

## The column of Marcian/Kıztaşı in Istanbul and an evaluation of its restorations

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**ABSTRACT:** The Column of Marcian, or Kıztaşı, is one of the magnificent monuments that were constructed in the name of Roman Emperor Marcian in Istanbul. It was built in his honor around 450–452. The monument consists of a square marble plinth block seated on a three-stepped platform and marble blocks on a single granite column topped with a marble column capital. Through the intervening years, the Marcian Column has been damaged by earthquakes, fires and repairs. With the 1999 earthquake, the column became slanted on its axis; the iron rings on the bases and those on the body itself were dislocated; the capital was deformed and hairline cracks were found in the column's body. In 2005, the Marcian Column was restored by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. This article will examine the old and new restorations and will utilize contemporary restoration criteria to evaluate the last intervention.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

In the past, “vow and memorial columns” served as some of the most important elements within the monumental appearance of Constantinople/Istanbul. Among these magnificent columns that were especially erected in the forums in honor of the emperors or as a memorial for a victory are the following: the Column of Constantine, the Column of the Goths, the Column of Arcadius, the Column of Justinian and the Column of Marcian (Yerasimos, 2000).

From the time of its erection, the name of the Column of Marcian, or Kıztaşı as it is called, has been eponymous to the name of the area in which it is located. The vicinity of the monument was called the Square of Marcian in the Roman and Byzantine periods and was named the Kıztaşı District in the Ottoman period (Yalcin, 1994). Today the column is located on Kıztaşı Street in the Sofalar Quarter of the Fatih District.

### 2 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MONUMENT

According to the inscription it bears, the Column of Marcian was erected by the city governor Tatianus in honor of the Roman Emperor Marcian (450–452). The erected date of the column cannot be known accurately, but it is estimated that it was constructed around 450–452 when Prefect Tatianus was serving as governor and its location was in the middle of a

square on Constantinople's fourth hill (Muller-Weiner, 2007).

Because the Column of Marcian stood in the garden of a private house in the Ottoman period, travelers were unaware of its existence until the middle of the 16th century. This column was first mentioned in 1540 by P. Gyllius in his travel notes. Drawings of the Column of Marcian that Ottoman traveler Evliya Celebi spoke of in 1634 (Yalcin, 1994) were made by Spon in 1679 and by Flachet in 1766. This column was not very well known until the beginning of the 20th century when it was discovered after the major 1908 fire (Muller-Weiner, 2007). After the fire, new plans for the region called for the area around the Column of Marcian to be situated in the middle of a square created where streets intersected (Yücel, 1969).

Although initially named after the Emperor Marcian, this monument was known in the Ottoman period as Kıztaşı (Girl's Stone) or Kızdirek (Girl's Column). It is thought that the monument was named the Kıztaşı because of the Nike reliefs found on the column plinth. However this name is also thought to have been related to the Ottoman slave market that was set up in this area (Ousterhout & Basgelen, 2005) or the name of another Kıztaşı used in the construction of Süleymaniye Mosque was given to the Column of Marcian (Yerasimos, 2000).

In the Republican period in 1998 the Column of Marcian was registered as “a cultural property that has to be protected.” In 2001 in recognition of the importance of its universal value, it was included within the framework of an “old work of the first category”.



Figure 1. The Column of Marcianus/Kıztaşı, at the beginning of the 20th century (Eken, 1992).

### 3 ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MONUMENT

In the past, the Column of Marcian was constructed as a monument with a marble plinth that sits on a stepped marble platform, a single piece of granite with a marble capital, marble block, the marble upper plinth and on the uppermost the emperor's statue. Today the three-stepped platform part of this monument remains partially below ground and the emperor's statue has been lost (Figures 1–2). Prior to 2005 the platform was buried underground by the road work that was carried out during the 20th century. How and when the emperor's statue disappeared is not known (Muller-Weiner, 2007).

The entire surfaces of the monument's prismatic lower plinth that was made of Marmara marble is decorated. The rectangular plinth whose width and length are close to each other ( $175 \times 195$  cm) is 237 cm high. There is a round wreath decoration of laurel leaves in which is found the monogram of Jesus, the letters I and X in the center on the east side of the column plinth. Although the sources write that the same decoration was also found on the west and south façades, these decorations today have been almost erased (Figures 3–4). On the north façade a better quality decoration and inscription are found. On this façade are the symmetric forms of two opposing angels or Nikes (goddess of victory) holding a round medallion or crown motif (Figures 5–6). While the medallion and the angel on



Figure 2. Kıztaşı, east façade after the restoration, 2007.



Figure 3. Kıztaşı, west façade of the column plinth before the restoration, 2005 (photograph by Üveysuna, D. & Demirel, A.).



Figure 4. Kızıtaşı, west façade of the column plinth after the restoration, 2007.



Figure 5. Kızıtaşı, north façade of the column plinth after the restoration, 2007.

the right are almost complete, the angel on the left side is missing her head. In the inscription above this decoration on the north façade is the statement: “This column was erected for the Emperor Marcianus by the Prefect Tatianus”. While it has been said that in the past the inscription was comprised of bronze letters (Yücel, 1969), only remaining today are the holes through which the letters were held.

A single granite column that is nearly 110 cm in diameter and 870 cm in height rises on the lower plinth of the column. Between this column and the lower plinth is a marble bracelet 50 cm in height and on the top of the column there is a marble capital of Corinthian design (Figures 7–8). The capital, decorated with sharp-pointed acanthus leaves and its corners voluted, has been destroyed in fires. A block



Figure 6. Kızıtaşı, north façade of the column plinth after the restoration, 2007.



Figure 7. Kızıtaşı, west façade of the column capital, marble block and upper plinth, before the restoration (Akşit & Akşit, 2001a).



Figure 8. Kıztaşı, west façade of the column capital, marble block and upper plinth, after the restoration.

of marble at the 160 cm height is decorated like a second capital on top of the column capital. The corners of this block are decorated with open-winged eagle motifs. At the uppermost of the monument there is a marble upper plinth 60 centimeters high that is thought to have been where the emperor's statue was. The total height of the monument together with the platform is approximately 17 meters and without the platform 15.30 meters (Bilge, 1972).

#### 4 REPAIRS MADE TO THE MONUMENT

The Column of Marcian, which ranks as one of Istanbul's oldest monuments, has passed through many earthquakes and fires and has withstood many rebellions and wars. In spite of all these disasters the fact that it has managed to survive to our day was secured through repairs carried out at various times. Some sources provide us with definite information and clues related to these repairs.

##### 4.1 Ottoman period repairs

In the photographs of the Marcian Monument taken at the beginning of the 20th century, it is seen that the monument had had hoops put on it at various levels. This repair must have been carried out on the parts of the monument that were damaged in the 1894 earthquake and the 1908 Fatih fire. In this photograph, the marble stepped platform is still at street level. On the lower plinth of the column, there are steel hoops at the column bracelet and on the body. The lower plinth has been encircled with four hoops, the bracelet with two and the column body with three. One cannot understand, however, if the metal cramp and chains that are on the column today—but are not seen in the photograph—were put on during this repair or in repairs carried out later. The photograph also does not show the statue that is said to have been on the uppermost of the monument, so it could not have been still extant at this date.

##### 4.2 Republic period repairs

At the start of the 1970s the Kıztaşı was repaired because its cracks and the pieces falling off the marble column capital had been posing a danger. Corrosion of the cramps and mortises found on the capital and their decomposition were the reason for the damage on the monument. In this repair the rusty and corroded metals were removed and then the marble pieces that had separated from the capital were cleaned and reattached with Akemi brand adhesives and the cracked parts of the capital and the body were filled in. In addition, because the corroded hoop bolts had fallen out, they were replaced and the loosened hoops were screwed back together. The other metal parts and chains, for which no objections were raised for their remaining, were painted as a barrier to corrosion. Additional hooping was carried out on the lower plinth part and the cracks were filled with cement mortar. Because adequate funding could not be located for this repair at that time, permanent measures could not be carried out with the result that the aim of that repair was to use basic interventions to keep the monument standing (Bilge, 1972).

Five or six years after this repair, the damage to the Kıztaşı began to increase and the metal hoops again became warped. After the major earthquake that occurred in 1999, the monument further deteriorated and began to pose a danger to surroundings. In 2005 restoration was started on the Kıztaşı under the supervision of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality; however, because the restoration was not being carried out under the supervision of the Istanbul Restoration and Conservation Center and architects Derya Akşit and Ferit Akşit, who were the restoration project authors, it was stopped in 2006. Attempts were then made to finish this restoration according

to the technical reports that had been prepared by experts.

## 5 THE DAMAGE TO KIZTAŞI PRIOR TO THE 2005 RESTORATION

In the survey measurements carried out for the repair it was determined that the monument was not in an upright position. It had begun listing, 7 cm to the south and 16 cm to the east from its axis (Akşit & Akşit, 2001a). It was determined that, because there was an asymmetric distribution of the load created due to the disintegration of the marble upper plinth on which undoubtedly the statue rested, the column was in weak condition vis-à-vis lateral movements and it had become dangerous for the vicinity (Babuş, 2001). Also, the rusting and decomposing of the cramps and chains on the capital were the reason for the cracks and broken off parts in the marble. The hoops at the level of the lower plinth had dispersed because the bolts had snapped off. Aside from these structural problems, other problems were also noted: the dirtying of the Kıztaşı granite body by time and atmospheric conditions, the cleavages on the north façade and formation of a crust, corrosion and stain on the metal parts, cracks on the body, the damage on the relief decorations and the breaks in the corners of the eagle motifs. In addition, the cement mortar that had been used in previous repairs had produced salt and caused the materials to behave differently.

## 6 2005 RESTORATION PROJECT DECISIONS

In the restoration project, the suggestions given by the Istanbul Restoration and Conservation Center were adhered to for cleaning, repairing and protecting the stone and metal materials in the Kıztaşı (Gökce, 2002).

### 6.1 *Basic principles approved of for the restoration project*

- Today the monument is located at a crossroads with heavy traffic flow and must be partially protected from the traffic by being isolated within a circular square.
- The stepped platform of the monument that remains underground must be uncovered with an excavation supervised by the Istanbul Archaeological Museums. As a result of the information that will be gained about the foundation of the monument when it is revealed, the soil should either be strengthened or reinforcement decisions taken. The difference in levels between the road and the original ground level must be solved with stairs.

- The writing in the inscription section should be remounted on the marble column using bronze letters.
- The rusted and disintegrated metal parts must be replaced with materials that are bronze or rustproof.
- The capital with its eagle figures has to be fixed into place or the original should be removed to a museum for protection and a copy placed on top of the column. In the case that a new capital and new upper plinth are used they should be produced by pouring a mixture of white aggregate and white cement strengthened with fiber mesh into special moulds.
- The monument inclination should be measured periodically for 12 months to determine whether there is an increase in incline from its axis. If the inclination increases, action has to be taken accordingly.
- In order for the repair work to be done in connection with Kıztaşı, first the monument's resistance against lateral forces has to be increased and a supportive skeleton must be established with a transverse support against it from the ground (Akşit & Akşit, 2001b).

### 6.2 *Repair methods recommended in the restoration project*

- *Cleaning* must be carried out without damaging the stone in order to remove both the dirty layer on the façade and the cement mortar supplements. Squirting water on the monument will soften the dirt and then a brush with a plastic claw brush and water should be used to eliminate the dirt. For dirt that cannot be removed, a mixture of mashed paper and 10% ammonia carbonate should be applied onto the surface of the stone. This should be covered with plastic sheeting and allowed to wait for 2–3 hours and then the process should be repeated until the desired result is attained. During this work care must be taken that metal parts do not come into contact with the solution.
- *Filling for the ditch and cavity stone surfaces:* Mortar including lime and mortar that suits the aspect of the stone must be used. In joint fills the filling material used in prior repairs that include cement must be carefully removed and replaced with mortar that is a mixture of hydraulic lime mortar and marble powder.
- *Filling cracks:* epoxy that is not affected by water and is especially designed for bonding (Araldit AY103 – Hardaner 956) has to be used by the injection method.
- *Crust formations* must be reinforced using Paraloid B72.
- *On the stone façades:* Protective and water propelled chemical material must not be used on the facades.

- *Metal repair:* The important metal parts must be cleaned mechanically by using a lancet, a dentist's drill or cavitron. Once they are clean, the metal surfaces should be protected with a coating of acrylic resin that includes five-percent Paraloid B72.
- *To ensure that the monument is not affected by water that comes from the environment,* the sides of the column plinth have to be uncovered and drainage precautions taken. The area around the column should be covered with stone or other like materials. And no planting near the column should be allowed.

## 7 2005 RESTORATION APPLICATION

In the repair work carried out without the supervision of the project author, the monument body was shored up with steel props that rest on the cement foundations created in the vicinity of the monument. A temporary arrangement that would protect the monument against lateral forces was created. All the rusted and decomposing metal parts were replaced with steel materials. Only the rusted metals were cleaned using mechanical methods, while the protective layer was left in place. The cement mortar used in the old repairs was removed; the cavity and cracks were filled suitable materials, the Nike figure was completed and the façade cleaning was carried out (Cili & Ahunbay, 2006). The temporary steel propping system was taken away following the restoration.

## 8 RESULTS

Throughout the nearly 1500 years it has graced the city, the Column of Marcian or Kıztaşı has had authenticity, art, antiquity, historical evidence and rare values, making it of great symbolic value for the city of Istanbul. Its values mean that we as the inheritors of the city must maintain the goal “to protect it with the least intervention;” the repairs have to be carried out with scientific methods and of a kind that can be later undone.

In the repairs carried out in the 1910s the purpose was to ensure it remained standing; however those restorers did not consider that the iron hoops, chains and clamps used would further damage the monument. Along with this, they ensured that the monument stood in a public square, rather than be sequestered out of view on a parcel of private property. The second repair carried out in the 1970s was implemented at a time when the understanding of modern restoration was not yet completely understood in our country. In addition, this repair was also hampered by inadequacy of financial funding. The aim of this repair was only to stop the destruction of the column; no one recognized the fact that the fills done with cement mortar and the

iron hoops would add to the damage to the monument and no one demonstrated aesthetic sensitivity. In order to prevent corrosion to the metal parts temporary measures were taken but continual checkups were not undertaken.

Even though the repair in 2005 was quite a successful work carried out by the local administration that has a special responsibility for the preservation of the monuments, it is not possible to say that the repair was an attentive one. The positive aspects of this repair which lengthened the life-time of the monument can be listed as: first of all, the surveys, restitution and restoration projects of the monument were prepared, the views of expert people and institutions were gathered and the aim of the project was to strengthen the monument with minimum intervention. During the repair work, in issues such as cleaning, inlay, filling the cracks and the cavities, cleaning the flaking surfaces and metal repair, the recommendations reached in the restoration project were adhered to and the possibilities and materials that modern technology offers were utilized. The monument was strengthened with stainless steel rings and clamps to prevent further corrosion.

Despite all these positive actions, the repair work was not entirely successful. Because of the column's innate values, the restoration projects of Kıztaşı should have been prepared by an expert group and the repair should have been carried out under the supervision of this group, however the responsibility was given to individuals. Although the repair application is a legal and professional responsibility, it was not conducted under the control of the architects who prepared the projects. For whatever reason, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality excluded the project architects, worked independently of the Preservation and Conservation Center and completed the repair in a hasty manner. Since public institutions, like individuals, are also obliged to abide by conservation resolutions and laws, the local administration was litigated. Although they were specified in the project plan, the restorers failed to expose the platform, strengthen the soil, relieve the load on the monument, use an imitation capital or install bronze letters on the inscription. In utilization of the steel hoops, rather than decreasing the number of hoops and changing their locations, the number of hoops was increased and their locations were not changed. They also failed to measure any possible increases in the rate of inclination. It is not possible to say that the plastic repairs on the monument base were applied with care and skill. Apart from all these, the most negative aspect of this work was that the monument was not considered to be an entity that embellishes a world city like Istanbul and one that adds value to this city. Yet, blocking the surroundings of the monument to the traffic and the formation of a large conservation belt that will enable the public to look at, and admire, the monument will also eliminate the

negative effects of vibration that is being caused by the dense traffic. In spite of all these aspects—both positive and negative—it would be more correct to evaluate the 2005 restoration according to the criteria below.

*Protecting its original value and integrity during the restoration:* The original material that creates the form in which the Kıztaşı is seen and its style is at the same time its structural material. Because it is not possible to bring a cracked column back to its original form, one cannot help but see the traces of the spoiled areas and the repairs. In practice, all the traces belonging to the age when the monument was made were protected and, in terms of color, attempts have been made to provide a new integrity with the steel hoops that do not offer a contrasting view. Despite this, the monument's symbolic value was not emphasized and a reconstruction of the statue that once graced the top of the column was not considered.

*Protecting the additions that were made over time:* The additions that were made to the Kıztaşı over time are the iron parts that belong to the early twentieth century. While used to ensure the soundness of the monument, these additions not only failed to protect the column but also caused further damage to the monument.

*Aesthetic concerns:* Restorers believed that aesthetics were not a concern as they had not tampered with the shape of the monument, its structure and/or its material. What actually destroyed the aesthetic integrity was the completion of repairs in “patches.” These types of completions were removed and a limited integrity of the Nike figure was achieved. However, it is not possible to say that the completions were carried out with a craftsmanship that enhanced this monument.

As a conclusion, the last restoration works on the Column of Marcian, one of Istanbul's oldest works, were not at the level that the monument deserved because they were not carried out under the supervision of expert people and organizations who had accumulated knowledge on this subject and experience.

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