

Conclusion

Yaşar Kemal starts his masterpiece *Memed, My Hawk* with a sharp description of the rural landscape of Anatolia. He romantically describes the landscape through the Taurus Mountains rising from the Mediterranean coast “covered with a tangle of brushwood, reeds, blackberry brambles, wild vines, and rushes, its deep green expanse seems boundless, wilder and darker than a forest.”¹ Yet, when the story continues, he dramatically portrays a picture of the Turkish village and villagers still grappling with poverty and social underdevelopment after more than 30 years of republican rule. Kemal’s novel, based on an insider’s observation of a village community, shows the impact of the early republican deal, which often emphasized modernizing and nationalizing the country rather than the actual needs and problems of the rural community. Moreover, this book intends to unfold different layers of nation-building and modernization endeavors in Turkey during the early republic by addressing this disconnection between the government and the governed society via village planning. Therefore, the research concentrated on clarifying relevant facts through the historiography of early republican village planning, highlighting the argument in a spatial context, and considering the theme in different geographical, cultural, social, and economic circumstances. At the beginning of the studies for this book, other rural settlement implementations were trialed in various locations for possible consideration. Many of these rural settlements have disappeared due to uncontrolled urbanization approaching rural areas, the underdevelopment of the settlements, and/or the state’s larger projects.

The cases of İzmir and Elazığ presented here have been chosen among because they allowed an architectural investigation followed by an architectural documentation. Yeniköy Village especially retains the original form of the republican settlement in its site organization and houses. This settlement gen-

1 Yaşar Kemal, *Memed, My Hawk*, 3.

erated a sample of the “modern Turkish village” after the construction of other buildings such as a school, gendarmerie, public park, nursery, and shops. On the other hand, in Havuzbaşı and Taşkesik villages the settlements have been reformed due to the contemporary needs of the village community, and the houses have been modified by the residents themselves.

According to official documents, ten new settlements were built in Elazığ during the 1930s. However, today only four of these survive in the neighborhoods of (Kövenk) Güntaşı, (Vertetil) Yazıkönak, (Etminik) Altınçevre, (Perçenç) Akçakiraz, along with the houses built in the former republican settlements. Most of the rural settlements were demolished following uncontrolled growth after the population flow from neighbouring provinces in the 1950s. Some of them were submerged due to construction of the Water Reservoir of Keban Dam, starting in 1966. Today, the best-preserved settlement is located in Yazıkönak district – the former Vertetil Village – where it still displays the characteristics of the original settlement.

Residents of the planned rural settlements built in the 1930s in İzmir and Elazığ express a common feeling of nostalgia for the history of the adaptation period to their new “homeland”. In İzmir, Yeniköy, Havuzbaşı and Taşkesik, the whole immigration story – from leaving the land of origin to landing and settling into Turkey – has been told to residents by preceding generations in the form of significant personal memoirs. Most of them referred to the settlements as “Atatürk’s Villages”, even promoting the “heroic-character” of the founder and the first president of Turkey. Current residents show a great respect and nostalgia towards the early republican programs as they gave them “a house to sleep in, bread to eat, animal and land to survive” in this particular brand new place. In other words, they carry the immigration story with them and add the bond with the new home as their “national” origin place.

In Elazığ today’s residents acquaint themselves with the early republican implementations in their villages. However, many settlers who were housed in these settlements in 1930s moved to the western provinces, starting in the 1950s. The people who remained there narrate how their ancestors struggled to survive in the harsh land, which was much less fertile than that of their countries of origin. And they state that their ancestors, most of the time, taught them how to cultivate the land and animals with the new techniques of the locals. Those who left reunited with their relatives in the western provinces where the soil and climate were more similar to their home countries.

The rural settlements, constructed in the early republican period of Turkey, had a great impact on the rural landscape by changing the physical environ-

ment and relocating people. From the 1930s they became models of Kemalist interventions, of which the consequences and traces are still observable in the countryside. They were elaborated as particular forms to generate the modern Turkish village in accordance with the socio-cultural, economic, and demographic programs in which the regime often sought a formula through regulations, legislative instructions, specific associations, and actors, and building practices aiming to re-shape rural Turkey.

Starting from the early republican period, methods to reform the countryside have been altered by different governments under different ideologies in Turkey's political milieu, while the rural population – still the largest group in the country – has remained underprivileged. Up until the 1980s the focus of the state remained on the rural population, despite the urbanization of Turkey that gradually started in the 1950s. In other words, Turkey witnessed the instrumentalization of rural people for political purposes for a long time in its history. In this regard, villages built during the early republic have maintained a critical position in the maneuvers that regimes have usually negotiated between the consolidation of political power and the community in rural Turkey.

These specific settlements have emerged as representative sites to comprehend the profound strategies of the state legitimation practices that still affect the lives in the social, economic, and cultural spheres. Their values in architecture and planning correspond with the modernist aesthetic and technique while becoming examples of places to build a controlled environment that appears to be prevalent among authoritarian regimes even today. Consequently, the documentation of *Forming the Modern Turkish Village* discloses another vein of the architectural history of early republican Turkey and contributes to an interdisciplinary observation field by suggesting a critical reading for idealized rural Turkey, its history, and its people.

