ISTANBUL'S HAGIA SOPHIA:
CHALLENGES OF MANAGING SACRED PLACES
Santa Sofía: Desafíos en la gestión de lugares sagrados

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ABSTRACT

Istanbul's Hagia Sophia was inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985 as a part of the Old City of Istanbul. The site's Outstanding Universal Value 'resides in its unique integration of architectural masterpieces that reflect the meeting of Europe and Asia over many centuries, and in its incomparable skyline formed by the creative genius of Byzantine and Ottoman architects' (UNESCO 2013). However, a simple taxonomic classification of Hagia Sophia as a museum or an architectural masterpiece that aesthetically tells the story of the city's multi-layered, cross-cultural past, falls short of providing answers that relate to its religious history and how those relationships with the building have shifted over time. Hagia Sophia is more than just a fossilized site boasting some of the finest examples of Byzantine and Islamic art and architecture; instead, it carries with it a sense of place that is related to people's sense of identity.

Although the building now serves a secular function, it is still imbued with a spiritual heritage seen by many Muslims and Christians who recognize this building as part of their religious histories. Hagia Sophia was turned into a museum in 1935 following the secularization of Turkey. Since then, the management approach towards Hagia Sophia has fit into the framework of what is termed the Authorized Heritage Discourse, disregarding any ascribed sacred values that many still attribute to the site. However, Hagia Sophia is continuously imbued with value and meanings, which I argue, make it a site of Living Heritage as defined by ICCROM, presenting a unique challenge for heritage managers. With a history so integral to two religions, we must consider the ways in which this structure is being managed and the implications that has on the communities with whom it resonates.

This paper will examine the history of Hagia Sophia, focusing on how the building's symbolism and function is called into question, and certain managerial decisions that emphasize the disjuncture between managing the building as a museum and as a religious space, de-emphasizing the building's role as either or. I will then argue that Hagia Sophia should be considered living heritage yet I contend that the current methods in place for managing living heritage do not adequately

address the issues present at Hagia Sophia. By tracing the problem areas within the current management systems, this presentation suggests a potential solution to managing the needs of Hagia Sophia.

Key words: Heritage management, living heritage, sacred sites, Hagia Sophia, interpretation, perception, nationalism

RESUMEN

Hagia Sophia, en Estambul, fue inscrita en la lista de Patrimonio Mundial de la Unesco en 1985 como parte de la Antigua ciudad de Estambul. El Valor Excepcional Universal del sitio 'reside en su integración única de obras maestras de la arquitectura que reflejan la unión de Europa y Asia a lo largo de los siglos, y en su incomparable perfil formado por el genio creativo de arquitectos otomanos y bizantinos' (UNESCO 2013). Sin embargo, una simple clasificación taxonómica de Hagia Sophia como un museo o una obra maestra que cuenta estéticamente la historia del pasado diverso e intercultural de la ciudad, no es suficiente para proporcionar las respuestas relacionadas con su historia religiosa y con cómo esas relaciones con el edificio lo han cambiado a lo largo del tiempo. Hagia Sophia es más que un simple lugar fosilizado, muestra algunos de los mejores ejemplos del arte y la arquitectura bizantina e islámica; de hecho, lleva consigo un sentido de pertenencia que está vinculado con el sentido de identidad de la gente.

Aunque el edificio tiene ahora una función secular, todavía sigue imbuido con un patrimonio espiritual visto por muchos musulmanes y cristianos quienes reconocen a este edificio como parte de sus historias religiosas. Hagia Sophia fue convertida en museo en 1935 tras la secularización de Turquía. Desde entonces, el tratamiento patrimonial de Hagia Sophia se ha encuadrado en lo que se conoce como el Discurso Patrimonial Autorizado (Authorized Heritage Discourse), sin considerar los valores sagrados asignados que todavía muchos siguen atribuyendo al lugar. Sin embargo, Hagia Sophia está continuamente imbuida con valor y significados que, como argumento, convierten al lugar en un Patrimonio Viviente como es definido por el ICRROM, presentando un desafío único para los gestores patrimoniales. Con una historia tan integral para dos religiones, debemos considerar las maneras en las cuales esta estructura está siendo gestionada y las implicaciones que esto tiene sobre las comunidades en las que resuena.

Este trabajo examinará la historia de Hagia Sophia centrándose en cómo el simbolismo del edificio y su función son puestos en duda y en ciertas decisiones de gestión que enfatizan la disyuntiva entre gestionar el edificio como un museo y como un espacio religioso, restándole importancia al papel del edificio como lo uno o lo otro. Sostengo a continuación que Hagia Sophia deberá ser considerado patrimonio viviente aunque afirmo que los métodos actuales en práctica para gestionar el patrimonio viviente no abordan adecuadamente las cuestiones presentadas en

Hagia Sophia. A través del seguimiento de las áreas problemáticas dentro de los sistemas actuales de gestión, esta presentación sugiere una solución potencial para gestionar las necesidades de Hagia Sophia.

Palabras clave: *Gestión patrimonial, patrimonio viviente, lugares sagrados, Hagia Sophia, interpretación, percepción, nacionalismo.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Situated in the crowded Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul stands Hagia Sophia, aesthetically telling the story of the city's multi-layered, cross cultural past, symbolizing the city and it's histories. At the same time however, it represents a conflict of ideologies that has been at the nation's core since 1923; a conflict that has, over time, 'acquired the quality of a national obsession in Turkey' (Kandiyoti 2012: 514). The building is an intersection of sacred and secular and represents a long history of religious dominance, contested pasts, and symbolic triumphs. Hagia Sophia is a unique building that currently presents a challenge for heritage managers. With a history so integral to two religions, we must consider the ways in which this structure is being managed and the implications that it has on the communities with whom it resonates.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Commissioned by Emperor Justinian in 532 AD, Hagia Sophia has become known as one of the greatest architectural masterpieces of its time. The Hagia Sophia that stands today was built on the site of two earlier churches that bore the same name. Serving as the seat of the Patriarch of Constantinople and the throne to the Byzantine Emperors, the building functioned as the most decorated Christian basilica for nearly 900 years. It remained a Christian place of worship until 1453 when the Ottoman Empire gained control of then Constantinople. Sultan Mehmed II, leader of the Ottoman Empire, recognized 'Hagia Sophia's imperial prestige and monumental magnificence' and converted it into a mosque, while retaining the same name with a new Turkified spelling, Ayasofya[1] (Necipoglu 1992: 196). The new Muslim occupiers aesthetically altered the structure in numerous ways, adding minarets, covering up the Byzantine iconography and artistically decorating the interior with symbols of the Islamic faith (Figure 1).

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1 There are three traditional spellings for Hagia Sophia: Hagia Sophia (Western), Ayasofya (Turkish) and Agia Sophia (Greek). This paper will use the Western spelling, Hagia Sophia, as it is the spelling most commonly used in current academic literature.
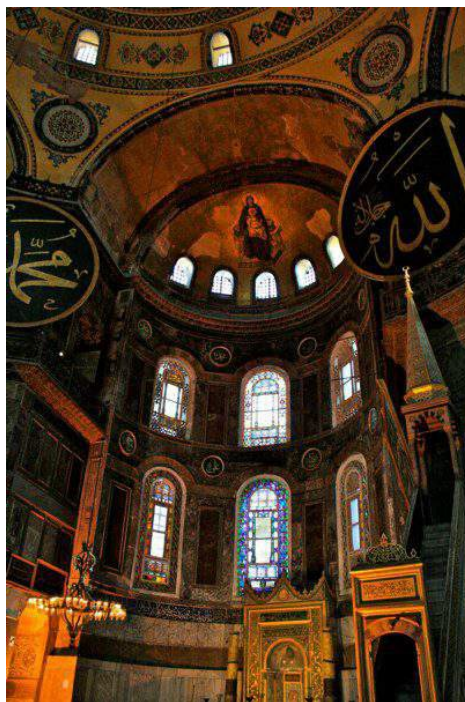
Figure 1. Interior of Hagia Sofia showing both Christian and Islamic symbolism

The building functioned as a mosque up until the end of the First World War; after Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was elected President of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, he instituted a complete reorganization and modernization of the new state. One of the major changes that came as a result of the secularization was the conversion of Hagia Sophia from a mosque into a museum as Necipoglu (1992) explains,

> 'The imperial and religious associations that the Ayasofya Mosque came to acquire [during the] Ottoman rule had to be neutralized under the secular Turkish Republic… The mosque had become too closely linked with the legitimacy of the Ottoman past from which the new government chose to sever its ties' (225).

Hagia Sophia continues to function as a museum today and in 2013, was the second most visited museum/archaeological site in Turkey attracting 3.3 million visitors and contributing about one fourth of the overall ticket revenue from all cultural heritage sites in the nation (Kultur Varliklari ve Muzeler Genel Mudurlugu 2013); its importance in Turkey's tourism industry is unparalleled.

3. THE USE OF HAGIA SOPHIA IN FORGING A NEW TURKISH IDENTITY

The transition of Hagia Sophia from a mosque to a museum was an important step in the transformation of Turkey from a religious state to a secular[2] one. The building began being cast as a symbol of this transition into a modern, secular state. The link between archaeology and nationalism is one that has been widely explored (Kohl & Fawcett 1995; Diaz-Andreu & Champion 1996; Sørensen 1996; Kane 2003). During the establishment of the newly formed Turkish state, this link was particularly strong; the new nation instituted 'a simplified functionalist top-down model, where a group of people with clear political aims codify a specific history for consumption by the general public' (Sommer 2009: 104). Oncu (2007) states, 'In the cosmology of Turkish nationalism, Istanbul's name had been debased as emblematic of Ottoman decadence, pollution, miscegenation, against which the purity of a new national culture – located – in Ankara' was created' (236). Faced with the challenge of laying the foundation for a new modern state, Ataturk used severe methods to form a 'new Turkish identity based on the separation of mosque and state, ethnic and religious tolerance, and respect for both religious and secular Turkic traditions' (Baran 2010: 24). In order to establish this new identity, Ataturk relied, in part, on embracing the past of Turkey and re- inventing it for present purposes. Turkish heritage was beginning to be reimagined as ties were severed with the basic features of the Arab, Persian and Islamic worlds and emphasis was placed instead on modern and Western alternatives (Nachmani 2003: 87).

The effects of the secularisation of Turkey in 1923 under Ataturk's regime rippled throughout the country causing waves of political, administrative, and cultural change. To Ataturk, 'the role of Islam in Ottoman society and politics was responsible for the failure to modernize' (Toprak 2005: 30). He believed that the 'unity of religion was not essential for the formation of a nation' instead, a nation was formed by persons who 'share a rich historical legacy, have a sincere desire to live together, and have a common will to preserve their shared heritage (Bali 2006: 43). Ataturk and his colleagues issued a series of reforms to separate the state from the influences of Islamic religion; 'people began to see themselves as part of

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2 Defining 'secular' and 'sacred' varies greatly depending on context, and in Turkey especially, these terms are interpreted in many different ways. Secularism takes a unique form in Turkey; constitutionally it is a secular state, yet its historical and geographical circumstances create a particular atmosphere preventing secularism from fully manifesting (Dabestani et al 2012). With this in mind, 'one should not expect a full adaptation of secularism…[in] Turkey' (Topal 2011: 4). In the context of this discussion, secularism refers to a basic understanding of the separation between religion and politics, with an understanding that Hagia Sophia's current function is a 'secular' one, meaning 'not connected with religious or spiritual matters' (Oxford Dictionaries 2013b). Sacred, on the other hand, refers to something that is 'regarded with great respect and reference by a particular religion' (Oxford Dictionaries 2013a) or something 'recognized by individuals or groups as worthy of devotion, loyalty or esteem' (Jackson & Henrie 1983: 94).

a secular nation and not as part of a religious community, as had been the case in the Ottoman times' (Heper 2012: 81).

Instead of focusing on the 'religious and ethnic divisions that had plagued the diverse groups inhabiting Anatolia and the Eastern Balkans', Ataturk turned his attention towards creating a 'geographically based national identity' (Baran 2010: 9). However, the dominance of Istanbul as the most 'prominent symbol and bearer of Ottoman legacy' (Oncu 2007: 236) created issues for Ataturk. If a geographical identity were to be attained, this ideology attached to Istanbul would need to be re-negotiated. Özdogan (1998) describes, 'In creating a nation out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, it was essential to formulate an ideology that would assure national pride, give moral direction and identity' (116). Ataturk turned to the notion of culture to create this national pride, moral direction and identity in the city of Istanbul, claiming in 1936 'Culture is the foundation of the Turkish Republic' (Ministry of Culture 2013).

Attention was placed on re-vitalizing Istanbul and creating a national identity based on the previous cultures that thrived here. The focus became 'the generosity of the rule that accommodated a certain pluralism in the city' (Bora 1999: 49). Buildings that represented Ottoman dominance were either converted to serve secular functions (i.e. Hagia Sophia and Topkapi Palace) or retained their function and were opened to non-Muslim visitors (Blue Mosque), symbolizing the construction of a new national narrative and a new identity for Istanbul. The move towards a secular nation cast Hagia Sophia as a symbol of the plurality of Istanbul.

Hagia Sophia underwent various changes as a result of the Turkish secular movement. Upon the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1923, a newly formed Department of Religious Affairs was created (Article 136, The Constitution of the Turkish Republic). Prior to the secularisation, buildings including the Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia and Süleymaniye Mosque served religious functions and fell under the rule of the state. However, in 1924 when the new constitution was put in place, the Blue Mosque and Süleymaniye Mosque were placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Religious Affairs, and Hagia Sophia was placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Education (Deed of Hagia Sophia 1935), followed by the Undersecretariat for Cultural Affairs, and finally under the Ministry of Culture in 2003. This meant that Hagia Sophia now functioned very separately from any sort of religious constitution. The new ways of governing these structures has had profound impacts on the daily operation and use of each building. Stemming originally from the secular movement and then from a change in heritage management policy, these buildings took on new identities as being part of a larger national narrative.

Although Turkey was secularized in 1923, it was not until the 1950s that heritage became a technology of state through the establishment of the High Council of Monuments (Atakuman 2010:113). Following the Second World War, Turkey 'entered a new phase of politics that was characterized primarily by the search for closer union with Europe and the United States against the growing threat of communism flourishing among Turkey's neighbours' (Atakuman 2010: 113). The first democratic elections in 1950, 'dealt a major blow to the secular ideals of the Kemalist establishment' and a new identity politics formed focusing on an Islamized narrative (Atakuman 2010: 113). Atakuman states,

> 'Such conflicts between evidence and discourse have highlighted heritage as a dangerous issue; in turn, this has prompted attempts to remove heritage from the national consciousness and place it in the economic realm of touristic consumption. Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the 1980 military intervention, the Directorate of Cultural Assets and Museums was removed from the Ministry of Education and attached to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Atakuman 2010: 115).

The 1980s was a period of change in Turkey; a new constitution in 1982 and a new heritage law in 1983[3] firmly situated heritage within the state discourse and control (Ataukuman 2010: 115). It was also during this decade that Turkey applied for membership in the European Union and ratified the World Heritage Convention (WHC). In 1984, it submitted its first nominations to the WHC with the Old City of Istanbul as one of the candidates; this 'carried subtle messages of the state supported ideological orientation' as 'Istanbul…was a living monument to Turkish-Islamic tolerance' (Atakuman 2010: 116). A year later, in 1985, the Old City of Istanbul was inscribed onto the UNESCO World Heritage List (WHL) and as a result the preservation of these sites was made a priority. The nomination and subsequent inscription of the Old City of Istanbul onto the WHL was very politically important in a time when Turkey was trying to be put on equal footing with other European countries in the EU bid and when they were trying to situate themselves as independent yet similar to the Middle East. Scientific committees were put in place to take care of these structures (Ahunbay, interview, 26 March 2013) and construction around the area of Sultanahmet Square was carried out to protect the buildings from the human impacts of car pollution and heavy traffic. The secularisation of Turkey spurred off a chain of events in the heritage management practices of Turkey that contributed greatly to the increased physical preservation of these sites.

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3 Law 2863 on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assests

3.1 Symbol of Turkey

In the 1990s, following Turkey's EU rejection and a newfound distrust of the West as a result of the destructive economic effects of the Gulf War, Turkey faced a time of turmoil. Atakuman (2010) states, 'Turkey began looking for independent means by which to construct and protect its sovereignty while presenting the appearance of a regional superpower that Europe should seek to embrace' (118). Atakuman continues, 'new metaphors were created within the heritage discourse to glorify' Turkey (118). In the case of Hagia Sophia, Ataturk, 'used the policy of secularism to cast the building less as a palimpsest of religious practices than as one of cultural histories, where Byzantine and Ottoman legacies were to be shown side by side and equally defunct' (Shaw 2002: 932). 'To make Hagia Sophia a museum meant that it would be unlived. That was part of the idea' states leading scholar and conservator of Hagia Sophia, Zeynep Ahunbay (interview, 26 March 2013). Today a focus is placed on the architecture of the building to demonstrate the relationship between the 'east- west' .

Figure 2: Istanbul's Olympic bid logo for the 2020 Olympics showing the distinct skyline of the old city (Hurriyet Daily News 2013).

Furthermore, the distinct silhouette of Hagia Sophia is commonly seen alongside that of the Blue Mosque, a distinctly religious structure associated with the height of the Ottoman Empire, emphasizing again this binary further. Images of the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia as part of the Istanbul skyline have become staples to the city's identity. Most recently, this image has found itself integrated into Istanbul's failed 2020 Olympic bid logo (Figure 2). This logo, accompanied by the phrase 'Bridge Together', illustrates how images of these two buildings, Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque, are cast as representations of a harmonious relationship of past and present, East and West, secularism and Islam (Palmer

1999: 316). Here, Istanbul represents a nation and city where two very different cultures meet and exist in harmony. The repeated use of these images illustrates how the Ministry of Culture and Tourism 'relies upon a form of nationalistic rhetoric as a way of conveying images and meanings about what it considers to be the nation's communal heritage' (Palmer 1999: 316). The use of these images and phrases, examples of the 'language of heritage tourism', are 'a powerful force in the construction, promotion and maintenance of a national identity because it illuminates the historic symbols of the nation's identity and holds them up for communal veneration' (Palmer 1999: 319). Hagia Sophia and Blue mosque are like many heritage sites in that they 'represent a conglomerate of symbols and narratives composed of an accumulation of all their past and continually evolving meanings (Viejo-Rose 2011: 54-55). The use of this particular images, illustrates not the sacred aspects of the buildings but more so a selective view of the plural history of Istanbul.

A historical trajectory outlining the effects of secularisation on Turkey's heritage policy and practices illuminates the possible reason for the incongruence between the sacred and secular identity of Hagia Sophia. Prior to the secularisation, Haiga Sophia functioned as a religious place of worship; yet post-secularisation the building was cast as a symbol of the new Turkish state. Images of Hagia Sophia and the Istanbul skyline, which combines the silhouettes of Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque, have been used in appropriating Turkey's national narrative. The importance of these buildings in Turkish nationalism exemplifies the secular commitment that the government has in maintaining these buildings as such.

4. ENCOUNTERING THE SACRED AT HAGIA SOPHIA

The existence of Hagia Sophia under different cultural and political groups has given the structure a unique aesthetic that represents the multi-layered past of the city of Istanbul. It is this distinct combination of architectural styles that contributed to the inscription of the Old City of Istanbul, of which Hagia Sophia is a part, to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985 with the site's Outstanding Universal Value residing 'in its integration of architectural masterpieces that reflect the meeting of Europe and Asia over many centuries' (UNESCO 2013). However, a simple taxonomic classification of Hagia Sophia as a museum or an architectural masterpiece that aesthetically tells of the city's multi-layered, cross-cultural past, falls short of providing answers that relate to its religious history and how those relationships with the building have shifted over time. Hagia Sophia is more than just a fossilized site boasting some of the finest examples of Byzantine and Islamic art and architecture; instead it carries with it a sense of place that is related to people's sense of identity.

Although the building now serves a secular function it is still imbued with a spiritual heritage seen by many Muslims and Christians who recognize this building as part of their religious histories. Hagia Sophia is 'a true lieu de memoire in which a wide variety of memories (Christian-Byzantine and Islamic Ottoman) crystallized, passing down from one generation to the other and continually being reinterpreted according to changing contexts' (Necipoglu 1992: 225). Hagia Sophia has functioned as a museum for over eighty years, the building continues to elicit emotionally charged responses from groups of people who revere the site as a sacred place. These responses are often seen in the form of protests, attempted worship, and actions of concern and arise as a result of individuals feeling that Hagia Sophia's sacred integrity is being compromised by its secular function as a museum.

Many events representing such feelings have occurred recently, highlighting the relevancy of these issues. In May of 2014, '40,000 Turkish Muslims assembled on mats in front of Istanbul's Hagia Sophia Museum in an organized prayer of protest calling for the famed basilica's conversion back to a mosque' (Seligson 2015). Salih Turan, head of the Anatolian Youth Association commented, 'Ayasofya is a symbol for the Islamic world and the symbol of Istanbul's conquest' (Seligson 2015). A similar prayer event occurred in May of 2012, again organised by the Anatolian Youth Association. Turan stated at the time, 'Keeping Hagia Sophia Mosque closed is an insult to our mostly Muslim population of 75 million… as the grandchildren of Mehmet the Conqueror, seeking the re-opening Hagia Sophia as a mosque is our legitimate right' (Yackley 2012). Turan has collected over 15 million signatures petitioning for Hagia Sophia to return to a mosque exemplifying the relevance of this issue, even after eighty years of the site's secular function. In February 2013, a group of citizens from the province of Kocaeli recently filed a petition to the Turkish government requesting to change the status of Hagia Sophia from a museum to a mosque (Hurriyet Daily News 2013). The request was met with Prime Minister Erdogan's dismissal, as he stated 'We have our Sultanahmet [Blue] Mosque just next to the Hagia Sophia. Leave the Hagia Sophia aside and fill up the Sultanahmet' (Bozkurt 2013). In addition to the museum's function being called into question, the building as a religious symbol has spurred controversy. In January 2013, Lego issued model toy set that a Turkish community felt resembled Istanbul's Hagia Sophia. The model, Jabba's Palace, caused upset from the Turkish Cultural Community of Austria upon the release of the item on shelves. The group 'called on Lego to apologise for affronting religious and cultural feelings' calling the act of selling the structure 'pure racism' (Nelson 2013).

However, it is not just members of the Muslim community expressing their interest in converting Hagia Sophia back into a religious place of worship. In

September 2010, a group of 200 Orthodox Christians, led by Chris Spirou, the president of the International Congregation of Agia Sophia, planned to 'conduct Holy Liturgy Services in the Holy Church of Agia Sophia, the Great Church of Christianity and the symbol of the Orthodox Christian Faith' (Spirou 2009). The group's plans were cancelled for an undisclosed reason, yet Culture Minister Ertugrul Günay stated 'The state will take measures against such efforts' and that the iconic site would never host any type of religious service, maintaining its status as a museum (Hurriyet Daily News 2010).

In order to understand these events and why they might have occurred, it is useful to look at Hagia Sophia as a type of dissonant heritage. According to Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) 'Dissonance in heritage involves a discordance or a lack of agreement and consistency… The attempted creation of a universal heritage which provides an equal but full inheritance for all, is not only essentially illogical but the attempt to approach it rapidly creates its own problems' (21). The conversion of Hagia Sophia into a museum attempted to cast this building as universal heritage. However, the various phases of conversion of Hagia Sophia still heavily remain in the collective memory. Not only has Hagia Sophia become 'a symbol of Islam's victory over Christianity and the West' but 'political Islam never forgave Ataturk for decreeing Ayasofya a museum in 1935' (Bora 1999: 50). Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) suggest we use a phenomenon known as 'misused heritage' to understand the range of feelings associated with Hagia Sophia. They explain, 'an extra dissonant dimension will occur when the heritage is felt to be not only misplaced but misused as a result of that misplacement. Here it may not be the heritage itself that is altered but the context in which it is placed or presented' (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996: 54). For some, Hagia Sophia is being 'misused' as a museum, creating tension and restoring religious feelings towards the structure.

4.1   Sacred or Secular?

It becomes evident from the events outlined above that there are still sacred qualities attributed to the site by various groups. However, since the secularization of Turkey rendered the building a non-religious site, there has been a constant disjuncture between the site as a 'secular museum' and as a 'religious heritage site'. Interpreting the ways in which Hagia Sophia is being represented and understood illustrate the difficulties and incongruences of incorporating these sacred views into the management approach of the building. Hagia Sophia is a unique heritage site that currently presents a challenge for heritage managers.

If one begins by analyzing the exterior of the site, this disjuncture between the building as a secular museum and a religious space becomes very clear. On the southeast side of Hagia Sophia is the 'Ayasofya' Mosque, opened in 1991 by the former Turkish President, Turgut Ozal. 'Historically it is not a mosque' states

former director Haluk Dursun, during the Ottoman times this was an annex building for the Sultans (interview, 29 March 2013). He continues, 'the building is a problem', not only does it not belong historically as there should not be a mosque within a mosque, but '[it] doesn't belong to the church [referring to the historical function of Hagia Sophia], [it] doesn't belong to the museum' (interview, 29 March 2013). Despite this however, the mosque uses the minarets of Hagia Sophia for the call to prayer. Audible from the loudspeakers affixed to the south and west minarets, the call to prayer can be heard from Hagia Sophia during the five prayer times as the verses alternate with that of the Blue Mosque. Despite the building functioning as a secular museum, the call to prayer continues to be recited from the Hagia Sophia minarets. On the opposite end of the southeast wall from the Ayasofya mosque, are located multiple shops selling various types of items from clothing, to rugs, to postcards (Figure 2).

Figure 3: Southeast wall of Hagia Sophia where both tourist shops as well as the Ayasofya Mosque are located.

Physically, these buildings are a part of the Hagia Sophia structure, however they do not sell any religious items. The location of the mosque on the one end of the southeast wall and the secularised shops on the opposite, creates a material area where religion interacts with civic and cultural practices, a space where the sacred and secular physically meet.

The use of Hagia Sophia's external structure as both a religious and a secular one further emphasizes the incongruence between these two ideologies, yet this phenomenon is also visible in the ways the administration chooses to administer the site itself. While there are obvious measures of profane secularism, there are

visible decisions that acknowledge the sacred qualities of Hagia Sophia, again creating a unique interaction between the religious and the secular. First, the guards strictly adhere to a rule that does not allow prayer to take place in the museum, enabling them to remove the person from the site if they are engaging in worship. This gesture of profound secularism represents the museum's decision to maintain the building's secular function. Additionally, the museum lacks interpretive material. It is unclear whether or not this is intentional[4] however, the fact that the available text panels at the front entrance, and the select labels accompanying restored icons or Islamic architecture focus on the historical and architectural significance of the structure rather than the religious significance of the building, further represents the museum's disengagement with the sacred qualities which many attribute to the site. Paine (2013) highlights that the design of a museum as well as what texts, illustrative materials or other interpretive techniques they employ, heavily influences and often determines the way visitors understand the objects being displayed and in this case the space itself (107). The lack of interpretive text minimizes the building's role as both a museum and as a sacred space. Additionally, the confusion between the building as sacred and secular is made more evident by the types of items sold in the museum gift shop. Not only do the museum stores at Hagia Sophia sell tourist-type items (pens, calendars, mugs etc.), but they also sell religious 'souvenirs' such as Christian icons and replicas of the Islamic medallions that hang in the nave of the structure, again questioning the role of the site as a museum and as a religious space.

There is a further disjuncture between Hagia Sophia as secular and Hagia Sophia as sacred as made evident by the ways in which The Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCaT), the administrative body over Hagia Sophia, represents the building. On the official tourism MoCaT website (kultur.gov.tr.), Hagia Sophia is categorized under the 'Religious Monuments' category as well as the 'Museums' section. This same pattern repeats on Turkey's official tourism portal (GoTurkey.com). Although the government bestows the title of 'museum' upon Hagia Sophia the role of the structure is not fully understood. Two labels have been given to Hagia Sophia, 'museum' and 'religious space'; however neither of them fully encapsulates the meaning or understanding of the site. There are still actions that point to the sacred qualities that many attribute to this building yet at the same time there are actions of profound secularism. Hagia Sophia proves to be a very unique heritage site that has yet to find a way to balance both the sacred and the secular aspects of the site.

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4 None of the interviewees, including the museum director, were able to explain why this phenomenon was occurring. The MoCaT is the body responsible for any changes made to the building, including exhibits and interpretive texts; further interviews could illuminate the reasoning behind these decisions.

5. CURRENT MODELS OF UNDERSTANDING HERITAGE

The heritage field has put forth several frameworks that heritage professionals use to understand and approach issues of heritage management. Three approaches dominate the field, the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), the Values Based Approach (VBA) and the Living Heritage Approach (LHA). Each of these models contributes to our understanding of heritage yet address different issues. Hagia Sophia is a unique site that has suffered a break in functional continuity as the site has changed from a church to a mosque to a museum. This, in turn, has made the job of the heritage manager at Hagia Sophia very difficult. Upon evaluation however, none of the frameworks in place serve the needs of Hagia Sophia due to its unique cultural biography.

5.1   *The Authorized Heritage Discourse as the model of preservation in practice*

It is helpful to look at the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) as a tool for a critical analysis of the managerial approach of Hagia Sophia. The AHD 'focuses attention on aesthetically pleasing material objects, sites, and places and/or landscapes that current generations 'must' care for, protect and revere' on behalf of the public (Smith 2006: 29). The current management of Hagia Sophia currently treats the site as a 'safely dead' space (Baillie 2011). It is evident however, that the space is not 'safely dead' but rather very much 'alive' as certain stakeholder groups continue to ascribe sacred qualities to the site which are visible and temporally relevant. The treatment of Hagia Sophia as a 'safely dead' site began in 1923 after the site was museified following the secularisation of Turkey. Invited by the government, architect-planner Henri Prost oversaw the planning of Istanbul from 1936 to 1951 as a consultant to the Municipality's Directory of Urban Planning (Bilsel 2011: 103). Prost's plan was to redesign 'the old city in a way to bring out its "glorious" monuments and silhouette, reminiscent of its imperial history' (Bilsel 2007: 112). In 2005, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality initiated a strategic development plan to rehabilitate the Historic Peninsula of which Hagia Sophia, Blue Mosque and Sultanahmet Square are a part, with the goal being heritagisation (Gezici & Kerimoglu 2010: 259). The area in which these sites are situated has been termed 'archaeological park'. The creation of this park creates a sense of history which 'has now been transformed into a prized collection of architectural fragments to be preserved in bits and pieces and protected from the sights, sounds and smells of local populations' (Oncu 2007: 234). Furthermore, the term 'archaeological park [denotes] dead architecture which is problematic because it implies that you don't need the spirit or the spirit does not exist' (Pasic, interview, 20 March 2013). This again, brings up the notion of 'safely dead' illustrating the ways in which this area is still being cared for under the ideas of the AHD. A similar phenomenon occurs at sites such as Angkor Wat (Baillie 2006;

Winter 2007) and Jerusalem (CinC 2012). At Hagia Sophia, it is evident that the museum administration has not found a model appropriate enough to manage the continuous sacred views that people ascribe to the site and an assessment of the current methods of heritage management reveals that they are not able to offer viable alternatives.

5.2 Limits of the current heritage management models

The Values Based Approach (VBA) 'has been developed since the 1980s, within the developments of post-processual archaeology…and is considered the current most preferred approach to heritage conservation' (Poulios 2010: 172). The VBA contrasts with the AHD and is defined as the 'the coordinated and structured operation of a heritage site with the primary purpose of protecting the significance of the place as defined by designation criteria, government authorities or other owners, experts of various strips and other stakeholders (Mason et al. 2003: 1). The principles of the VBA are rooted in the Burra Charter (ICOMOS Australia 2009) and have been further developed by the Getty Conservation Institute. A key concept of the VBA is that of stakeholders. Stakeholders ascribe value to sites, and this is the main reason heritage is conserved, 'because of the values imputed to it, not for the sake of the material itself' (Avrami et. al 2000: 25). The VBA approach however, cannot be applied to a potentially effective management scheme for Hagia Sophia. First, 'A values based approach tries to recognize and involve equally the whole range of the differing stakeholder groups and their differing values in the conservation and management of heritage' however 'the promoted equity of stakeholder groups and values is theoretically debased and impractical… any decision taken will inevitably favour certain stakeholder groups and   values at the expense of others' (Poulios 2010: 172 -173). The VBA also does not provide a way to determine which groups to choose and how to establish priorities amongst the stakeholders; for this reason, the VBA as a whole would not be able to be applied to Turkey's heritage management as much of the country's cultural heritage has stakeholders from different religious and ethnic backgrounds who may view each site differently. It also places an emphasis on 'one leading managing authority' to which Poulios (2010) argues, 'is not justified in the first place' (174).

As it currently operates, the centralized management approach that Turkey employs regarding their cultural heritage does not consult the stakeholders in any way. This presents an issue at many heritage sites with multiple stakeholders, however these issues are heightened at places such as Hagia Sophia where the views of the stakeholders differ dramatically. The views placed on Hagia Sophia by its stakeholders (Christians, Muslims, and the Turkish government), are incongruent with one another. If the VBA were to be applied to this situation, how would the needs of each group be evaluated and implemented equally?

Furthermore, who would act as the lead managing authority and how would that influence the decisions made? As the building currently operates, the religious values placed on the site are being marginalized, yet the VBA does not provide an appropriate alternative to managing this heritage site because it does not have a way to effectively deal with the different values of each stakeholder group.

ICCROM suggests the Living Heritage Approach (LHA) as an alternative to the VBA. The LHA concerns itself with living heritage, referring to 'sites, traditions, and/or practices which have been created overtime by many authors and which are still in use' (Baillie et al. 2009: 5). The LHA is defined as 'a community-based, bottom-up, interactive approach to heritage management…[whose] primary goal is to conserve the continuity of a core-community's connection with their Living Heritage' (Baillie et al. 2009: 9). It was developed as a response to the AHD and the VBA and created for sites such as Meteora in Greece (Poulios 2008), Temple of the Tooth in Sri Lanka (Wijesuryia 2000) and Angkor Wat in Cambodia (Baillie 2006) where the communities have a primary role in the management and conservation of their heritage. While this approach works for certain religious sites it does not appropriately engage with the issues that Hagia Sophia faces. If we consider the Blue Mosque for example, a place of living heritage where the function has remained the same through the course of the building's history, the LHA would succeed as a management approach. The management of the Blue Mosque focuses on the continual function of the site as a mosque and places the community attached to the site at its core. In line with the LHA which sees change in 'response to the changing circumstances in society' as 'an essential requirement for the survival and continuation of a living heritage site over the course of time to present' (Poulios 2010: 176), the Blue Mosque has adapted to the increase in tourists by balancing the needs of both the worshipping Muslim and the secular tourist. Additionally, the LHA relies on the core community to manage and care for the site (Poulios 2010: 176); this is representative of the way in which the Blue Mosque operates as it is run by volunteers as well as the Sultan Ahmet Mosque Protection and Improvement Foundation, a non- governmental volunteer based organization.

The current LHA framework however does not provide a viable solution for managing Hagia Sophia. First, the museum has altered its function over the past 1500 years. LHA is rooted in functional continuity, an aspect that Hagia Sophia lacks. Baillie et al. (2009) notes, that the primary aim of the LHA is to keep heritage 'alive', this entails continuing the core- community's connection to heritage' (33). While the connection to heritage has been kept alive by memory, functionally, the continuity has broken. Additionally, Poulios (2010) mentions change as an important idea in LHA, stating that 'Changes in the function, the space, and the community's presence, in response to the changing circumstances in society

at local, national, and international level, are seen as an inseparable element of continuity and an essential requirement for the survival and continuation of a living heritage site over the course of time to present' (175). Sharma (2006) continues, 'What we do not recognize is that change itself helps to keep the heritage 'alive' (in function, use) for the community… The real 'threat' however, comes when the community's own links with the heritage break' (10).

However, at Hagia Sophia, the very concept of change is what transformed the site from a 'living' site to a 'dead' one. Each time the building transformed in function, it was an action of dominance: the Ottoman Empire forcefully took over Hagia Sophia when it changed from basilica to mosque and when it transformed into a museum, the government imposed the secularisation of the building on the people. While the function of the building has changed, the communal links with Hagia Sophia have remained, yet the LHA does not acknowledge this because the building's functional continuity does not exist.

The LHA relies greatly upon a 'core community' described by Poulios (2010) as 'a specific community that retains its original association with [a heritage site] throughout time (continuity), by maintaining its function and continuing the process of its spatial definition and arrangement of the course of time to the present…This community is seen as an inseparable part of the site' (175-176). I argue, however, that many sites considered living heritage, such as Hagia Sophia, do not have a 'core community' as defined by Poulios (2010). Each phase of the site's existence defined a different 'core community': during the basilica phase, the core community were the Orthodox Christians, during the mosque phase, the Muslims, and during its secular phase the heritage managers in the form of the government. Although the site currently does not manifest in its original function, we cannot exclude these past groups who were once considered the core communities. While the LHA provides an appropriate way of understanding Hagia Sophia, the management approach that it puts forward cannot be applied to the site and other sites experiencing the same issues. I argue that while the approach as it currently stands limits its application at sites like Hagia Sophia the recognition of the site as living heritage may provide ways of moving forward and creating alternative frameworks of understanding.

5.3   *Finding a place for Hagia Sophia*

The current approach to managing Hagia Sophia does not cater to the various stakeholder groups and ignores the living aspect of the site. This approach seems to be representative of the way Turkey manages most of its cultural heritage. Atakuman (2010) points out, 'Turkey's history with heritage policy demonstrates that when speaking of diversity and tolerance in the country it has always been best to display "fossilized" sites in the hope of obscuring fundamental problems

at the living sites of contestation' (124). The heritage of Hagia Sophia has been ' "antiqued", not only in appearance but, rather more sinisterly, in being presented as if it was significant historically as well as merely ennobled by time' (Fowler 1989: 60). However, Hagia Sophia is a living site because people continually ascribe sacred value to it, 'it is the believed that the values, associations, and meaning attributed by people to any form of heritage can potentially render the later as living' (Alexopoulos 2013: 60). The current frameworks for managing heritage sites are not applicable to Hagia Sophia. Hagia Sophia is the confluence of two distinct religions and the junction of sacred and secular. This example illuminates the 'potential limits of defining what is an active or 'non- active', in religious terms, archaeological site' (Alexopoulos 2013: 62) and subsequently how these unique places can be appropriately managed and conserved. The reality is that the current approach to managing Hagia Sophia does not work, nor do the two other approaches that have been forth recently, and the MoCaT as well as heritage scholars 'should more actively engage in collaborative efforts to address and identify the challenges and opportunities posed by living religious heritage values' at secular sites (Alexopoulos 2013: 62).

The framework of the Living Heritage Approach is a positive step forward in the management of cultural heritage and has paved the way for a new understanding of heritage sites imbued with a 'living' aspect. As it currently stands, the framework applies the 'living' feature of heritage to certain sites, those with a 'core community'; yet there are many other sites, like Hagia Sophia, that can be considered living cultural heritage to which multiple core communities lay claim. I suggest that the first step forward in addressing some of the issues surrounding Hagia Sophia and other sites like it is a re-evaluation of the LHA and its definitions. Once Hagia Sophia is recognized and understood as living heritage, the role of the site's governing body should be addressed. Turkey's current approach to heritage management is a very top-down centralized approach that offers little flexibility to individual heritage site managers. While Turkey has been recently attempting to decentralise, these efforts have 'remained incomplete' and is 'far from having stabilised' (Bayraktar & Massicard, 2012: 37).

6. CONCLUSION

Hagia Sophia is a complex accretion of religion and history and stands in the middle of the longstanding conversation between the sacred and secular in Turkey. Its function has been intentionally altered numerous times and as a symbol it has been continuously re- appropriated. Today, Hagia Sophia is considered a museum. Yet, beneath this label manifests a unique relationship between the sacred and the secular.

Often revered for its significance as an art historical and architectural masterpiece, this discussion illuminates the underlying sacred qualities that continue to exist at Hagia Sophia despite its secular function. This study suggests that because of these continued connections to the site, Hagia Sophia should be considered a Living Heritage Site and should be managed so accordingly. The current approaches to heritage management as well as the centralised approach of the MoCaT however do not provide sufficient frameworks for managing a site like Hagia Sophia with cross-cultural claims. The study of the heritage management approach of Hagia Sophia and can offer great benefits not only to the preservation and understanding of Turkey's heritage but to other sites with a cross-cultural and overlapping religious heritage around the world. With the start of the Arab Spring in 2010, the U.S. looked to Turkey as model nation (Atlas & Gaouette 2013) as the country is able to act as a role model for a large swath of the world attempting to balance the dominance of the Islamic faith with a secular democracy (Altunisik 2005: 45). Although the recent events in Turkey, namely the protests in Gezi (Atay 2013) and Taksim Square (2014), question this 'model nation', the importance of Turkey as setting a standard for the Middle East does not go unnoticed. If heritage managers are able to develop a deeper understanding of how to approach heritage in Turkey, and sites of deeper meaning like Hagia Sophia, then potential doors will open regarding approaches to managing similar heritage in other contested parts of the world.

Hagia Sophia, however is merely one case study in the larger realm of Turkey's cultural heritage. The secular/religious debate has been on-going since 1923 and is still a present issue, especially in cities like Istanbul with 'multiple and multi-layered pasts' (Bora 1999: 32). Many scholars reflect on the divide and often times conflicting relationship between Islam and secularism in Turkey. This dichotomy continues today, with recent events such as the Gezi Park protests illuminating this issue. Demonstrations such as the ones in Gezi and around Turkey are breaching traditional ideological barriers. These demonstrations were a 'reaction of the secular-minded people…to the 'official' trend of intensification toward religious morality in daily life and the (secular) public space' (Atay 2013: 43). The relationship between sacred and secular is an on-going one in turkey and future research into these protests and the current movements in Turkey will be able to add knowledge to this relationship as it manifests in the present.

Turkey is in a situation where the secular and the sacred are constantly in conversation, and Hagia Sophia is no exception to this. Turkey needs to find a way to maintain a balance between these two ideologies and harmonize their relationship rather than intensify it. MoCaT needs to acknowledge that although many of the sites in Turkey are secularised, there are some to which people still ascribe sacred significance and changes need to be made accordingly. Haluk

Dursun put it simply: 'We own these things and we love them'. We must 'protect them for all the future generations'. We must 'have empathy and understanding' and learn to 'co-exist' with one another (interview, 29 March 2013). Perhaps if this mentality is embraced, then we will be able to find ways to move forward in heritage management practices regarding sites such as Hagia Sophia and others like it.

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