

# LEARNING FROM THE TUBERCULOSIS CRISIS IN TURKEY

## Spatiality and Modern Interiors in Yaşamak Yolu Journal (1929-1950)

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**ABSTRACT:** Yaşamak Yolu [A Way of Living], the journal of the Istanbul Tuberculosis Association, played a pedagogical and propagandistic role in building a healthy nation after the establishment of the Turkish state. The journal is a valuable archive incorporating the spaces of tuberculosis combat during the 20th century, encompassing social, cultural, and political information. It reveals how tuberculosis was a crisis that influenced Turkey's Modern Movement in architecture and modern interiors. The discourse on the contagious nature of tuberculosis and the healthy way of living in Yaşamak Yolu impacted ideas about modern interior design in different building typologies. After scanning the 1929-1972 Yaşamak Yolu issues from the Izmir National Library's archives, this study categorized, analyzed, and evaluated the data at the intersection of tuberculosis and modern interiors, focusing on national and international sanatoria, housing, alternative interiors, and everyday items. Despite the journal's broad coverage of architectural typologies, this study, among others, focused on the 20th-century Turkish sanatoria as conventional interiors. The notion that the sanatorium movement shaped the Modern Movement in architecture served as the foundation for this study. To reveal the journal's vast breadth from urban to industrial scale, portable structures, everyday objects, and/or tuberculosis paraphernalia covered in the journal were evaluated as alternate treatment interiors, furniture, and objects. The extensive content and contextual information, along with the publication's span from 1929 to 1972, made the analysis challenging. Therefore, and to overcome the constraints in selecting specific built environment typologies, this study set the framework to include the timeframe from the journal's inaugural issue to the point at which the journal's published doctors/authors recognized the effectiveness of Streptomycin. This marked a turning point in the spatiality of tuberculosis and thus limited the scope of this study to the years 1929-1950. Due to its focus on the interiors of tuberculosis combat facilities, this study revealed that the journal proved to be a significant archive for the field of architectural historiography and design.

**KEYWORDS:** Tuberculosis, healthcare interiors, modern Turkish interiors, health advice periodicals, Yaşamak Yolu

**INTRODUCTION:** The treatment approaches for tuberculosis coincided with the emergence of Modernism, which sought to provide a hygienic lifestyle within a socialist framework (Sontag, 1978; Campbell, 2005, p. 463). Following the First World War and the ensuing turmoil, the spread of tuberculosis posed a significant problem during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey (Yıldırım & Gürkan, 2012, pp. 35-36). The tuberculosis campaign was among the numerous fights undertaken by the young Turkish state following its establishment in 1923.

The first organization dedicated to the prevention and control of tuberculosis during the republican period was the Izmir Tuberculosis Association (hereafter: TB Association), established in 1923 (Anon., 1950b). The establishment of the Istanbul TB Association followed in 1927.

Both associations published journals as propaganda<sup>1</sup> tools (Saracoğlu, 1950; Yücer, 1937): Izmir's *Savaş* [Fight/War] (Anon., 1950b), and Istanbul's *Yaşamak Yolu* [A Way of Living]. These journals took it upon themselves to intervene before the onset of the disease, offer

treatment strategies for patients at early stages, and promote convalescing facilities to lure the patients with advanced tuberculosis (Carr, 2023, p. 33). This battle was a significant undertaking that necessitated a multifaceted approach encompassing sanitation, social measures, administrative efforts, and propaganda. The associations identified and assisted individuals afflicted with tuberculosis, directing them to appropriate healthcare facilities such as preventoriums, sanatoriums, or tuberculosis hospitals based on their specific medical requirements. The Turkish TB associations, established per city, began disseminating the preventive B.C.G. (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) vaccination for infants and elementary school children. Journals facilitated the dissemination of knowledge on disease transmission and prevention.

The *Yaşamak Yolu* journal serves as an important archive, including extensive social, cultural, and political data from its contemporary publishing era, while also offering medico-social insights into everyday life and detailing the state's healthcare reforms. From the perspective of architectural historiography, the journal offered a scope of

spatiality of tuberculosis, as it informed the public about the transmission, contagion, prevention, and elimination of tuberculosis bacteria in the built environment, especially in modern interiors. The journal comprised sanitation propaganda<sup>2</sup>, including causes of tuberculosis from different scales of spatiality, from urban environments<sup>3</sup> to domestic interiors.<sup>4</sup> A collection of graphics supporting guidelines on appropriate conduct in public and private settings also integrated propagandistic messages (Anon., 1929; Saracoğlu, 1950; Yücer, 1937). Importantly, the journal<sup>5</sup> prioritized the inclusion of children in political discourse, viewing them as the nation's future, by incorporating a selection of content under "Pages for Children" [FIGURE 01]

### AIM, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY OF YAŞAMAK YOLU: MODERN INTERIORS AND TUBERCULOSIS

*Yaşamak Yolu* maintained its publication from 1929 to 1972 (İlkan Rasimoğlu, 2014, p. 300).<sup>6</sup> The abundant content published during this lengthy period was quite a challenge to the process. One approach to setting a framework was to focus on one building typology (sanatoria)



01 How to teach hygiene to children in Japan?  
© Yaşamak Yolu, 1929, No.3, pp. 2-3.

and then jump to a smaller scale of portable structures, furniture, and objects. Another was to set a period limit. Dr. Tevfik İsmail Gökçe's article *Streptomaycin* [sic.] (Gökçe, 1950) on the effectiveness of the drug developed by Dr. Selman Waksman's team in the 1940s was a significant occasion. The discussions on antibiotics lessened the journal's spatial arguments. This date, therefore, signaled the end of the assessment for this study. As a result, the focus period spans from 1929 to 1950, beginning with the first issue in 1929 and concluding with the 170<sup>th</sup> issue in November 1950.

The Izmir National Library archived the issues of the *Yaşamak Yolu* journal. They were digitalized for the research project "Architecture of Convalescence: Mapping the Sanatorium Heritage of Turkey" (Avci et al., 2022). The author categorized the scanned data, concentrating on modern interiors. The journal offered comprehensive information on examples of national and international sanatoria, housing, alternative interiors, and everyday objects. Therefore, this article restricts its analysis to the interiors of designated sanatoria, eliminating other building typologies and concentrating on alternative interiors, furniture, and objects.

Sanatoria, pioneers of the Modern Movement in architecture, significantly influenced the approach to modern interiors (Campbell, 2005; Colomina, 2019; Overly, 2007). During the transition from historicism to modernity (Del Curto, 2013, p. 140), designers experimented with the design of these institutions, incorporating customized and tailored architecture to enhance isolation, care, fresh air, sunlight, and hygiene. The design principles to fight tuberculosis were a major factor in the adoption of Modern Movement architecture and interiors in Turkey, as well as in the west. Accordingly, the initial section, titled "Spatiality of Tuberculosis in Sanatorium Interiors," focuses on how the journal portrays the interiors of Turkish sanatoria as local translations of canonic sanatoria models, on the spatiality of their public spaces, patient rooms, and cure balconies.

Not everyone could afford to stay in a private sanatorium, and public sanatoria had immense waiting lists. Hence, the 'prescribed' sanatoria were unable to accommodate all patients. The socialist objective of the young Turkish state led to the application of modernist sanatoria-inspired architectural elements to housing, furniture, and everyday objects as alternative precautions. Through journals, the state infiltrated households and began regulating the use of even basic goods, like kitchen utensils and handkerchiefs, to combat tuberculosis. The next section, "Alternative Interiors of Convalescence and Management of Furniture and Objects," demonstrates the great variety of items discussed in the journal, ranging from the building scale to portable and temporal structures to objects.

This article makes four primary contributions to the field. It argues that *Yaşamak Yolu* presented a complete analysis of the spatiality of tuberculosis in Turkey in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, covering different scales of the built environment by utilizing national and international examples. It argues that the state used the journal as a tool to impose westernization and modernization, thereby regulating the nation's health. It highlights that the connection between architecture and tuberculosis was addressed in a health advice journal in Turkey at the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The bibliography meticulously selects modern interiors and the spatiality of tuberculosis from the journal's extensive content.

## SPATIALITY OF TUBERCULOSIS IN SANATORIUM INTERIORS

The *Yaşamak Yolu* journal showcased Turkish sanatoria that mirrored their famous canonic counterparts. Standard sanatoria also had "a high level of design and construction quality" (Del Curto, 2013, p. 143). This was particularly applicable in Turkey, where war-torn conditions prevailed. The Turkish sanatoria stood out with their advanced features, including modern construction techniques, implementation of innovative easy-to-clean materials, retrofitting, and furnishings, as well as surgical rooms and equipment modeled after European standards.

The patients adhered to the treatment protocol established within the culture of sanatorium facilities. A sanatorium facility was promoted in the journal with the following words: "The sanatorium is fully equipped to facilitate healing: rest, nutritious food, fresh air, and sunlight. All conveniences for patient comfort have been considered, and all safety measures included to ensure that a patient poses no harm to others" (Anon., 1950c).

The Erenköy Sanatorium, inaugurated by the İstanbul TB Association in 1932—who established *Yaşamak Yolu*—was widely covered with photographs, articles, statistical reports on patients, and promotion pieces of the medical facilities and equipment. Another institution that received significant promotion was the Heybeliada Sanatorium, Turkey's first state sanatorium, inaugurated in 1924 (Avci-Hosanli & Degirmencioglu, 2024). This promotion pertains to the fact that the institution's chief physician, Dr. Tevfik İsmail Gökçe, served as the journal's editor.

In addition, the publication presented worldwide examples to its Turkish readership. The promotion of architecture in a publication not dedicated to architecture but rather to health advice is significant. References to the European sanatoria included late 19<sup>th</sup> century establishments in Leysin and Bern, Switzerland (Sabar, 1932); the Papworth village settlement in Cambridge, UK (Kudsi, 1932a); the Institute Benito Mussolini, a tuberculosis village in



Sondalo, Italy (O. Ş. U., 1935); Dr. Turban's Sanatorium in Davos, Switzerland (Öktem, 1935a); and the Planegg Sanatorium in Munich (Gökay, 1947).

The journal also compared the new Turkish sanatorium examples with their western counterparts. The journal promoted various sanatoria in Turkey, including Haydarpaşa Tuberculosis Pavilion (A.Z., 1948) and Cerrahpaşa Tuberculosis Pavilion (Anon., 1930), both established in Istanbul during the early years of the republic. The deliberate comparison of the new, republican-era tuberculosis pavilion of the Cerrahpaşa Hospital (1928-1930) complex built of concrete and stone with that of the old, deteriorated timber structures erected in the Ottoman era was a contemporary discourse that served as a means of nationalist propaganda, glorifying the republican-era achievements. The comparison served to highlight the advancements in construction [FIGURE 02].

Other featured sanatoria were: Buca Sanatorium [FIGURE 03] and Yamanlar Camp in Izmir (Anon., 1950b), mid-century Süreyyapaşa Sanatorium in Istanbul (Kayacıoğlu, 1950), and a small sanatorium in Hatay, which was exemplary of remote Anatolian cases (Anon., 1948a).

The journal even incorporated further information on sanatorium interiors, employing doctors' reports, visitors' observations, and patients' recollections.<sup>7</sup> Medical professionals attended the inauguration of the Erenköy Sanatorium's new pavilion in 1932. Inspections revealed that the patient rooms, cure balconies, dining halls, X-ray rooms, laboratories, kitchen, and other pertinent spaces satisfied the essential requirements (Kemal Cenap, 1932). The following year, Dr. Ihsan Rifat, the institution's chief physician, published an article titled *Personal hygiene in prevention of tuberculosis* with concomitant images of the private rooms and public halls of the sanatorium (Sabar, 1933). In 1940, a journalist visited the sanatorium and noted its amenities and infrastructure, describing a laboratory characterized by cleanliness and organization (Anon., 1940). Noting that sanatoria did not solely



02 The new pavilions of the Cerrahpaşa Hospital (Istanbul), 1930. Text reads: [The section (marked with an x) is a 75-bed tuberculosis pavilion. Tuberculosis was treated in the old, dilapidated structures (marked xx) until now]. © Yaşamak Yolu, 1930, No.20, p. 2.



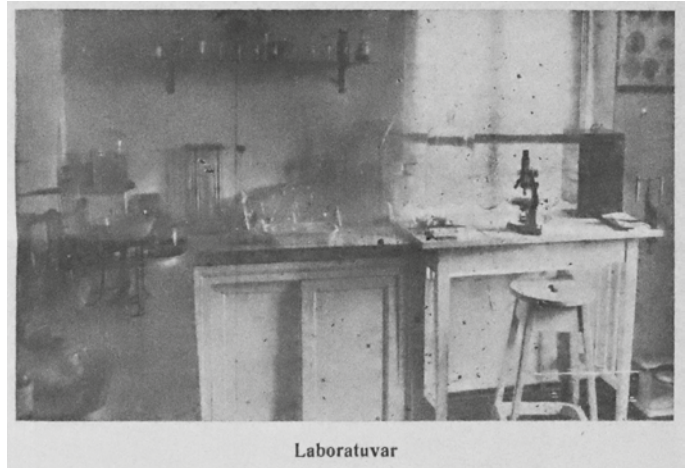
03 Buca Sanatorium (Izmir), 1950. © Yaşamak Yolu, 1950, No.162, p. 5.

operate on discipline and hygiene, the journal covered entertainment spaces such as dining and theater halls (Anon., 1940) [FIGURE 04, FIGURE 05, FIGURE 06].

Journalists often described Heybeliada Sanatorium's curious patchwork arrangement of the pavilions and



04 Dining hall and laboratory of Erenköy Sanatorium, 1933. © Yaşamak Yolu, 1933, No.53-54, pp. 7-8







05 Theater hall of Heybeliada Sanatorium, 1940. © Yaşamak Yolu, 1940, No.92, p. 4.

the spatial relationships between them (Avci-Hosanli & Degirmencioglu, 2024). The hall of the first pavilion was uniformly white, centralizing the bust of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding leader of the Republic of Turkey, representing the sanatoria as part of his legacy and health reforms (Öktem, 1935b). Tables draped in white tablecloths adorned a spacious dining area, complemented by floral arrangements and a centralized radio system (Öktem, 1935b). The high-tech operating room in the latest pavilion was characterized by furnishings and fittings in a serene blue hue, as well as cleanliness to the point that “one was afraid to tread” (Öksüzçü, 1940). The theater hall’s significance was evident in the aesthetics of its parquet flooring (Öksüzçü, 1940) [FIGURE 05]. The descriptions of the premises resembled those of a high-quality hotel rather than a typical hospital setting.

The journal showcased the patient rooms in sanatoria to highlight their advanced quality in terms of hygienic features. The Erenköy Sanatorium equipped its patient rooms with well-maintained beds and heating systems, as well as expansive windows [FIGURE 07] that allowed sunlight to infiltrate indoors (Anon., 1940). Burhaneddin Âli Moral (B.Â.M.) (1941a) described his room there as a hotel



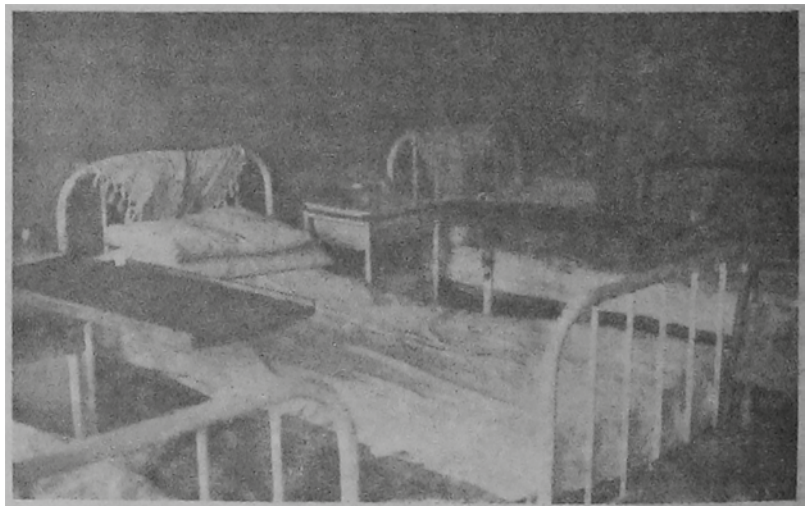
06 Cure balconies of Erenköy Sanatorium, 1940. © Yaşamak Yolu, 1940, No.90, p. 15.

room of second-class quality, featuring three white-hued beds, undisturbed bedside tables, and a built-in closet. In the Heybeliada Sanatorium, the rooms had “pristine-white beds” and nightstands that “exuded a fragrance of cleanliness” (Öktem, 1935b). The narratives highlighted the inclusion of cure balconies as a spatial extension of the rooms [FIGURE 09].

The low-tech characteristics of architecture, such as deep terraces, balconies, and/or garden pavilions, eased the cure sessions—the act of resting on a recliner in the open air for prolonged periods. The environmental and architectural design of sanatoria was developed in response to this primary demand [FIGURE 09]. The balcony recliners were arranged to ensure an appropriate distance between the patients. The recollections of a patient from the Erenköy Sanatorium informed the readers about the positioning of 18 recliners lined along the extensive balcony [FIGURE 06], patients’ ability to wrap themselves up, and instances of rule-breaking during the cure hours (Burhaneddin Âli Moral (B.Â.M.), 1941b).



07 A bedroom in Erenköy Sanatorium, 1933. © Yaşamak Yolu, 1933, No.53-54, p. 9.



08 A bedroom in Hatay dispensary, 1948. © Yaşamak Yolu, 1948, No.147, p. 12.



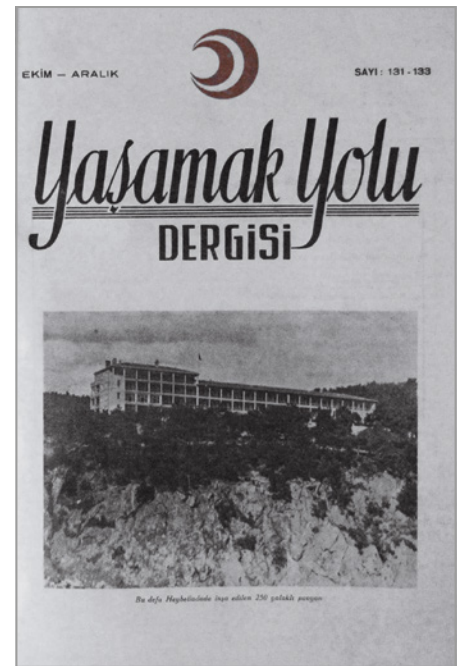
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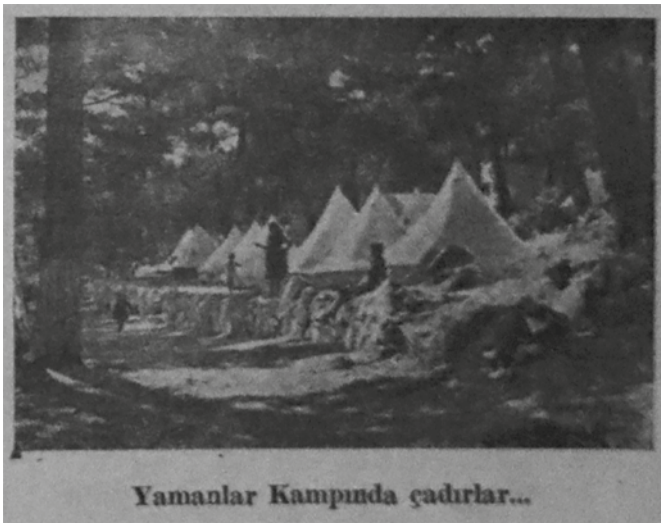
- 09 Covers and headlines of *Yaşamak Yolu*, which promoted the spatiality of the cure treatment from 1929-1946.
- a: Validebağ Sanatorium complex, text reads: [The sun is the most important factor in protection against diseases. Children taking sun baths at the Validebağ Preventorium of the Ministry of Education]. © *Yaşamak Yolu* cover, 1929, No.3;
- b & c: Erenköy Sanatorium, texts read: [Erenköy Sanatorium is one year old. Cure under the pine trees] and [A view from the new pavilion of Erenköy Sanatorium]; © *Yaşamak Yolu* covers, 1933, No.53-54; 1939, No.89.
- d: Heybeliada Sanatorium, text reads: [This time, a 250-bed pavilion built in Heybeliada]. © *Yaşamak Yolu* cover, 1946, No.131-133.

A close inspection of these articles reveals that the journal conveyed certain messages. The spaces of dust and darkness, without sunlight and fresh air, were environments where the tuberculosis bacteria could thrive. Therefore, through its focus on sanatoria, the journal informed the public about the necessary spatial arrangements to prevent bacterial propagation. Only the health reforms of the Turkish state and the legacy of the republican regime made it possible for tuberculosis patients to receive state-of-the-art and hygienic care in public healthcare institutions comparable to their Western and European counterparts. However, the challenging working and living conditions faced by the proletariat necessitated innovative approaches to combat tuberculosis. Patients who could not afford to stay in sanatoria pursued alternative measures.

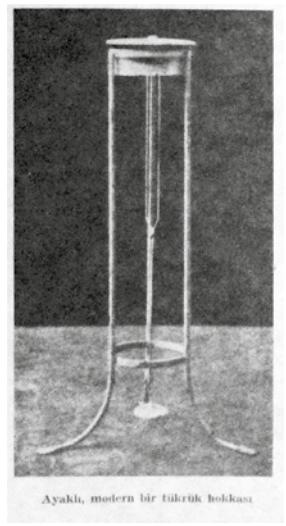
## ALTERNATIVE INTERIORS OF CONVALESCENCE AND MANAGEMENT OF FURNITURE AND OBJECTS

The journal recommended implementing the sanatoria's treatment regimen in everyday spaces. From this perspective, *Yaşamak Yolu* assumed responsibility for defining the regulations of sanitary modern housing and subsequently published guidelines for housing development. The guidelines included the selection of the site, the orientation of the structures, the plan layouts to offer the best possible usage schemes for the health of their residents, and the fittings and furnishings of the interior spaces to prevent the spread of the tuberculosis bacteria. The sanitary regulations for houses outlined in Le Corbusier's famous *Towards a New Architecture* were incorporated into an article titled *Sihhi ve Rahat Ev* [Hygienic and Comfortable House] (Le Corbusier, 1931; Uysal, 1943). Despite its





10 Tents in Yamanlar Camp... in Izmir. © Yaşamak Yolu, 1950, No.162, p. 5.



11 A comparison of a 'surgical' modern furniture and a medical instrument captioned as "Legged, a modern spittoon." The visual on the left gives multiple messages about the new national identity: Health and hygiene, together with the modern Turkish woman happily reclining on a rest bed. © Yaşamak Yolu cover, 1949, No.156; Yaşamak Yolu, 1948, No.140, p. 8.

appeal, rendering it more fitting for a specialized architectural publication, an exemplary modern house tailored for a nuclear family was showcased with its plan on one cover concomitant to an article (Sağlam, 1949). However, the assessment of the content on housing covered in the journal would far surpass the limitations of this article.<sup>8</sup>

As a buffer zone between houses and objects, the journal introduced alternative interiors of convalescence in portable and temporal structures, i.e., tents. Countries that were unable to promptly establish sanatoria due to the economic crisis were advised to explore other practical approaches. Consequently, an alternative space for the treatment of tuberculosis was deliberated. Dr. Kudsi, the director of the Hygiene Museum in Istanbul, posited in 1932 that establishing tents may serve as a cost-effective and uncomplicated means of isolation. This intervention would benefit poor or newly developing countries, such as Turkey, where the number of beds available in sanatoria "did not surpass a mere two hundred" (Kudsi, 1932b). Moreover, the use of tents provided the advantages of sunshine exposure and open-air treatment with the families of the patients in proximity, which could positively affect the patients' morale. Unsurprisingly, the utilization of tents was advertised coinciding with the yearly inauguration of the Yamanlar Camp in Izmir, a complex established by the Izmir TB Association (Anon., 1935) [FIGURE 10].

Sanatoria had a major influence on the modernist furniture designs of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Campbell, 1999). When modern recliners (*chaises-longues*) were designed with anthropometric data and new production techniques, a new type of chair became an icon of Modernism. This solely functional furniture to heal tuberculosis patients soon spread to the new housing, so much so that the modern interiors were ridiculed as "surgical, clinical, and hospital-like" (Overy, 2007, p. 29). The tubular steel chairs and recliners were also showcased on occasional covers

of *Yaşamak Yolu*. A photograph on the cover of an issue also conveys information about the new Turkish identity: A youthful, healthy, and modern Turkish woman is reclining on a modern piece of furniture, sunbathing, and enjoying a book [FIGURE 11].

It was imperative for the tubercular patient to employ physical barriers, practice correct coughing and expectoration etiquette, and diligently sanitize surfaces. The *Yaşamak Yolu* journal conveyed this etiquette, especially in private interiors, which the state could not surveil. The articles specifically highlighted the difficulty that emerged in the absence of sputum cups. Dr. Gökçe emphasized the importance of using sputum cups: "It was a civic duty towards one's own nation." One advertised example of a modern spittoon had tubular legs and was elevated from the ground for the patient in bed (Gökçe, 1948; Anon., 1948b). This design indeed aligned with the aesthetic principles of the Modern Movement furniture [FIGURE 11].<sup>9</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

*Yaşamak Yolu*, the journal of the Istanbul TB Association, aimed to disseminate propaganda and instructional content to foster societal consciousness regarding hygienic measures to avoid the spread of tuberculosis in urban settings, public buildings, medical facilities, and houses. From interiors to furniture to objects, the design principles and characteristics published in the journal demonstrated the characteristics of the Modern Movement design brought about by the tuberculosis crisis.

In a war-torn country in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Istanbul TB Association's health advice journal established a correlation between modern interiors and tuberculosis. In the Western context, architects and designers actively promoted health through their hygienic designs and lifestyle choices, such as Jan Duiker jumping into a pond to promote exercise and Aino Aalto resting on her recliner (Colomina,

2019, pp. 108-109). The *Yaşamak Yolu* journal adopted a similar discourse, albeit with a different content. The architect, as a user, was the first to promote health in the Western context. In Turkey, doctors and patients—the latter perhaps involuntarily yet directly—became the promoters [FIGURE 05, FIGURE 06, FIGURE 09, FIGURE 10, FIGURE 11].

Acknowledging the challenge to fully capture the rich content within a single research article, this study jumped from the conventional modern public healthcare facility or building scale to a focus on alternate interiors, followed by objects and utensils. Aiming to set the groundwork for future research on tuberculosis' spatiality in *Yaşamak Yolu* via other architectural typologies and the subsequent decades (1950-1972), the extensive scope of the journal was revealed, including temporal and portable spaces of convalescence, everyday objects in domestic environs, and the management of tuberculosis paraphernalia.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 In early republican Turkey, the term ‘propaganda’ had a positive connotation: the spread of the principles of the new state’s nation-building objective, including instructional material aimed at promoting social awareness. See note 2.
- 2 For more on early republican visual propaganda to fight diseases, see (Berberoğlu & Değirmencioğlu, 2023, pp. 228–229, 234).
- 3 For an analysis of Zeytinburnu, the largest squatter-neighborhood (*gecekondu*) in Istanbul as the tuberculosis-control pilot zone in 1961-1963, also covered in *Yaşamak Yolu*, see (Delmaire, 2023, p. 163). For a typological and urban analysis of Istanbul sanatoria, see (Avcı & Değirmencioğlu, 2024).
- 4 For the dissemination of late Ottoman and early republican era socio-political ideologies prescribed for Turkish homes, womanhood, and motherhood contextualizing tuberculosis, see (Evered & Evered, 2020). For tuberculosis, early republican housing and traditional houses, see (Değirmencioğlu, 2022).
- 5 *Yaşamak Yolu* comprised discussions on hygiene and dietary recommendations with translations of physicians’ writings from *La Vie Saine* [Healthy Life] and *l’Esprit Médicale* [The Medical Spirit]. The journal also featured a selection of literary works, poems by patients, stories about sufferers, and plays centered around tuberculosis (İlkan Rasimoğlu, 2014, pp. 303–305, 307).
- 6 A modestly illustrated booklet designed to cater to the literacy level of its readers during the challenging process of transitioning from the Arabic to the Latin alphabet, *Yaşamak Yolu* experienced a shift towards a more scientific approach after 1940 (İlkan Rasimoğlu, 2014, p. 300).
- 7 For more on healthcare architecture, emotions, and senses, which focus on Turkish sanatoria interiors, see (Değirmencioğlu & Avcı Hosanlı, 2023).
- 8 See note 4.
- 9 Other everyday objects and/or medical paraphernalia were also featured, such as lamps that provided artificial ultraviolet light to the interiors and wrapping kits (blankets, furs, etc.).