

prolegomenon to the study of ayvalık

"...I had made the map of Galata myself, walking in streets and squares roundabouts, pacing from one end to another. For Galata might be refounded according to my book if destroyed one day or wiped off from the surface of the earth. That's why Galata is a map- narrative . A geological crusade. There speaks the streets, houses and places, instead of the people."

İlhan Berk

(*İnferno*. Yapı Kredi Yay. İstanbul, 1994. p.125)

"...I think humanity is in layers. You know, remnants of history stay in the soil. The water is said to keep traces as well. A new discovery, by a French scientist. He says even the water has a memory too. However, it is rather difficult to recapture men's memory."

Abidin Dino

(*Simurg* a documentary, Yapı Kredi, 1994)

The earth, the atmosphere and the waters, i.e. all layers of nature, are found to have memories. Traces in the soil do not disappear. Archaeology defines itself as the 'memoriology' of soils. A recent discovery about sounds in the atmosphere claimed that sound waves never disappear after abandoning our hearing thresholds, and they circulate with an eternal sway in the air. It is scary to think that all voices and speech of the past may be deciphered one day. Every stir of water is known to be coded in an arcane molecular memory, which kept the record of the oscillation of continuous waves.

The historical existence of a city also depends on such an 'ingrained' consciousness of collective memory back to Ancient Greece, even Ancient Egypt. The written histories of the cities occupy not more than a restricted part in the genealogy of this memory. However, James Joyce wanted his adorable *monument d'écriture*, *Ulysses* to recreate the full vision of his city, Dublin, if one day it is totally erased from the face of the world. He examined every object of the city under microscope, with a schizophrenic anxiety. However the essential identity of the city is nothing but an ever spoken oral history codified within the memory of its citizens. That is the hub of civic consciousness.

The idea of place and rapport with the land in the human mind is older than the antiquity of the city: parallel to man's settled nature. In Ancient Greece, the *topos* of a temple was no ordinary place. By the enactment of rituals this chaotic / savage piece of land was transformed into the civilized world of *kosmos*, the order and possession of human(e)-life. The cities were founded similarly; at a moment of sanctification, a sacred piece of land, *topos* was transformed into *chora*, territory of the city. From then on, the society and their specific practices were almost anchored to that place. Accumulated on top of each other, *strata* of settlements formed the historicity of the land. A new trace, an addition of building, or a destruction of one, would be the memorandum of the collective memory.

Early maps at the birth of cartography, as Calvino indicates in his "A Traveller on the Map", included historical narratives about the topography of a place. This descriptive style that demanded to add the notion and dimension of time to a geographical image, would for example, provide the illustration of a river with its story related to its floods on the parchment.

Land -or the place- shapes people living on it. Eating bread out of its wheat and drinking its water, man sinks in this magma; the earth absorbs man into its heterogeneous structure and gives him form. With the rise of urban culture, the sense of place and the identity it provides for its inhabitants can be only discussed by means of the city. As Orhan Pamuk indicates in his *Black Book*, the city, as one wanders through its streets, make up the mapping of his own face.

In the subsurface of this relation of man with the land and the city is the idea of an exchange. As the so-called geographies molds man in its gorgeous vessel; the human being undertakes the position to be both the object and the subject of this memory. The idea of *possession* came to a privileged position in the 20th century, to define the relations between the man and the land. As

response to the land's influence on man, the man claimed for possession on land itself. Thus, the human being who is forced to move away from his homeland, both experiences a biological crises and an existential one: as a result of being dispossessed from lands he owned which confirmed his settled identity and memory, as well as tied him to life.

Starting from these observations, it is essential to follow a land/locality oriented geographical culture, that shaped the language, the religion and the traditions of its society. The rising political-nationalist ideals of 20th century, that lacerated this culture, depends on an illusion of private ownership at its origins. The discourse of a homogeneous nation and the land it puts a claim on, annihilates the culture of the land and ethnical differences. The governing power and the people on which it sees every right to exercise repression, are confronted by means of an artificial political relationship; while the right to have rapport with a specific land or city is being aggressively denied by banishments. Against the artificially structured pile of so-called totalities of a nation, it is important to revive the vernacular culture and its collective memory.

The area of interest of this book unavoidably preserves all aspects that ties man to the land and the city. If the collective memory, this historical memoranda is codified in the objects of urban life, it is clear that the encoding of this memoranda is only possible by the reading of these objects. The geography of 'urban objects' stands as a map narrative waiting to be deciphered. Architecture, as a narrative of social consciousness and historical continuity, needs to be handled with its anthropomorphic aspects, from window pediments to tiles of the ives, from the *Kafeneion* to the courts of churches.

The historical and cultural cartography of the city of **Ayvalık**, in the context of such a geographical discussion, exhibits a very diversified, colorful geography. This land of dramatic rises and falls, as well as fracture and disintegration, has been an exceptional and special settlement all through its (non-)obstructed life since the 17th century. Its important geographical position (where the Mediterranean opened to Asia Minor and Asia Minor opened to the Mediterranean) is supported by its ethnical diversity and intellectual liveliness.

Ayvalık witnessed almost all of the evolutionary stages of European thought since the Enlightenment (industrial revolution, neohellenism, orientalism, etc.). The Academy of **Ayvalık**, established in the second half of the 18th century was very prestigious in the Aegean; its fame penetrated into Europe. (Richard Clogg, 'Two Accounts of the Academy of Ayvalık', *Revue des Etudes Sudest Européens*, X, 4 pp. 633-667. Budapest, 1972). With the establishment of a printing press in the city which produced books and newspapers, at the beginning of the 19th century, the city celebrated an "enlightenment culture". This neohellenic revivalism was also reflected in its exceptional architecture.

The diverse oriental culture of Anatolia, the fecund mother, has influenced this western propensed community and the cultural geography of their city, which appeared as a juxtaposition of East and West. Similar to other Turko-Greek settlements in Asia Minor, a common ground has been formulated that shaped both languages and traditions,.

With the rapid rise of Smyrna in the 17th and 18th centuries, **Ayvalık** became a focal trade point in the mercantile atmosphere in the Aegean, being situated at a point where Aegean mercantile routes met Anatolian silk and spice routes. The culture of the land met the culture of the sea in **Ayvalık**, where a lively bourgeois urban life flowered. Not breaking with their roots with agricultural production and building up an industry of olive workshops, the **Ayvalikiots** supplied most of the olive, olive-oil and soap demand of Istanbul and the Ottoman Palace for about 200 years.

Histories of not many cities must have witnessed so many dramatic seperations of its citizens from their land: that's why the history of **Ayvalık** is a story of disintegration and fracture. The greatest of those many banishments / abandonings of the **Ayvalık** community in the Greek Revolution in 1821, exile in 1917 and the Minorities Exchange in 1923; were recorded in the memories as the deep wounds by (political) hands over the city.

This narrative is a trial of a redreaming and reconstruction of **Ayvalık** in *man, history* and *things*. It is a debt of the heart.