



Çomakdağ-Kızılağaç Village Houses in the Context of Rural Architectural Building Traditions That are Vanishing in Our Country

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Abstract

As it is known, the conservation and rehabilitation of historical environments has been on the agenda as a topic that has been discussed frequently in recent years. The new and current understanding of conservation is based on historical, cultural and traditional architectural features of the buildings that make up the old texture and environment to be preserved as a whole together with all natural and artificial elements and pass it on to future generations. Today, our country is rapidly losing its characteristic settlement identities due to the rapid population growth and the irregular and dense construction in our settlements as a natural consequence. Many of our cities and towns are still affected by this change and are witnessing the loss of our historical buildings, which are part of our cultural history.

This is an issue not only for our big cities, but It is also the case for our rural towns and villages. Today perhaps we have lost our building heritage in many of our cities, but we have not lost it completely yet. We have still the chance to protect and save our rural settlements, that has not been completely disappeared. Therefore, we should not delay in dealing with small towns in their own special circumstances. The Çomakdağ-Kızılağaç village of Milas stands out as a unique example of a traditional village settlement in danger of being destroyed due to the aforementioned unplanned urbanization activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Presently in our country rapidly increasing population and tendency toward modernisation and industrilisation are causing changes in settlement infrastructure. Due to the employment of modern technology in building repairs, additions and construction, the physical environment is losing its local characteristics. These continuous changes have already affected and deteriorated most of our cities and also rural settlements. Presently we began to lose our traditional architectural examples. Conservation of traditional architecture must be considered not only in big cities with their old quarters but also in small settlements like small agrarian or mountain villages with their surrounding landscape.

Çomakdağ-Kızılağaç village in its full name since it was formed by the merger of two villages in the past is a mountain settlement on the Beşparmak mountains, 80 km from Muğla, 60 km. away from the center of Bodrum and 14 km from Milas district. According to the information signboard at the entrance of the village, the village is a nomad village founded 500 years ago by the Onoklar tribe of Oghuz Turks, the literacy rate in the village of 300 households is high and the number of university students is quite high, the main source of livelihood in the village is agriculture and animal husbandry, especially olive cultivation, silkworms are grown to obtain the silk needed for their clothes and they try to continue weaving on hand looms.[1]

2. THE PLAN CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL HOUSES OF KIZILAĞAÇ / ÇOMAKDAĞ

The general characteristic structure of the Çomakdağ range has been eroded by the effects of heavy rainfall, sun and wind and has become rounded with soft lines. The settlement patterns in the region are natural settlements that have settled within this structure without disturbing it and using it. The village coffee house, shaded by large mulberry trees in the square of the village, which is reached by climbing a narrow two-lane road, forms the center of the settlement. The mosque of the village was also built in this relatively flat area. In Kızılağaç-Çomakdağ, the houses that form the main settlement texture are located on a rocky hill surrounded by olive trees. These houses of the village are constructed at the most suitable points of the hilly terrain and are in the form of stone and concrete structures with courtyards, gardens and huge rocks that form the borders of the streets that have developed organically without any geometrical features. On the pedestrian paths, Çomakdağ stone texture is left in its natural state. In many places, many of the roads that do not allow motor vehicle transportation also end with dead ends. Houses are located as separate buildings and building groups placed on terraces on rocky and rugged slopes (Figure 1,2,3). We know that in the first stage of village development all the the buildings are made of stone and wood. Unfortunately many of these houses have lost their original features as a result of additions and alterations with inappropriate methods and materials. Also new structures which are made of concrete and bricks are increasing rapidly (Figure 4).



Figure 1. Çomakdağ-Kızılağaç Village Settlement which is formed by separate buildings and building groups placed on terraces on rocky and rugged slopes (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 2. Houses are located as separate buildings and building groups placed on terraces on rocky and rugged slopes (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 3. A traditional hanay type houses from Çomakdağ-Kızılağaç which preserves original features. (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 4. New constructions of Çomakdağ-Kızılağaç Village (photo belongs to the author)

In the Mediterranean Sea climate, it is important to orient the buildings according to the air breezes. However, it is just as important to prevent buildings from being affected by radiation [2]. Therefore the traditional houses in Kızılağaç-Çomakdağ are characterized by one or two storeys, surrounded by thick walls of cut stone, windows open to the view, exterior entrance with stairs, projecting fireplaces with windows on both sides, earthen flat roof (Presently many of them has new roofs with tiles) and most importantly the use of carved wooden ornaments (Figure 5).



Figure 5. A house from Çomakdağ-Kızılağaç Village which has newly added roof. (photo belongs to the author)

These houses locally called as “yer evi” and “hanay” were built according to four different plan types [3,4]. The basic plan type is a building with a single room. The basic plan type is a one-room building. In this type of house, the room spaces are defined by wooden floor elements, the living area is built directly on the ground and the storage area is left bare without any cladding [3,4]. In the second plan type there is also one single square room which is raised from ground therefore the entrance of houses are more than one meter from the ground. The lower floor is used as a cellar or granary. The main domestic life takes place in the rooms on the upper floors. The other plan types of “hanay” are more developed structures with one or two or more rooms which were placed above the granaries and they have semi opened verandas called “ayazlık” [3]. These ayazlık’s are located on the south side of the two-storey houses facing the courtyard and at the street side they have a raised platform for sitting which is called “sekili köşk” with the sofas called “sedir”(Figure 6). The stairs that provide access to the living floor from the courtyards or gardens are also connected to this ayazlık section from the outside, and there is also a wooden bench called "suluk" in this space, which has the function of washing pots and pans (Figure 7). There are also wooden laticce works all around the “ayazlık” spaces. The wooden köşk keeps the entrance gate to the courtyard and the path leading to the house under control, and forms a breezy and open section surrounded by sofas where the lady of the house spends the summer months. Grains and dried food kept throughout the year in the breezy and cool living area “hayat”.



Figure 6. Neighbouring two houses from Çomakdağ-Kızılağaç Village, one is “yer evi” type and the other one is “hanay” type (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 7. A ayazlık from Çomakdağ / Kızılağaç house “hanay” (photo belongs to the author)

The functions of the rooms are determined according to the organization and location of the rooms, and the ones with local cabinets where the beds and quilts are placed are used as bedrooms, the places with shelves and cabinets where pots and pans and other materials are placed are used as kitchens, while the places with sunlit views are used as living rooms. Each room has a “ocak” (fireplace), so from the outside you can tell how many rooms a house has by the number of chimneys. In fact, there is another point that needs to be mentioned here. Each room has at least two and at most four narrow and long window openings in the walls, two of which are placed opposite each other [2]. In the rooms bed linens and quilts are kept in the cupboards, valuables in the chest, pots and pans on the “almalık” (shelves) above the fireplace, and the meal is eaten in the “sini” (tray), which is set up on a rug in front of the stove. The bed is for slept laid on the wooden floor during the nights. Rugs and cushions called *cicim*, handmade by Çomakdağ women, are in use on floors and “sedirs” [5]. Toilet spaces are located outside the houses in gardens and courtyards. In addition, the rooms of the houses have bathroom spaces in the wooden closets.

2. CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES AND DECORATIVE SPECIFICATIONS OF TRADITIONAL HOUSES OF KIZILAĞAÇ- ÇOMAKDAĞ VILLAGE

As it is mentioned traditional Çomakdağ-Kızılağaç houses are made of stones quarried from the region. There are several original stone dwellings in the village, which have mostly preserved their original architectural features (Figure 8). Originally the buildings are made of large stones supplied from the quarry near the settlement; these stones, which are 30-50 cm wide and 50-120 cm long, are carried from the quarry to the building site on mule backs [3,5]. Two types of stone found in the region are used in the stone masonry are used together: the main stone blocks of the body walls between them a stone that is darker in color and thinner in texture that can be delaminated into thin layers (slate). The stones were carved smoothly on one side only and used on the exterior of the building. These large gnays stones, with a hub in the center, are built with stone blocks placed according to a specific binding system, placed according to the rhythm of wide joints along the facades of the building, leaving a margin of three or four wedge stones placed transversely between them [3,4]. These are rotationally aligned along the wall. Also there is a special technique that the use of these small fragments for filling joints and ornamentation is one of the last makes it extremely interesting. These wide joints between the chipped stones used on the facades of the buildings were filled with tile fragments. These joints between the stones are tightened with 15-20 cm. long, 5-8 cm. wide pieces made of broken olive pieces of oil potteries called nails (Figure 9, 10). This type of masonry technique is very similar to the Hellenistic masonry techniques seen in the ancient buildings at Labraunda settlement [3]. At the end of the arrangement of each horizontal row of stones along the walls of the building, the nails are fused with the adobe mortar poured in the center of the wall. The core of the stones crosses the middle of the wall width, so the center of gravity of the stones is shifted towards the middle of the wall. On the outer surfaces of the walls; this masonry is completed with rubble stone masonry covered with plaster made of lime mortar on the inner surfaces. The houses shine brightly in the sun due to the quartz, mica and feldspar substance of the gnays stone blocks and this stone material is keeping them cool

in summer and warm in winter. Reflecting the image of traditional housing, this compact buildings have a high impression value (Figure 11).



Figure 8. Window orders of a Çomakdağ / Kızılağaç house (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 9. A general view of the stone wall of a house in Çomakdağ / Kızılağaç (photo by the author)



Figure 10. An example of stone masonry from Çomakdağ / Kızılağaç house (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 11. Details from stone masonry whith joints between the stones are tightened with 15-20 cm. long, 5-8 cm. wide pieces made of crushed olive oil potteries called nails Çomakdağ / Kızılağaç house (photo belongs to the author)

As it is mentioned above stone walls of the traditional houses of the village were build with load-bearing masonry technique the floors in the structure are wooden and the upper cover is flat roof. Although today most of the buildings are covered with hipped roofs or some houses have an extra additional roof coverings over these roof structures. For this reason, the number of flat roofed buildings that have survived in their original form is quite low (Figure 12). The “ayazlık” is covered with a pitched roof and the roof is supported by wooden or stone pillars.

As in the Milas region, one of the most interesting and distinctive elements of the houses in this village are fireplaces and their chimneys. One of the general characteristics of these houses is the reflection of the fireplaces on the facades. The hearths are emphasized by protruding from the facade surfaces. The stone chimneys rising above these roofs are the main elements which forms the physical appearances of these dwellings (Figure 13,14). These chimneys in stone-built houses are interesting characteristic elements with their aesthetic appearance. The chimneys are different from each other. It is understood that each master maked a different chimney form to show his own skill. This is sometimes likened to the chimneys in Milas houses, and sometimes to different animal motifs. Like as half-moon or eagle head figures or by the acroteres of ancient buildings can be seen on the tops of the chimneys and they are made of local slate stones. Also we can claim that some chimneys inspired from the form of Halikarnas Mausoleum or Gümüşkesen Roman Tomb (Figure 15,16) [3,6]. Another detail inspired by Byzantine structures is the eaves of the houses, called “kirpi saçak”(dogs- tooth type), where red and white bricks are used by skipping one another (Figure 17,18). The eaves are made of one original colored brick a white lime-painted brick next to it by knitting them in the same way. It is also possible to come across some eaves built with slate stones obtained from the region. Eave cornices created with stones are usually consist of one or two rows [6].



Figure 12. A traditional house from Çomakdağ / Kızılağaç which preserves original flat roof (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 13. A traditional house from Çomakdağ / Kızılağaç which has two chimneys (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 14. Typical chimney form which projects from the facade (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 15. Typical chimneys from Çomakdağ / Kızılağaç which has two chimneys (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 16. Gümüşkesen Roma Tomb [7]



Figure 17. Typical saw teeht “kirpi saçak” eaves (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 18. Original cornices of Çomakdağ houses made with three rows of bricks. (photo belongs to the author)

In this stone houses the second main building material is wood. In general, wood is used as in constructions of rough structure elements (beams, roof structures, floor slabs) as well as fine structural elements (projecting balconies, doors, windows, shutters, shelves, cupboards, “sedirs” etc.) The main carrier of the floor and ceiling is the wooden beam called “düver”. Their dimensions are approximately 20 x 25 cm. in diameter and each of them is carried by two ends entering the wall, cantilever with two ends, there are also examples carried by pillars at the points where they touch the walls [6].

Çomakdağ- Kızılağaç houses are known for their ornate decoration both inside and out. Main facade elements which are balconies, doors, windows and their shutters are all made of wood in local houses. While the exteriors are often adorned with these elements intricate carvings and ornate painted decorations. Especially the wooden balcony elements, which are the extension of the benches, are the most remarkable architectural elements with their colorful painting and decorative wooden motifs (Figure 19). The entrance doors to the houses are one of the important elements which are richly decorated elements as the shutters of the windows (Figure 20). Although the entrance doors of the storage spaces located under the house are simple wooden nailed doors. Because of woodworks the interiors of the houses are as colorful and impressive as their exteriors. The interiors feature elaborate woodwork and colorful decorative ornaments on the ceilings, doors and cupboards. The ceiling decorations and doors are full of examples of wood carving art (Figure 21,22,23,24) . The wooden decorations inside the houses used to be made with root paints. Nowadays, root paint has been abandoned, but the decorations are still very elaborate and the ceiling decorations are different in each house. Sometimes you can see geometrical star motifs and sometimes

floral motifs. Decorations on the timber lathed ceilings are only present at the centers with square or rectangular well ornamented timber elements (Figure 21).



Figure 19. An example from balconies of the Çomakdağ houses. (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 20. Two examples from shutters of the Çomakdağ houses. (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 21. A typical example of ceiling decoration from Çomakdağ- Kızılağaç houses (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 22. A highly elaborate cupboard decorations (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 23. A cupboard doors (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 24. A door example (photo belongs to the author)

3. THE HISTORICAL TEXTURE OF ÇOMAKDAĞ KIZILAĞAÇ-VILLAGE IN TERMS OF CONSERVATION PROBLEMS IN THE PROCESS OF VANISHING

It is understood that this settlement area maintained its original construction technique and the use of traditional materials until the 1970s [6]. However, after this date, as a result of the increasing population, the desire of more families to live in larger houses and separate from their parents and the lack of new craftsmen to continue the traditional craftsmanship, it is seen that new construction has increased rapidly in the village settlement and many of traditional buildings have been subject to additions and roughy interventions. Moreover, the use of today's readily available common construction materials such as cement, bricks, corrugated sheets, ceramics, etc. in the construction of new buildings and additions to old buildings has led to the deterioration of the characteristic features of the buildings. In addition, the plastering of the original stone wall surfaces and the concealment of the stone masonry cause the general characteristics of the buildings to be lost (Figure 25,26,27).

It is also interesting to note that while the use of materials and construction technology has undergone radical change and deterioration, the original plan typology of the dwellings was not immediately rejected and the traditional “Hanay” type planning still continues in some newly constructed houses [6].



Figure 25. It is seen that the stone facade walls of many residential buildings have been plastered with cement-based plasters and have lost their original appearance (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 26. Many of these houses have lost their original features as a result of concrete additions (photo belongs to the author)



Figure 27. Many of village houses have lost their original features as a result of additions and alterations with inappropriate methods and materials (photo belongs to the author)

4. CONCLUSION

Throughout history the area which is known as Çomakdağ, have been inhabited since ancient times, and it has been under the rule of Karia, Byzantium, Seljuks, Menteşe Principality and Ottoman Empire. Çomakdağ villages are Yörük-Türkmen villages. It is known that Türkmen's fleeing from the Mongol raids in Anatolia first settled around Çomakdağ in the 14th century, but their names are first mentioned in official records in the early 16th century [8]. In the neighborhood are the ruins of Mylasa Laubranda, the sacred city of Caria, and the city of Alinda. Therefore, it can be easily argued that the Çomakdağ-Kızılağaç houses are likely to be inspired by the building culture of the city of Mylasa, which dates back to 3000 BC. At the very least, as mentioned above, it can be assumed that there are stylistic and constructional influences from structures such as the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus (4th century BC) and Gümüşkesen Monuments (2nd century AD) [3,6,9,10]. On the other hand Yörük-Türkmen traditions are also seen all around the details of decorations of the traditional houses. It should also be emphasized that the colors and decorative motifs used in the wooden elements in the building were not created randomly and that each motif has a symbolic

meaning in Yörük culture. In summary, Çomakdağ- Kızılağaç village texture is a special settlement with its unique architectural structures, rare construction techniques and ornaments, which must be culturally preserved and transferred to future generations.

Today, the existence of some organizations such as the Çomakdağ Villages Culture, Tourism and Research Association to promote the settlements in this region both as a touristic attraction and to ensure their protection is pleasing. It is also understood that ÇEKÜL Foundation is also interested in Çomakdağ within the scope of the "Villages Should Live" project [6]. Despite these positive developments, more tangible steps should be taken for the preservation of this village. For example, surveys should be taken of every original building in the villages, restitution and restoration projects should be prepared, and within this framework, it should be investigated how the buildings can be returned to their original state. Of course, a conservation master plan for the village texture should also be prepared within this framework. However, the most important point here is how financing will be provided and how these studies will be organized. Otherwise, all the work done with good intentions will remain on paper. It should be emphasized to the local population that this settlement is attractive to tourists for the traditional dresses of the local women, can also be equally attractive with its traditional houses in drawing tourists to the area, which will ensure the success of the conservation efforts.

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