

This is a repository copy of *As Antioch Endures its Seventh Month in the Dust*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/224377/>

Other:

Koca, Metin orcid.org/0000-0002-9840-5000 (2023) *As Antioch Endures its Seventh Month in the Dust*. Nehna.

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

Metin Koca 4 Eki 2023 5 dakikada okunur

As Antioch Endures its Seventh Month in the Dust

Güncelleme tarihi: 14 Kas 2023



Wonder and curiosity, kept alive throughout history by the irregular colors that appear as one descends from Mount Amanus to the Amik Valley, are mixed with a sense of uneasiness these days. The dust that mixes with the air in Antioch (Tr. Antakya), which breathes where the Orontes meets the Mediterranean, is nothing but processed history returning to foreign matter. In this landscape, there are disagreements about which building has ceased to be itself. On a building wall that was under demolition order and annulment lawsuit, someone spray-painted the words "[MY] COURT / NOT DEMOLISHED, WILL NOT BE DEMOLISHED" in red.



A Disputed Building

In the district, where at least a few demolitions are carried out daily, the trucks accompanying the bulldozers are obliged to stack and transport selected building materials, together with clothes and other personal belongings that could not be neatly separated. Looking at the view, it seems evident that the rubble is just left there. Even a short four-minute walk from Kemal Paşa Street to the Bazaar requires swallowing a truckload of dust amidst the demolition work—the dust from the Habib-i Neccar Mosque, previously a pagan temple and a church, and dozens of apartment buildings mingle on that street. Still, further down the road, the Long Bazaar stubbornly tries to continue the exchange as a public space, announcing the presence of a community.

Walking on Kemal Paşa Street*The debris, collected and left behind in the field*

This short piece contains notes from my emotionally and geographically turbulent week-long trip. It began in the Tömük municipality of Mersin and ended in neighboring Antioch seven and a half months after the earthquake. Compiled as a humble update accompanied by images, the article will list what the residents said in Antioch about the basic essentials required for daily living.

First, Long Bazaar: "You're not from here, are you?" This question, which is a diagnosis of foreignness, usually strikes me as a warning, perhaps a little condescending. But what I felt this week was that for the shopkeepers of Antioch, the question functioned as a sign of gratification. The shopkeepers of the Long Bazaar have returned to the settlements around Antioch from the provinces where they were guests, have opened their shops, and are waiting for their customers. The sight of outsiders wandering around and asking for things Antioch people know well brings smiles to their conversations.

There are conversations that take the atmosphere out of the state of emergency: my share was to listen to the itinerary of the kerebiç, a pistachio-filled cookie that can be found beyond my childhood residence of Mersin. When I told them I came from Mersin, orders were accompanied by amusing conversations about the differentiated culinary cultures. I was already familiar with this rivalry. What was unfamiliar was that Yunus Bucak, the oldest baker of the Bazaar, said, "Me too," when I said, "We are from Mersin." I meant to talk about the part of my childhood in the Cilician Plains, whereas he was talking about leaving Antioch three or four days after the earthquake. The earthquake touched both of them, though: My primary school in Mersin, where I studied for four years, has become unusable due to the earthquake. Probably for the last time, I walked around its garden on this trip.

With officials pinning the hope for recovery on construction, there is no significant reconstruction activity in the center of Antioch. New housing is concentrated in the Altınözü-Kansu area. The only thing that could give hope to shopkeepers at this stage would be to make transportation to the Bazaar possible and relatively easy. Many shops have opened, from bakeries to wicker makers, toy shops to herbalists—including the famous PÖÇ butcher, one of the favorites of Vedat Milör, our nationally renowned "gourmand" and who hates the term. It is not easy for them to survive: There is no public transportation in the center of Antakya. Traffic rules are based on the mutual understanding of drivers rather than signs, lights, and police officers. Dents and rubble on the roads demand the utmost attention. Under these conditions, online shopping from across Turkey should be encouraged, recognizing that daily visits to the bazaar from outside are challenging. Examples exist but are limited.

In the plain between the center of Antioch and the Belen Plateau, there are settlements established by different municipalities in cooperation. Many returnees from Antakya have started to live in these "container cities." However, there are also tents on the sidewalks outside the central government's control. While these should be identified and moved, the inhabitants of the registered settlements make a list of problems, from water leakage to power outages. In front of the Saint Pierre Church, a tent area has also been set up. As far as I understand from the previous reports, the compound started in February with about ten AFAD (Eng. Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) tents and has since expanded to include dozens more, including makeshift tents.

A container city in the direction of Belen

As soon as we arrived in Saint Pierre, many children surrounded us. Baran seemed especially determined to accompany us. Thanks to him, I learned a lot about the previous months. When he saw me heading towards the old entrance, i.e., the stairs, he warned me in a panic, "A stone will fall on your head!" It had happened to him just a few days ago, he said. Instead, he pointed to the new entrance. Here, too, I had already paid attention to the rocks that had fallen from the mountain beyond where we were walking, but pretending not to care, we walked to the museum entrance. Baran's family left their neighborhood that was damaged, not by the earthquake itself, but by the rocks that had fallen due to the earthquake: "Otherwise, our house was solid," he said. Therefore, they settled in one of the tents below the Church. "In the earthquake, people took refuge in those tunnels," he said, pointing to the tunnels and caverns where church members once sought refuge during raids.

The tunnel Baran pointed to with his finger

The tent area below Saint Pierre Church

Baran dropped out of school when he should have been in the sixth grade. There is no current data on the school attendance rate, which was reportedly around 60% at the end of March. Özgür Tıraş, head of the Hatay branch of Eğitim-Sen (Education and Science Workers' Union), told the press that the number of students in Defne, a neighboring municipality, had dropped from 36,000 last year to 28,000 this September. Lacking the equivalent of this data, several anecdotes in Antioch suggest that container schools opened in a third of the more than 50 settlements have led first to overcrowded classrooms and then to a drop in school attendance. Transportation to school is another deterrent factor. Walking even for a few minutes under damaged buildings and on dusty and damaged roads is a challenge. Students who cannot walk often wait hours for the bus, which is usually overcrowded, or resort to hitchhiking to and from school, causing concern for their parents.

Henceforth

Analyzing historical sources over damaged buildings in the ancient city of Antioch, Paweł Filipczak, a historian of Byzantine, concludes that the city's history is marked by earthquakes more so than rebellions. Accordingly, the physical damage observed on buildings representing secular or religious authorities was caused by earthquakes, not by conflicting factions. From this, Filipczak concludes that Antioch had a "relatively peaceful" population. Having seen the manifestation of an earthquake on their buildings, the people of modern-day Antioch show remarkable resilience and unity, echoing their predecessors. Like those who rebuilt the city before them, the people who strive today will be making a record in the deep-rooted history of Antioch.

Antioch