



A Study on Circassian Exile Monument and Memorial Park in Göksun-Türkiye

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Abstract

Memorial parks are the places where religion, philosophy and arts are important for visitors, explains identity of the places. However, successfully design memorial parks are ones that are lively and well-used by people. Human benefits and enjoyment are basic requirements in creating successful places in open spaces. These special fields are often empty of people or if used, have significant conflicts between different user groups. Circassians celebrate the day when the Circassian deportation was launched 21 May every year, as mourning commemorating the Circassian genocide.

This study is to evaluate Circassian exile memorial park opened at 5 June 2021 in Fındık neighborhood of Göksun district of Kahramanmaraş Province in Türkiye. The assessment was made with theoretical and methodological principles, in particular, to make memorial park evaluations. It is considered as a sequence of activities that make up the concept design. In study field, constructed monument and memorial park, which take shape according to Circassian exile, dynamics of the historical process in which they were realized. It is typically reflecting the identity of event and time in a symbolic language, are the visual expression to visitors of the knowledge and memory between the past and the future. The site found to be guided to interest focal points and areas by successions of used design materials, completed by color and shapes of elements.

Keywords: Circassian exile, Open space, Memorial park, Göksun, SWOT analysis.

Göksun-Türkiye’de Bulunan Çerkes Sürgün Anıtı ve Anı Parkı Üzerine Bir İnceleme

Öz

Anı parkları; din, felsefe ve sanatın kullanıcılar için önemli olduğu, şehirlerin kimliğini açıklayan yerlerdir. Başarılı bir şekilde planlanmış anı parkları, insanlar tarafından yaygın olarak kullanılmaktadır. Açık alanların başarılı bir şekilde planlanması ve sürdürülmesinde insan kullanımı temel bir gereksinimdir. Bu özel alanlar kullanılmıyorsa boştur, kullanılması durumunda ise farklı kullanıcı grupları arasında önemli etkileri vardır. Çerkesler, her yıl 21 Mayıs’da, Çerkes soykırımını anmak için programlar düzenlemektedirler.

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin Kahramanmaraş ili Göksun ilçesi Fındık mahallesi'nde bulunan ve 5 Haziran 2021 tarihinde açılan Çerkes Sürgün Anıtı ve Anı Parkı'nın analiz edilmesi üzerinedir. Anı parkı üzerine yapılan değerlendirmeler, teorik ve metodolojik esaslara göre yapılmıştır. Çalışma alanında, tarihsel sürecin dinamiklerine uygun olarak Çerkes sürgününe göre şekillenmiş bir anıt ve anı parkı inşa edilmiştir. Anı parkının, tipik olarak geçmişte meydana gelmiş tarihsel olay ve zamanı sembolik bir dille yansıttığı, ziyaretçilere geçmiş ve gelecek arasındaki bilgi ve hafızanın görsel ifadesini sağladığı anlaşılmıştır. Alana yerleştirilmiş objelerin odak noktası özelliğine sahip olduğu, renk ve şekiller yardımıyla hatırlatıcı, öğretici özellikte olduğu belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çerkes sürgünü, Açık alan, Anı parkı, Göksun, SWOT analizi.

1. Introduction

According to the definition of the International Council of Museums and Monuments (ICOMOS), the term of *monument* is; 'It is any kind of immovable property that is recognized for its archaeological, historical, aesthetic or ethnographic importance and is therefore deemed worthy of protection' (URL-1). However, it is a single- or groups of symbolic buildings with historical, artistic or archaeological significance which built to commemorate an important event or a great identity by future generations throughout history (Ahmad, 2006).

The open space and park design practices have already investigated by many research groups (Carr *et al.*, 1992; Cooper Marcus and Wischemann 1987; Francis, 2003; İnan, 2011). The assessment of many memorial parks or monuments were also reported from a number of former studies. In particular, the aesthetic characteristics of parks and the subjective perceptions were proposed. A number of researchers has already reported that the more activities allowed in an urban design place, the more preferred by the users (Atalay, 2018; Behbahani *et al.*, 2013; Carr *et al.*, 1992; Cooper Marcus and Wischemann 1987; Demir *et al.*, 2016; Francis, 2003; İnan, 2011). However, there are several conditions limit human benefits and enjoyment in open spaces probably due to the fact that is an over emphasis on art and aesthetics. Because public spaces are generally perceived through an eye of sense, the human perception is a complex process (Dascălu, 2011).

However, works on memorial parks have a holistic structure that enables the transmission of cultural accumulations, physically represent social values or traumatic pain. These places also present some feelings and associations during transfer the past to the future while it's a remembering experience. In that sense, these places are mechanisms, create permanent official memory, which determines what a society will remember (Atalay, 2018; Behbahani *et al.*, 2013; Cho, 2012; Demir *et al.*, 2016; Kwon *et al.*, 2014; Şengünalp, 2020).

For a proper memorial park design, the city's natural structure, geographical features, traditions, cultural value and economic structure should be well-defined while such multifaceted analyses and design, taking account (Cho, 2012; Kwon *et al.*, 2014). However, these specially designed fields play an important role in shaping the image of the city and are an integral part of the structure and cultural life. Memorial parks and monuments designed during the historical process also provide educational lessons for the past, emphasize unity and integrity, and give an indirect message without ever directly pointing to an event (Behbahani *et al.*, 2013; Kwon *et al.*, 2014). These places play an important role in the formation of the socio-cultural continuity of ethnic, professional groups and non-governmental organizations, local people and visitors. Moreover, numerous studies have found that addressing user needs is a prerequisite to making well functioned open spaces (Francis, 2001 and 2003; İnan, 2011; Oleksiichenko *et al.*, 2018).

Circassians were experienced one of the greatest tragedies in human history in the 19th century. The independence struggle of the Circassians against the Tsarists Russia lasted for nearly 300 years, which ended with the defeats of the Circassians in 1864. Due to Russian inhumane policies (e.g., occupation, oppression and assimilation), most of the Circassians lost their lives while 1.000.000 to 1.500.000 of them (80 to 97%) were exiled from

their homeland to various parts of the world mainly into Anatolia and middle east. During that exile and migrate, Circassians faced difficulties on the roads, struggled with hunger, drowned in the sea, and died of epidemic diseases (Adın and Kaya, 2021; Çatalkılıç, 2021; Bulat and Bulat 2016; Doğanay, 2015; Şahin, 2016; Oral, 2017;).

In this case study, a newly built a Circassian exile monument and Memorial park in Göksun district of Kahramanmaraş province were examined. A comprehensive observation was also made within the scope of memorial park design and urban furniture practices after one year in service.

2. Material and Method

The district of Göksun's population is approximately 52.000 which is located in the north of the Kahramanmaraş province while it is elevated of approximately 1350 meters above sea level. Its location in the transition zone between hot and mild Mediterranean to cold and dry central Anatolian region. Therefore, both climate characteristics can be seen in Göksun and its near vicinity (URL-2).

The Circassian memorial park was dedicated for designing a type of special memorial garden, in Fındık neighborhood of Göksun district of Kahramanmaraş province in Türkiye, are the objects of our research. In particular, it dedicated to monument and to exile themes. The specially designed 10.300 m² of Circassian memorial park was officially opened at 5 June 2021 (URL-3). However, we reviewed and evaluated park in August 2021 and July 2022, respectively.

Since the memorial sites deals with some concepts, subjective method could be utilized which landscape quality derives from the eyes of the beholder. In this regard objective evaluation was made by subjectivity. However, evaluation is formed in review comprised two stages. Firstly, the Circassian culture and memorial park were reviewed within the literature database using keywords such as; circassian exile, memorial park design and landscape object assessment values of tangible characters evaluated objectively. During site visits, the locations and near environments were carefully analyzed. Secondly, potential external and internal conditions were defined. Then, all factors that may affects on the park functions with using urban furniture elements were carefully analyzed. It was suggested that SWOT analysis is a useful method for landscape character assessments at parks (Gkoltsiou and Paraskevopoulou 2021). In this sense, a SWOT analysis, is a technique for assessing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats aspects together, was conducted on Circassian Exile Monument and Memorial Park.

Site selection is very important in the design of memorial parks. For this reason, attention should be paid especially to the location of the place where commemorate ceremony took place, natural-historical and cultural values. It is known that the Circassians, who settled in the area after the Circassian genocide by the Russian Empire in 1864, had a significant population in the Göksun district. Figures 1 and 2 show the general location and aerial view of study area, respectively. The park is surrounded by three kinds of areas: forests and orchards, a dam lake, and an intercity road. Such diversity and terrain allowed us to carefully evaluate in relation to infrastructures of different fields. It has established that the memorial parks usually designed in the form of V, square, oval or rectangular depends on size and topography of field. In these formats; it defines the walking axes, the

boundaries and the relationship between the spaces (Francis, 2001 and 2003; Oleksiichenko *et al.*, 2018). The Circassian Exile Monument and Memorial Park, which end with a dam pond from the side of an intercity road, are appeared to in the form of a triangle. Figure 3 show landscape plan, presently lawn areas and planted trees are shown in various level of greens, and natural pine-cedrus stands is white. The boundaries of the study site are shown with green line while pink for pond mouth.

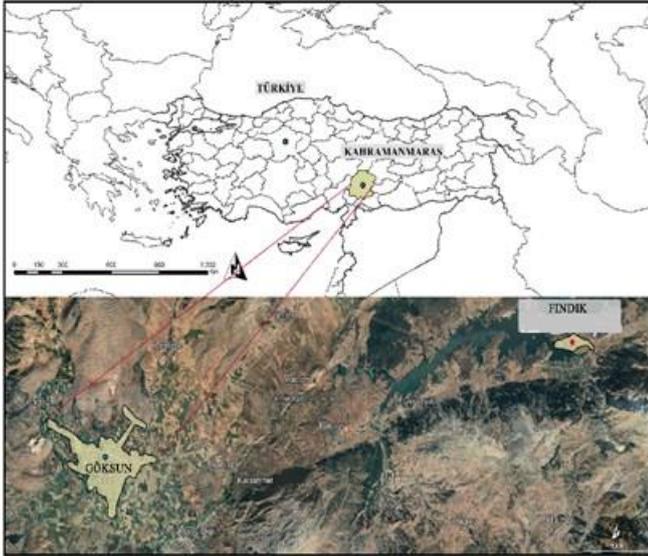


Figure 1. The location of Goksun-Kahramanmaraş



Figure 2. General aerial view of the Circassian Exile Monument and the Memorial Park (URL-3)

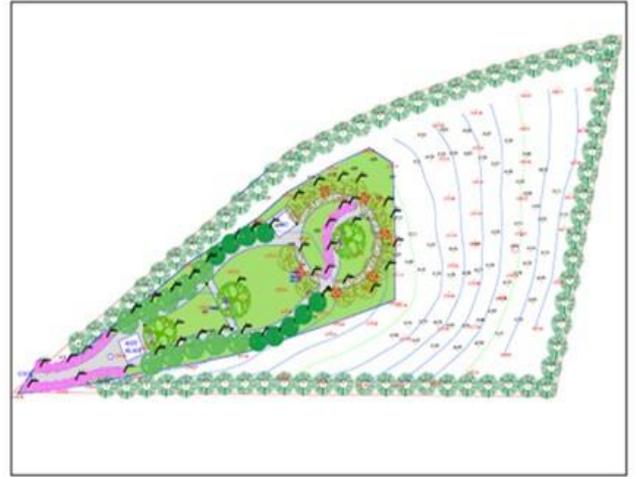


Figure 3. Landscape plan of Circassian Exile Monument and Memorial Park.

3. Results and Discussion

During site visits, the biological landscape systems of soil, surface topography, and natural vegetation were studied along with the patterns of drainage ways, utilities and orchards. Figure 4 show some pictures of the Circassian exile monument just south side entrance of memorial park. Certain objects can be evoking thoughts and feelings, and provoke action, influence the appearance of places. The park looks typically deals with a design issue of social and civic importance. However, planning efforts for that park are a benefit of creative physical design. The monument is clearly representing drown in the sea (at black sea) due to ships underway sank during Circassian exile. It looks like one of the aims of built a monument is to keep alive the memory of Circassians. It is clearly understandable; this monument is inspired from the war more than the other arts. Moreover, it exposes a sadness with a sensitivity. In this regard, a special attention had been paid to harmonize with the meaning and theme (Circassian exile), to adopt a creative and simple understanding in design with a well symbolic meaning.

Monuments could be built by various type of materials that change the place they are placed in, give meaning to it, and save it from the functionality and mediocrity of the past. But in order for that monument to fulfill these functions, they must be in strong enough to be made at correct positions with their surroundings, both socially and physically. Memorial parks are places that encourage thinking, comfort and arouse peace, together with the reminder of the bad event and disaster. Therefore, symbols and icons found in memorial parks are designs that have spirituality. With these design elements, which are shaped according to the cultural and traditional characteristics of the people, visitors connect with those who lost their lives in a spiritual sense and experience immortality. Memorial park can also be evaluated within the scope of sadness tourism which visits to areas where wars and genocides took place. It is suggested that those type of open spaces could also be planned to symbolize mass graves or martyrdom from natural disasters or wars which built in memory of them (Çelik, 2017; Kendle, 2008; Kılıç and Akyurt, 2011).



Figure 4. Circassian exile monument from south of entrance of memorial park.

The monument was found to be made with a special hard plastic on the marble basement that appears to durable to harsh weather conditions. It is clearly visible, the park is designed with a fiction that main focal point focuses, was built with the unity of the memorandum. The monument has also contained twelve stars made from hard plastics that represent the historical Circassian provinces: the Abzakh, the Beslency, the Bzhedugh, the Hatuqway, the Kabardians, the Mamkhegh, the Natukhaj, the Shassugh, the chemirgov, the Ubykh, the Yegeruqway, and the Zhaney.

It is very common to use easily molding and prefabricated materials (e.g., marble, concrete and plastic) for difficult curved or angular shapes, lines look straight, and the corners neat. It appears to selected hard plastic materials have certain strength characteristics which is important to resistance properties for aging, temperature variations, corrosion and wear. But it might be suggestive to consider some natural materials (e.g., stone, wood, ceramics and metals) alone and/or combination with other man-made plastic components.

Figure 5 show some basic built environment practices in field. Approximately 700 m² sidewalks and paths were constructed in field while cobble stones were mainly used as flooring material. However, concrete curbs were placed between soil/lawn and paths. It is seen that it guides people well enough and contributes to the memorial identity, and creates interesting areas by providing opportunities for the visitors in terms of recreation and tourism.

In landscaping practices, natural features, as well as infrastructure such as roads, bridges, fields and orchards can create an identity. These systems define the public realm, and delineating rooms in the landscape. In rural areas, like this park, there are variety of rooms, formed by its rolling hills, stands, built structures and infrastructure systems. The resulting composition is a mixture of urban and rural rooms. Although cobble stones were selected mainly for paving, it may be suggestive to use retired railroad ties with gravel, might also be considered to raise the path and create a historical appearance.



Figure 5. The plating practices on Circassian exile park.

A number of plant materials which have found to be suitable in that climate were planted in the park. These were; plane (*Platanoides orientalis*), Japanese pagoda tree (*Sophora japonica*), crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), chinaberry tree (*Melia azedarach*) and black locust (*Robinia piseudouacacia*). But it is important to note that numerous trees, flowers and shrubs had planted and not well feature as expected during these evaluations. The plants appear to well suited in region and will established well appearance when fully grown in the future.

Memorial parks were built for the purpose of respect after the important memorable events in ancient times for keep the memories of events and ensure their continuity. Many studies on parks have shown that providing for human needs is a prerequisite for successful open spaces (Francis, 2001 and 2003). Figure 6 show some urban furniture and landscape elements in the field. Some roofed picnic tables, benches, and garbage bins were seen to be in park. Additionally, a two roomed concrete toilet building was also constructed for visitors. Although design and planning can make a difference in both the natural and built environments while inspired design can make a significant improvement. Some basic needs and requirements were found to be established in the park which considerations as comfort and relaxation of visitors.

Space composition is also considering in the design of memorial parks. Formal and utilitarian semiotics are important to create a successful composition in these spaces. The semantic approach creates the value, that is, the concept of the design. When evaluated in this context, it is seen that memorial parks carry the value of commemorating the event, give an identity and help it to be a symbolic object for the city.



Figure 6. Some urban furniture and landscape elements.

Within the scope of the study, the physical properties of memorial park were review after one year in service. Figure 7 show some pictures from Circassian Exile Memorial Park after one year in service. It aimed to reveal the planting practices and environmental effects on utilized urban furniture objects. It sought to much of the plants were adopted to park environment while the lawn establishments were unsuccessful. There are wild herbs covered throughout park. It was probably due to insufficient maintenance on the area. However, a gate with wire mesh fence established, appears to confused visitors and not appropriate to park environment. Moreover, except furniture made from wood-plastic composites, other urban furniture objects (benches and trash bins) appear to become erode which wooden benches looked pale appearance and metal trash bins was deeply rust.



Figure 7. General feature of Circassian exile park.

SWOT analysis is a tool that can help to analyze assessment, perception and management of certain design areas (Gkoltsiou and Paraskevopoulou 2021). In this regard, a SWOT analysis was conducted, in order to get evaluation of current status with measuring overall performance of park. Table 3 show SWOT analysis of Circassian exile memorial park.

Table 3. SWOT analysis of Circassian Memorial park.

Strength	Weak
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is located one of the oldest settlements in the region, The natural flora of the area is rich and greenery structure, The location of park in neighborhood where the Circassian population is dense, It has a positive attitude of the public towards the area, It can encourage Circassian cultural activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is far from the Göksun city center (approx. 20 km), The maintenance system of park is inadequate, The number and quality of urban furniture (lighting, directional signs, signage) used throughout the area is insufficient.
Opportunity	Threat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The statue used in the park have potential to be one of the landmarks of the region, Relatively close to the university campus (approx. 8.0 km), It is located on the main transportation way of the neighborhoods. It could be a sightseeing place for travelers and contributed to tourism. It could be marketing/sales opportunity for local products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administratively, the manage of park is difficult due to location, It has located in a rural area and the implementation of the zoning plans is difficult, It has located very cold region and difficult to reach especially at winter season. Problems that may occur in the planting some herbal material.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

War and exile play important role in history, and they have many influences on culture of a nations. However, memorial parks and monuments are impressive and remarkable places in cities with concept designs. Those impresses all visitors with its physical features such as; materials, structure, color, and dimensions. In this context, the landscape design studies of Göksun Circassian Exile monument and Memorial Park were examined.

The park assessment is an important topic and has studied by many researchers. However, there are some way to evaluation of those objects such as; subjective, physical, psycho-emotional. Göksun Circassian Exile monument and Memorial Park was built as a special place, efforts to reveal cultural heritage to promote tourism activities which Circassians has very rich cultural assets. So, this park could become an important cultural center.

It has seen that the study area was constructed for sadness tourism with a systematic approach and sensitivity. It has found clearly emphasized and support the subject, to be leave a mark, to have structural, and functional contributions for visitors. However, some recommendations could be made in terms of landscape architecture discipline.

- The Circassian exile monument is very special characteristic forms of the Circassian's identity. The park could serve as socio-cultural centers in order to encourage cultural activities

(memorandum of Circassian Exile) while neighborhood culture could be improved.

- The established monument is appeared to bear a concept and to display the Circassians exile together. This will provide a landmark and significant contribution to tourism.
- Visitors may be travelled to park area either with their own-and/or local public transportation vehicles. However, it is important to reserve proper area (parking lot) for vehicles.
- Another important issue is supplying necessary information to visitors. The park should be organized with information boards in terms of Circassian Exile.
- In a memorial park site, like Göksun Circassian Exile Memorial Park, visitors could have different expectations. The identity of park should be organized to express the traditional Circassians lifestyle.
- Visitors must access park area by foot. The sidewalks and paths should be well organized and made user-friendly for all users; easily recognized route plans should be posted at suitable places.
- Park and near vicinity are very unique for Circassian settlements. Information boards should be erected along roadsides.
- In the park area, depending on tourist or visitor origin, a range of languages should be used on information boards and signs.
- Increasing number of foreign visitors may offer marketing opportunities for local products. This can be seen as an opportunity for Goksun and near vicinity.

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