followed by a more comprehensive text of *Turkish Art (Türk Sanatı)* in 1928 and *L'art Turc* in 1939 in French, Arseven published *Les Arts Decoratifs Turcs*.

Concurred with the migration routes in Turkish History Thesis, Arseven divided the national works in three camps: primitive stage of Turkish art, pre-Islamic Turkish art in Central Asia and Anatolia, and Islamic Turkish art in Central Asia and Anatolia. In this architectural narrative, Islamic art meant the specific works that Turks created within the belief system of Islam: Seljuks and Ottomans.

Arseven, furthermore, signified architectural documentation as the scientific basis to exhibit the everlasting principles of the national architecture of Turks. His aim on documentation was twofold: on the one hand to assert the continuity of Turkish culture as a monolithic entity against the critical eyes of Western Orientalist scholarship, and on the other to find connections with artistic traditions of the Modern Movement.⁷ The combined effect of these assertions was to situate Turkish civilization firmly within world civilizations, both historically and artistically.

Ülgen, upon graduation, began his professional career as Arseven's teaching assistant at the Academy in architectural history and urban planning. Ülgen and Arseven worked together at the Academy until Arseven became the deputy of Istanbul at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in 1942. Over the years, two scholars collaborated professionally on different platforms, most importantly, in the establishment of Supreme Council of Immovable Antiquities and Monuments (*Gayrimenkul Eski Eserler ve Anıtlar Kurulu, GEEAYK*) in 1951, the first autonomous entity outside the institution of the state, as a mechanism of review and judgement of the practice of historic preservation (*Madran, 1997*). The duo was founding members.

Echoing his mentor's reconciliation of Turkish History Thesis, Ülgen stipulated an architectural reading based on pure building forms. Even in diverging landscapes and vernacular contexts, the purity of architectural forms prevailed, which signified the everlasting qualities of the Turkish identity. Ülgen notes in the essay "The Turkish Architecture (*Türk Mimarlığı*),"

⁶ Today, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University provides four-year- educational programs along with associate degrees and graduate programs.

⁷ In 1930s, modernist architectural forms imported from the European counterparts began to be celebrated in the progressive and revolutionary discourse of the secular republic. The modernist practice, *New Architecture (Yeni Mimarî)*, dominated the educational, cultural, and professional architectural circles. Modernist designs emerged with pure geometric forms, asymmetrical composition of horizontal and vertical masses, long-spanned window sills, flat roof, and minimalist facades. The unadorned cubic form of the Ismet Pasha Institute for Girls, built in 1930, Ankara is a trademark of the interpretation of Modern Movement in early republican Turkey (Bozdoğan 2001, 2007; Akboy-İlk 2019).

Nobody has any doubts about the capacity of the rational feeling and the realist vision embedded in Turkish architecture, whether [exhibited] in Central Asia, whether [exposed to] diverse climates and material conditions after the ages of expansion through Asia Minor... the aesthetical consensus has not disappeared despite the varying structural techniques. In fact, when the Turkish civilization advanced and intensively came into contact with foreign countries, these sentiments and proprieties did not weaken; on the contrary, became stronger. (date unknown(c), p.5)

To determine the rational feeling embedded in the evolutionary path of Turkish architecture, Ülgen distinguishes morphological resemblances between the building traditions of Asiatic origins and Anatolia. Ülgen finds evidence to the unity of Turkish architecture, in the pure, rational, and austere forms of the tents of the nomadic Turkic tribes in Central Asia, the Buddhist Temples in Turkestan, the tombs of the Seljuks in Anatolia, and the mosques of the Ottoman Turks. In this lengthy history of the nation, the purity of Turkish architecture has not weakened due to centuries long exchange of different nations. Quite the reverse, the Turkish spirit infused different schools of architecture, of Persian, Arabic, Roman and Gothic. These nations owe the existence of their creative works to the Turkish architectural forms, Ülgen (1938, 1) heralds.

Ülgen's architectural narrative includes an open disdain to the recent past, "Turkish architecture during the decline of the Ottoman Empire included mediocre architectural examples," although the built environment created in the sixteenth century imperial rule constituted "the most glorious page in the civilization of Turks." Architect Sinan's (1489-1588) works, the chief royal architect of the Ottoman Empire, in particular, the Süleymaniye Complex in Istanbul and the Selimiye Complex in Edirne, constitute the climax in the Turkish architecture. The weakening power of the Empire, however, culminated in the grad-

ual infiltration of the Western architectural styles, which betrayed the "rational feeling and realist notion" of classical buildings and structures (Ülgen, date unknown (c), 6).

To Ülgen (1943, 2-4 and 45-46), "...all [Turkish] buildings furnish rational needs," in which "the architectural components and ornaments solely meet the needs" of the building program. Ülgen appraises the "modern" form of the sixteenth century mosque buildings as a result of Turkish architects' "perfection of" construction, proportion, and function. The design is based on constructional solutions to alleviate structural deformations for a long-life cycle of the building. Accordingly, proportion is the harmonious relationship between the structural elements of the composition, but also privileges the coherence between the building and the site. A patron worshipping under the dome or strolling through the courtyard would "feel the proportion of the architecture." In this scheme, structural elements serve the spatial function. A band of windows located in a dome, for example, merely serves to provide natural lighting. "Beauty" is embedded in the form of the mosque, through the juxtaposition of construction, proportion, and function in harmony, which was orchestrated through the "prodigy of the Turkish architects."

Ülgen's studies at the Academy, also, cultivated his professional awareness of compiling measured drawings as a scientific record to gain a profound understanding of the historic property and to negotiate a preservation dialogue. A measured drawing, by definition, includes the existing condition of the building, including graphical notes of alterations, additions, and subtractions occurred during the lifetime of the edifice (Akboy-İlk, 2013, 9). Defining these particular drawings by "architectural portraiture," Ülgen (date unknown (a), 1) gave priority to the creation of measured drawings in the assembly of preservation projects, scholarly work, and educational pursuits. His widely recognized work, *The Buildings of Mimar Sinan (Mimar Sinan Yapıları)* which consists of two-volume catalogues of measured drawings of the built

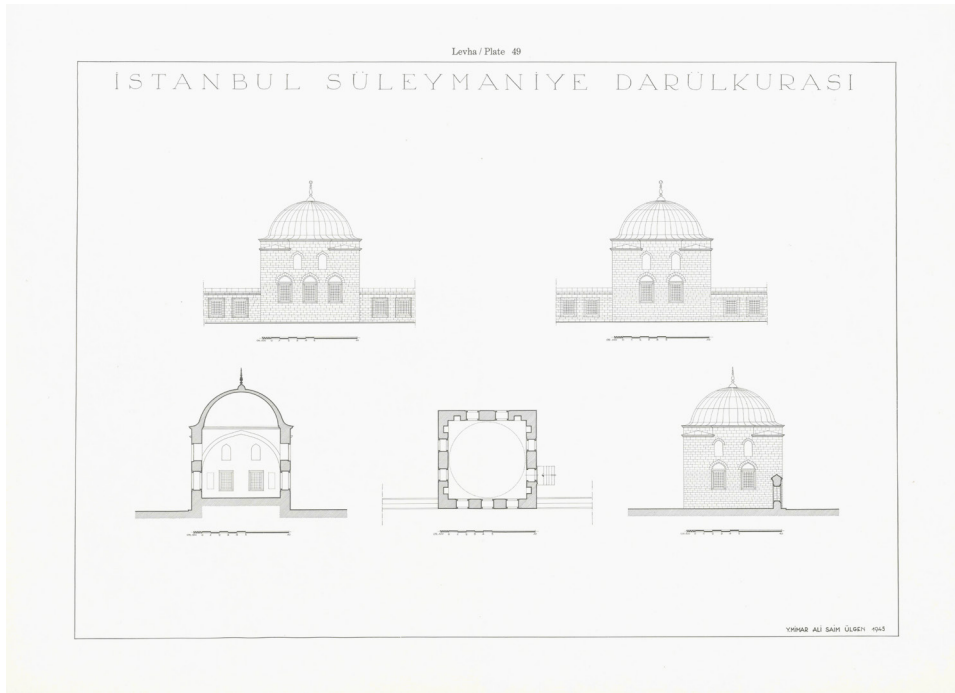


Figure: 3
The measured drawing sheet of darülkurra in the Süleymaniye Mosque Complex, delineated by Ülgen. After, Ülgen, Yenişehirlioğlu, Filiz, and Madran, Emre. (1989). *The Buildings of Mimar Sinan*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu.

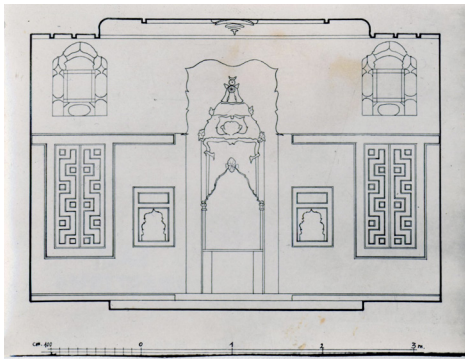


Figure: 4
Elevation drawing of the Şemaki House in Yenişehir, Bursa, delineated by Ülgen when he was a student-architect at the Academy (TASUHI173). Ali Saim Ülgen Archive, SALT Research, Istanbul, Turkey.

environment created by Sinan, still serves as a reference material (Figure 3).

While as a student-architect, Ülgen attended Sedad Hakkı Eldem's (1908-1988) National Architecture Seminar (*Millî Mimari Semineri*) at the Academy. In support of the "inherent modernity" of traditional, timber-frame Turkish houses, Eldem, the renowned Turkish architect-scholar, epitomized studying built heritage through drawings. In the 1930s and 1940s, his students prepared measured drawings of vernacular architecture of houses and mansions across Anatolia. Doing so, they could transcribe the authentic form, proportion, and construction to new design. Eldem's sustained efforts resulted in several volumes of publications such as *Bursa Hous-*

es, in 1948, *The Plan Types of the Turkish House*, 1954, *A Survey of Turkish Kiosks and Pavilions*, 1969, and *Works of Turkish Architecture*, 1975. A student of the seminar, Ülgen prepared booklets of the Köprülü Mansion (*Köprülü Konağı*) in Vezirköprü, Samsun and the Şemaki House (*Şemaki Evi*) in Yenişehir, Bursa (Figure 4). These unpublished volumes include architectural descriptions formulated through written histories and measured drawings.⁸ This seminar and the efforts to document old houses, plausibly, created Ülgen's professional consciousness for architectural documentation as a source of modern design (Figure 5).

Another influential figure in the formation of Ülgen's theoretical quest is the French scholar Albert-Louis Gabriel (1883-1972), whose work espoused the independence of Turkish architecture from other schools of art and emphasized the primacy of Turkish architects. Gabriel's documentation work of the medieval architecture of Anatolia became a reference for the restoration of the material culture of Turks. Supported by the republican government, Gabriel surveyed the built environment across the country and published monographs,

⁸ Ülgen, consequently submitted the drawings of the Köprülü Mansion to the Istanbul Archaeological Museums, which were displayed at an exhibition at the Dolmabahçe Palace.

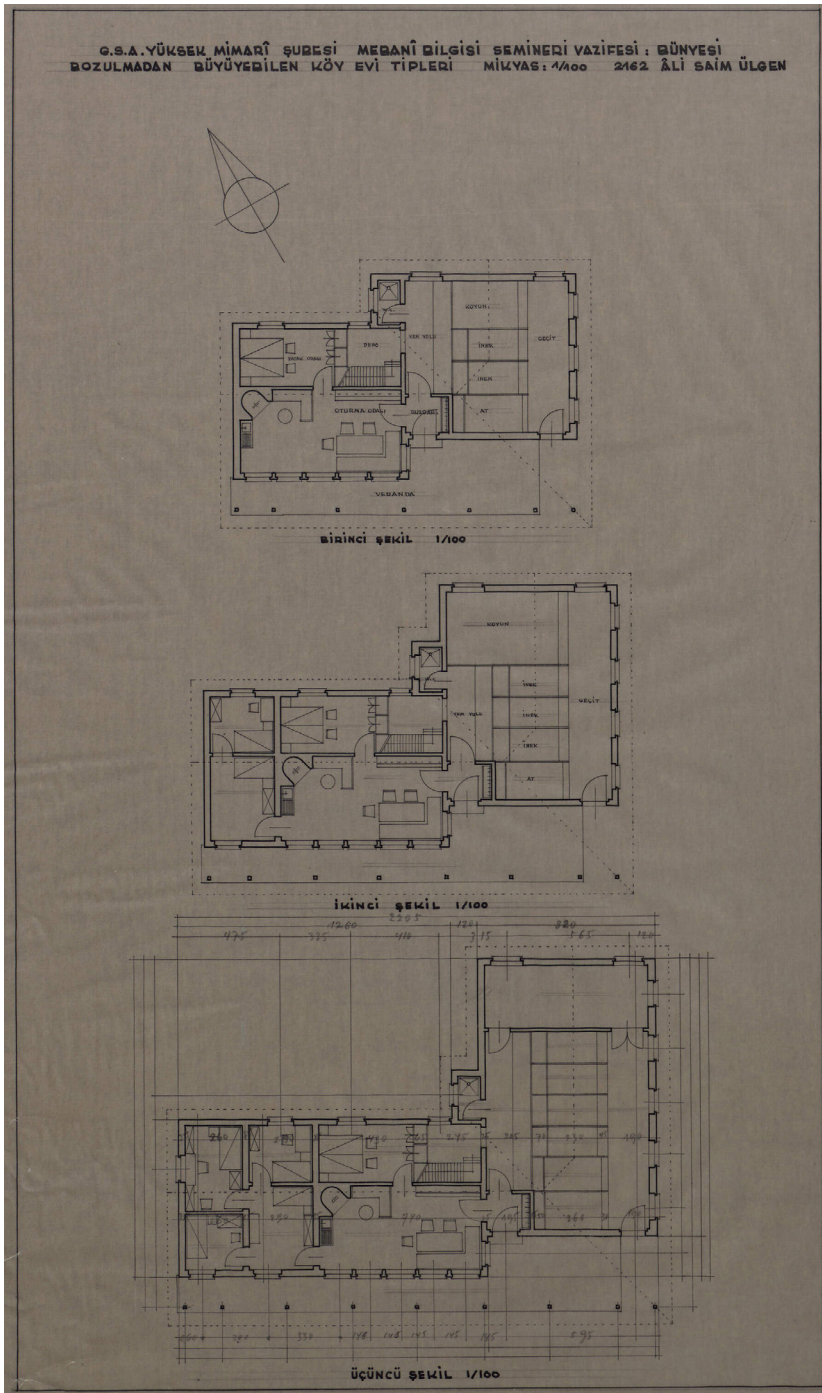


Figure 5
 Ülgen's design for the studio assignment of an expandable village house (TASUPA0043).
 Ali Saim Ülgen Archive, SALT Research,
 Istanbul, Turkey.

including the *Monuments Turcs d'Anatolie*, 1931-1934, which was later translated to Turkish. In these compilations, Gabriel extensively specified the significance of preservation and restoration of Turkish monuments (emphasizing Seljuk and Ottoman built heritage) as sources of inspiration to the young nation.

Ülgen helped Gabriel for the third volume of *Monuments Turcs d'Anatolie*, which included architecture of Bursa. The duo documented the buildings across the city and assisted various preservation work, for example the restoration of the tiles of the Green Tomb (*Yeşil Türbe*). Over the years, Ülgen assisted Gabriel during his absence in France. Ülgen continued Gabriel's research in Turkey and conducted his official correspondence with the Turkish government. Years later, after Ülgen's immature death, in the letter of condolence addressed to his mother, Rebia Advıye Hanım, Gabriel sincerely inscribed, "I lost a genuine friend." In his writings, Ülgen regrets that the Academy has not offered classes on "the art of national architecture" and methods of restoration. Student-architects who were interested in the history of national monuments would enroll at courses at Istanbul University. Consequently, Ülgen followed Professor Arif Müfid Mansel's (1905-1975) archaeology courses at the Faculty of Letters (*Edebiyat Fakültesi*). Supported by Turkish Historical Society (*Türk Tarih Kurumu, TTK*), Mansel, an archeologist and academician, conducted excavations and archival work, while contributing to the *Outline of Turkish History*. Upon Atatürk's request, Mansel wrote the section on Iran, which culminated in *The History and Archaeology of Iran (Iran'ın Tarih ve Arkeolojisi)* in 1934. Led by Mansel's research and teaching, the national understanding of Turkish history promptly found its way into schoolbooks (*Döşemeci 2013*).

In 1938, Ülgen graduated from the Academy as an architect, with the diploma record number 551. Mentored by leading academicians, bureaucrats, and practitioners of the early republican era, Ülgen had a formal training in design, architectural documentation, and research. Soon after his graduation, he was awarded a state fellowship to pursue post-graduate studies in Germany in architecture – archaeology. In March 1939, Ülgen left for Germany, however, abruptly returned Turkey, in September 1939 due to the outbreak of World War II (*WWII*) (*Aktur 2010*).

Ülgen resumed his teaching position at the Academy. Subsequently, he published *Conservation and Restoration of Monuments (Anıtların Korunması ve Onarılması)* in 1943, the first book on historic preservation in republican Turkey. The book is, at a large extent, based on Ülgen's experience during his fellowship in Europe. With the purpose of implementing preservation norms across Turkey, Ülgen elicits the architectural conservation in Europe and provides examples, accompanied with photographs and detailed explanations. Ülgen conceived *Conservation and Restoration of Monuments* as the first book in a four-volume study. Due to his untimely loss, unfortunately, the rest of the volumes were not achieved.

Not surprisingly, Ülgen begins *Conservation and Restoration of Monuments*, with an excerpt from Atatürk, "The existence of every nation in the world, the right of freedom and independence, is in proportion to their civilized works of the past and future." Ülgen emphasizes the importance of applying rational principles of preservation and tributes the republican regime's formalized efforts to implement scientific methodologies,

Albeit the lack of scientific methods in restoration works in our country until recent past, due to the great tasks that our Republican Ministry of Education is achieving, we are certain of the prompt success; which greatly deserves appreciation and praise. (1943, XXIX)

By scientific methodologies, Ülgen identifies documentation to fashion informed decisions,

Restoration of the monuments necessitates architectural evidence and historical records of great significance. This evidence has to be searched, either on the surface of the building or on peer monuments formed in the same era. Records such as historical works, miniatures, engravings, archival, maps, plans, and pictures, specifications and deeds of buildings can be utilized. (1943, p.76)

Negotiating a Preservation Discourse for the Architecture of the Nation

In 1944, Ülgen transitioned to the newly founded Office of Monuments (*Anıtlar Şubesi*) in Ankara as the director. After years of fieldwork, research, along with teaching in the academical setting and assisting state-run agencies, transitioning to a governmental position lent Ülgen's voice to negotiate a historic preservation discourse across the nation.

In 1954, Ülgen began to work at General Directorate of Pious Foundations as a preservation-architect and got involved in the repairs of approximately 150 historic properties (*Ergezen 1963*). Some projects include, the repairs of the Süleymaniye Mosque Complex, Mehmed Ağa Mosque, Divriği Mosque and Hospital, Siirt Mosque, Aksaray Sultan Han, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Complex, Seyyit Battal Gazi Complex, Kayseri Huand Hatun Complex, and Laleli Mosque.

Ülgen's writings during his tenure at the Office of Monuments mark the modest beginning of architectural preservation in the state level. In a progress report, Ülgen (*1947a*) estimates a collection of 30-35.0000 of historic properties across the country, classifying 10.000-12.000 of them as monuments. The urgent issues Ülgen includes compiling an inventory of historic properties, conducting documentation campaigns with measured drawings and photographs, registering monuments, preparing repair routes and restoration projects, establishing a documentation archive, instituting material research and storage facilities, launching a state propaganda to prioritize the protection of monuments, along with training architects, contractors, and craftspeople on preservation practice.

Yet, to build a modern country, republicans were short of funds and workforce. The limited resources were allocated to institutionalize economical, educational, and socio-cultural reforms. Prioritized projects of establishing a centralized school system, industrializing Anatolia with launching factories, building the new capital, Ankara, and "weaving an iron web" with new rail

lines required massive national capital. In this scheme, the upkeep of monuments lacked the necessary funding to complete such an undertaking.

Ülgen's candid tone portrays the "heart-breaking conditions" of the monuments. Viewed from a managerial perspective, the Ministry of Education's⁹ elusive mission of preservation deemed a naïve and clumsy experiment, which was doomed to fail with the limited personnel and resources of the Office of Monuments. To Ülgen (1947a), unless policies of the state culminate in centralized efforts to develop transparent tasks and labor of division, the current attempts of the Office would not go beyond "saving the day."

Ülgen (1947a) saw planting the seeds of historic preservation as an ideological, cultural, and educational mission to be taken to the remotest corner of the country, "... dictated by our national cause to my conscience, I am obliged to succeed my duty flawlessly." However, the lack of resources placed impossible demands to Ülgen's shoulders, "The director of the Office of Monuments does not have any support. The Office does not have a designer to craft drawings, a typist for secretarial tasks, a surveyor for construction sites, an epigraphist to decipher inscriptions, or a technical clerk to assist computational duties."

Buttressing the rigorous work of documenting, inspecting, consulting, and educating, Ülgen ceaselessly travelled for years, often visiting multiple cities within the same month,

Today, as the director of the Office, I have to execute all the managerial duties with the limited personnel; I run across Anatolia to conduct controls and repairs of the monuments; I architectural inspections, review zoning plans and building registrations without the help of a surveyor or a designer; furthermore, I am obliged to work overtime to train my very valuable, but novice colleagues (1947a).

Years later, when Ülgen transitioned to the General Directorate of Pious Foundations,

the dire conditions surrounding the built heritage prevailed. Ülgen (1962) resents, "Unfortunately, nobody regards scientific materials and documentation research and even those concerned do not place importance on achieving this difficult task." An idealist professional, Ülgen notes that he is obligated to proclaim the shortcomings for protection of national works. Lack of travel funding hinders site visits, surveying work, and inspection of constructions. Given this, the bureau cannot meet the project deadlines and for the ones completed in the fiscal year, the quality of materials and workmanship is low.

Defining the National Architectural Patrimony

With the implementation of Turkish History Thesis, the selection of historic properties to be documented and protected in the modern borders of Turkey was automatically achieved with an inclination of Seljuk and Ottoman monuments. Thus, Ülgen's budget estimations for preservation interventions showcase the certain division of state resources for individual properties. When projecting the itemized expenses for the fiscal year of 1950, Ülgen (1951) notes, "All monuments across Turkey are in ruins. At all times, we need emergency funds for unexpected costs." In the detailed report, within the budget of 2.025.000 Turkish Liras allocated for the repairs of monuments in Istanbul, the Byzantine monuments achieved 350.000TL, mainly focusing in the structural interventions for the Museum of Hagia Sophia (*Aya Sofya Müzesi*).

Although early republican scholars acknowledged historical and artistic merit of Byzantine works, Turkish monuments had an additional political value to prove the nation's belonging to the land. Ülgen summarizes the national sentiments,

Monuments are the witness of our belonging to these lands, which we call homeland (vatan)... We do not engage in a platonic love, but we love our homeland for framing our consciousness. For this reason, we are obliged to love our monuments, protect them,

⁹ At the time, the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums was operating under the Ministry of Education.

*preserve them like a sacred memory,
and transfer them to future generations.
(1947a)*

The protection of Byzantine built heritage followed a meandering way, by asserting these monuments in the historical plot of the Turkish nation. The advanced Byzantine culture became a physical evidence to portray the intensity of Turkish struggle to defeat and replace it (Altınyıldız 2007). In an unpublished manuscript, “A Turkified Byzantine Monument, Hagia Sophia,” Ülgen articulates the reasons of the Turkish essence of the building,

...following the Latin occupation of 1204, Hagia Sofia gained a new face through the repairs, additions, and modifications [under the Turkish rule], which erased the marks of the Latins’ massive plunder of Istanbul...; with its spirit, appearance, and meaning [the building] belonged to the Muslim Turk; if it still exists today, it owes its presence to the Turks’ passionate sense of humanity... and their esteem in dignifying the exquisite (date unknown(b), 3).

Following WWII, Turkey entered a new phase of politics characterized by a closer union with Europe and U.S. After joining North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, Turkey began to function as a cold-war security shield for the West. Fostering Islam and ethnic rationalism against the influential rhetoric of communism became a popular political strategy against the perceived threat of communism. The

secular ideals of early republicans gradually weakened while religion and traditional lifestyles re-surfaced (Atakuman 2016).

With rise to power of the Democrat Party (DP), the emphasis on Turkish History Thesis began to wane and substituted with an understanding of re-establishing the connection with Ottoman heritage. In contrast to the Turkish History Thesis, which aimed to connect all past cultures of Anatolia with Turks, the new identity emphasized that the history of Turks in Anatolia began when the Islamized Oğuz Turks defeated the Byzantine army at Malazgirt in 1071. This idea was subsequently systematized by the state-supported “Turkish-Islamic Synthesis” of the 1970s and 1980s (Copeaux, 1998; Güngören & Tuztaşı 2014).

DP highlighted returning Ottoman monuments to their past majesty. In 1956, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes (1899-1961) initiated a massive urban development operation in Istanbul to reinstate the monuments that were surrounded and obstructed by ruins. Paradoxically, the urban landscape of Istanbul was dramatically renewed through the construction of avenues that cut through historical peninsula. During the process, the texture of the traditional city irreversibly altered. Many buildings were moved to new locations, several were chopped off, some were half buried, others had their foundations exposed, and 7,289 buildings (of mosques, masjids, baths, fountains, and cemeteries) were demolished (Altınyıldız, 2007).

Ülgen, due to his position at the General Directorate of Pious Foundations, had to devise provisions for the protection of the remaining building segments, for example the eighteenth century Laleli Mosque (Figure 6). In his official report, Ülgen (1957) notes the expansion of the Ordu Avenue resulted in the shattered stone-masonry walls of the courtyard, thus the building lost its integrity. Furthermore, the expanding roadwork altered the levels of entry to the building. To resolve, Ülgen recommends introducing a marketplace and restaurants under the mosque and around the new courtyard. Following Ülgen’s



Figure: 6
Laleli Mosque after the expansion of Ordu Avenue in 1950s (TASU4418002). SALT Research, Ali Saim Ülgen Archive, Istanbul, Turkey.

Figure 7
Repairs on the exterior walls of the Süleymaniye Mosque during late 1950s (TASUH3585001). SALT Research, Ali Saim Ülgen Archive, Istanbul, Turkey.

proposition, the General Directorate provided the resources to meet the alterations. Ülgen supervised the restoration of the mosque complex for the next four years.

Restoring the Süleymaniye Mosque Complex

In 1957, for the 400th year anniversary of the construction of the Süleymaniye Mosque Complex, Menderes tasked Ülgen with the repairs and restoration of the compound. At the time, Ülgen was supervising 270 restoration projects across the country.

To achieve the timeless image of the Süleymaniye Mosque, Menderes requested Ülgen to clean the stone-masonry exterior walls and expose impeccable surfaces (Figure 7). Based on GEEAYK's decision on April 19 1957, Ülgen utilized a chisel (*murç*) to remove the dirt from the walls. Some peer architects, however, criticized Ülgen for altering the authentic measurements of the masonry walls and deeply abrading the stonework. Ülgen countered the criticisms by noting that the removal of years of accumulated dirt would culminate in one-two millimeters loss of the wall surface. The process, therefore, would not alter the integrity (Ergezen 1963).

Following the 1960 Turkish coup d'état, which marked the end of the DP government, the National Unity Committee (*milli birlik komitesi*), suspended the Süleymaniye project; removed Ülgen and his fellow staff from the office. Ülgen stood trial due to allegations of fraud and ill-treated physical interventions. Separate commissions inspected the project. The state commission focused on the misuse of state funds and improprieties in the fieldwork. Besides, technical committees including members from the Academy and Istanbul Technical University probed the application of preservation treatments.

Technical committees addressed lack of a scientific methodology in Ülgen's work. The committees asserted Ülgen's negligence during the fieldwork, his personal bias in physical interventions, and his disregard of documentation of the physical conditions before and after the treatments.



The committees criticized Ülgen's stylistic preference of the sixteenth century Turkish architecture, and his removal of the nineteenth century additions applied by the Swiss-Italian architects, Fossati brothers. Although the committees found the Fossati alterations "disgraceful" to the authentic "Turkish" context created by Sinan, they asserted that removing elements without thorough documentation and research culminated in the loss of the integrity of the space and speculated a pseudo-architectural composition.

Another major argument included the restoration of *darülhadis* and *darülkurra* in the complex. In 1957, the original layout of *darülhadis* had been considerably altered, while *darülkurra* was in ruins (Figure 3). Both structures were surrounded with squatter settlements and many of the authentic materials had vanished. Before the restoration, Ülgen approached academicians, architects, and antiquarians of the era, such as Eldem, Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi (1899-1984), Reşat Ekrem Koçu (1905-1975), Nadir Nadi (1908-1991), and Salahaddin Refik Sırmalı, to request for archival information. Yet, the extent of the historical records they provided for the

restoration of *darülhadis* and *darülkurra* is not clear. Subsequently, technical committees alleged Ülgen for introducing physical interventions without scientific evidence.

Contrary to the allegations, Ülgen had refrained from personal decisions and followed GEEAYK's rulings. In his official statement to the National Unity Committee, November 16 1960, Ülgen notes that limited personnel and lean state budget created field contingencies. The scarcity of construction materials of lead and lumber culminated in the delay of dome repairs. Furthermore, GEEAYK's delayed decision for the treatment of the nineteenth century calligraphy, suspended the restoration.

The charges for Ülgen's work were frequently published in newspapers. Although Ülgen was eventually acquitted and returned to the Süleymaniye project, the critiques against his professional judgment exhausted him (*Ahunbay 2013; Yücel 2015*). Ülgen (1961) inscribes his resentment to Koçu, the notorious author and historian, "...People envious of your great work are the ones who have sentiments of inferiority. Thus, may God bless all my friends with protection from assaults of these people. Since I experienced similar bitter incidents, I fully understand what you mean... [Following Koçu's letter about his growing professional solitude when compiling the *Encyclopedia of Istanbul*]."

After a life dedicated to safeguard the historic architecture of the nation, the allegations deeming Ülgen's line of work in the Süleymaniye project "arbitrary" paved the way for his untimely loss. Ülgen had a heart attack and retrieved to his home in Ankara (*Aktur 2010; Yücel 2015*). As a result of a plane crash in a nearby mall, GİMA, on February 8 1963, Ülgen had a shock attack and sadly died.

Concluding Remarks

In *On Architecture: Philosophy of Architecture and Historical Development*, one of his unpublished book manuscripts, Ülgen (1947b, 46) inscribes "...architecture is [a form of] art. This statement is sufficient enough to distinguish architecture from mere decent construction. Architecture,

can only become [a form of] art when it BECOMES FREE FROM ANY TYPE OF ENDORSEMENTS [author's emphasis] and strives to achieve beauty without a bias."

Paradoxically, Ülgen's rhetoric of architecture was not free from the political tendencies. His narrative resonated with a point of validation for the republican present in which historical references were encapsulated through forms of built heritage. Entangled with the Turkish History Thesis, Ülgen strove to provide an architectural discourse for framing the exclusiveness of the national unity, but also the inclusiveness of the state in the ranks of the modern world.

Ülgen equated the essence of national architecture to the purity of structural elements. In his writings, Ülgen favored a transnational architectural culture for the evolution of building elements. In this plot, the Seljuk architecture with heavily ornate designs was the transmitter of the Turkish national essence into pure, unpretentious, but elegant sixteenth century Ottoman architecture. Crystallized by the works of Sinan, Ülgen extensively documented and studied architectural works to exhibit the pure forms embedded in the architecture of the nation.

A zealous idealist, Ülgen dedicated his life to fashion the provisions for the protection of monuments of the nation. His letter to the Minister of Education, Hasan Âli Yücel (1897-1961), exhibits Ülgen's pride and diligence, "I did not commit myself to this profession solely to make a living. My hard work, even when I was a high school student, portrays my passion to science and art." (1944)

To Ülgen, architectural monuments are the "products of the land and the societies who belong to that land." Republicans are obligated to protect the national architecture, which unfortunately did not fully materialize due to the sea of changes in the political stories of governing parties. Selective memories of the past perpetuated certain forms of understanding and engaging with the present, seen in the political shift to redefine Islamic heritage under the DP

rule. Yet, due to his tenure at governmental agencies, Ülgen was entangled with the reconstruction of heritage in the changing political identities. His preservation work for Süleymaniye Mosque Complex became an icon to represent the proclivities of the Menderes government.

“...Our greatest mistake is to forget our primary mission: reckoning historic traditions and cultivating idealist persons...” writes Ülgen in 1961, in a letter to Refi Cevat Ulunay (1890-1968), the renowned journalist and novelist. The lack of interest in heritage conservation in educational, financial, and political policies along with the pervasiveness of destroying historic buildings in contemporary Turkish culture is a timely reminder of Ülgen’s insight●

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