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The Preservation of Adobe Structures: Regulatory and Implementation Challenges in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Adobe, one of the earliest construction techniques, represents a significant component of the architectural heritage and cultural continuity of the Anatolian region. Despite its historical importance, many adobe structures today face a serious risk of deterioration and disappearance due to environmental factors, inappropriate interventions, and insufficient conservation practices. Preserving these structures is essential not only for maintaining their physical existence but also for sustaining traditional knowledge, local craftsmanship, and vernacular architectural values.

The challenges associated with the conservation of adobe buildings extend beyond material degradation. They are also closely related to shortcomings in legal frameworks, implementation processes, and management practices. This indicates that conservation policies cannot be effectively addressed through legislation alone; they must be supported by practical, site-specific applications.

Within the scope of this study, two settlement areas in Turkey were analyzed through a comparative approach: Harran, known for its adobe architecture and subject to partial conservation interventions, and the Zile Settlement, which, despite its designation as a protected site, has not yet undergone any substantial conservation implementation. These cases were selected to illustrate different levels of application within the national conservation system.

The findings reveal that the primary issue in adobe conservation is not merely the absence of regulations, but rather the inability to effectively implement existing legal frameworks, along with a lack of adequate technical guidance. In Harran, certain interventions were found to be incompatible with the original building materials, while in Zile, no physical conservation actions have been undertaken despite official decisions. This situation highlights deficiencies in continuity, monitoring, and supervision mechanisms within the conservation system.

International conservation principles emphasize minimal intervention, the use of local materials, and continuous maintenance as essential strategies for preserving adobe structures. However, current practices in Turkey do not fully comply with these principles.

In conclusion, there is a clear need for a more comprehensive and systematic conservation approach. Accordingly, this study proposes an integrated model that includes inventory documentation, analytical assessment, appropriate intervention strategies, and regular maintenance and monitoring processes.

KEY WORDS:
Adobe architecture, cultural heritage, sustainable conservation, traditional construction techniques