

Bridges as Shopping Streets: Irgandi Bridge in Turkey

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Abstract

Shopping and shopping streets (i.e. high streets) are among the essential features of modern cities. Bridges, on the other hand, are physical constructs connecting zones or communities in a city. There are very few examples which exhibit both functions. Bridges that serve as connections between two sides of a valley, while at the same time supporting a line of shops, is the subject of this paper, with the case study example of “Irgandi Bridge” in Bursa (Turkey).

Irgandi Bridge is one of the rare examples of bridges with shops (other examples around the world are: The Ponte Vecchio in Florence-Italy, The Rialto Bridge in Venice-Italy, Anshun Bridge in Chengdu-China, The Covered Bridge in Lovech-Bulgaria, and Pulteney Bridge in Bath-UK). The Irgandi Bridge was built in 1442, with a row of shops that housed textile artisans. It was one the most picturesque sites in the historical city of Bursa, and therefore many travelers wrote about it, and many artists portrayed it. Miss Pardoe¹, in her famous travel narrative on Turkey published in 1836, wrote that silk weavers were working in the shops. The Illustrated London News also published an engraving depicting the bridge in 1890.

After many earthquakes and fires, the shops over the bridge were destroyed or changed with the passing of the centuries, but it always survived in the minds of citizens and visitors as “the bridge with shops”. Consequently, it managed to preserve its identity as a meeting point for citizens, embedded within their daily lives, and therefore remained an integral part of the city’s cultural heritage.

¹ Julia Pardoe, *The City of the Sultan and Domestic Manners of the Turks* (I-II, London, 1836)