

HOLISTIC CONSERVATION OF KONAKLI POMAK HOUSES IN THE CONTEXT OF TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

SOMUT VE SOMUT OLMAYAN KÜLTÜREL MİRAS BAĞLAMINDA KONAKLI POMAK EVLERİNİN BÜTÜNCÜL KORUNMASI

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Abstract

This study examines the holistic conservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage through the case of the Pomak houses in the town of Konaklı, located in Niğde Province within the Cappadocia region of Türkiye. Konaklı is characterized by a multilayered cultural structure shaped by successive migration waves, and today communities of Thessaloniki, Romanian, and Bulgarian origin continue to sustain intangible heritage through language, culinary traditions, music, rituals, and everyday practices. However, the traditional Pomak houses have largely lost their original functions and face serious risks of deterioration and abandonment. Employing a qualitative case-study approach, the research documents the architectural characteristics, spatial organization, construction techniques, and current conditions of the houses through systematic field observation and on-site documentation, and evaluates these data together with the cultural practices of the local community based on literature review and comparative analysis. The findings underline that addressing tangible and intangible heritage in an integrated manner strengthens the continuity of local identity and supports the long-term safeguarding of rural architectural heritage. Based on this integrated

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assessment, adaptive reuse scenarios including a local cultural exhibition space, culinary heritage facilities, and small-scale production and sales units are proposed as conservation tools compatible with the cultural character of the settlement. The study concludes that a holistic conservation framework constitutes an effective model for sustaining vernacular architecture and safeguarding cultural continuity in rural settlements shaped by migration.

Keywords: Holistic Conservation, Tangible and Intangible Heritage, Rural Architectural Heritage, Konaklı Immigrant Pomak Houses, Adaptive Reuse

Özet

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin Kapadokya Bölgesi'nde, Niğde iline bağlı Konaklı kasabasındaki Pomak evleri örneği üzerinden somut ve somut olmayan kültürel mirasın bütüncül korunmasını ele almaktadır. Konaklı, farklı dönemlerde gerçekleşen göç hareketleri sonucunda şekillenmiş çok katmanlı bir kültürel yapıya sahip olup, günümüzde Selanik, Romanya ve Bulgaristan kökenli topluluklar dil, mutfak kültürü, müzik, ritüeller ve gündelik yaşam pratikleri aracılığıyla somut olmayan kültürel mirası yaşatmaya devam etmektedir. Bununla birlikte, geleneksel Pomak evleri büyük ölçüde özgün işlevlerini yitirmiş olup fiziksel bozulma ve terk edilme açısından ciddi tehditlerle karşı karşıyadır. Nitel durum çalışması yaklaşımıyla yürütülen araştırmada, Pomak evlerinin mimari özellikleri, mekânsal organizasyonları, yapım teknikleri ve mevcut durumları sistematik alan gözlemleri ve yerinde belgeleme çalışmalarıyla ortaya konulmuş; elde edilen veriler, literatür incelemesi ve karşılaştırmalı analizler doğrultusunda yerel topluluğun kültürel pratikleriyle birlikte değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular, somut ve somut olmayan kültürel mirasın birlikte ele alınmasının yerel kimliğin sürekliliğini güçlendirdiğini ve kırsal mimari mirasın uzun vadeli korunmasını desteklediğini göstermektedir. Bu bütüncül değerlendirme doğrultusunda, yerleşimin kültürel karakteriyle uyumlu koruma araçları olarak kültürel sergileme mekânları, mutfak mirasına yönelik deneyim merkezleri ve küçük ölçekli üretim satış birimlerini içeren yeniden işlevlendirme önerileri geliştirilmiştir. Araştırma, göç kökenli kırsal yerleşimlerde geleneksel mimari mirasın korunması ve kültürel sürekliliğin sürdürülebilir biçimde yaşatılması açısından bütüncül koruma yaklaşımının etkili bir model oluşturduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bütüncül Koruma, Somut ve Somut Olmayan Kültürel Miras, Kırsal Mimari Miras, Konaklı Göçmen Pomak Evleri, Yeniden İşlevlendirme

Migration has historically constituted not merely a demographic movement but a complex cultural process through which belief systems, languages, traditions, social organization, and spatial practices are transferred to new geographies. In Türkiye, particularly Balkan-origin migrant communities have generated distinctive rural settlements by reinterpreting their cultural memory through local materials, construction techniques, and environmental conditions. This interaction between migration and space has produced layered rural landscapes in which architectural forms operate as physical testimonies of social continuity and cultural negotiation (Gögebakan & Saban, 2021; Öztürk & Aşçıkoça, 2013).

Contemporary heritage conservation approaches have expanded beyond monumental architecture to include vernacular settlements, everyday life practices, and migrant-built environments. Since traditional architecture emerges through the inseparable relationship between tangible and intangible components, the integrated documentation of built fabric and living cultural practices has become essential for understanding and safeguarding rural heritage (Bademci, 2018, pp. 14-15; Karakul, 2007, p. 151). Rural houses constructed with local techniques may thus be interpreted not only as shelters but also as spatial embodiments of linguistic traditions, culinary cultures, belief systems, production patterns, and social relations. Consequently, holistic conservation approaches addressing buildings, settlement patterns, and cultural practices together provide a more sustainable framework for preserving the heritage of migrant communities (Karakul, 2007, pp. 151–152).

Within this conceptual framework, Pomak culture constitutes a multilayered heritage system composed of language, foodways, rituals, and everyday practices, while Pomak houses embody the material traces of this identity. Architectural spaces acquire meaning through narratives, customs, and collective memory; therefore, conservation strategies that isolate physical fabric from social practices risk reducing heritage to static objects detached from lived experience (Karakul, 2007, p. 152; Metin Basat, 2013, p. 62).

The study area, Konaklı Town in Niğde Province, represents a settlement shaped by successive migration waves that have produced a complex cultural palimpsest. In the nineteenth century the town was inhabited by a Greek Orthodox (Karamanli) population; following the 1923 population exchange between Türkiye and Greece, Muslim migrants from Thessaloniki and its surroundings were resettled in the area. Between 1940 and 1960, Pomak communities migrating from Bulgaria further transformed the demographic and cultural structure of the town. These successive movements reshaped Konaklı's spatial organization, building traditions, and social life, generating a multilayered rural landscape.

The Pomaks constitute one of the indigenous Muslim communities of the Balkans and have been associated with Cuman-Kipchak elements from the eleventh century onward (Alp, 2012, p. 7). Until the nineteenth century, Pomak populations were concentrated in Lovech, the Rhodope Mountains, Western Thrace, and Eastern Macedonia, and their origins have been variously defined as Islamized Bulgarians, Muslim Macedonians, or Slavicized Albanians (Kırtıl, 2019, p. 188; Koyuncu, 2013, pp. 141, 144). The term “Pomak,” introduced in the nineteenth century by Ami Boué, derives from the Slavic word *pomoći* meaning “to help” (Kanitz, 1882, p. 183; Turan, 1999, pp. 69–70). Following the Balkan Wars and the Second World War, Pomak communities migrated to Anatolia and settled primarily in Thrace and Western Anatolia, while forming smaller communities in provinces such as Niğde and Konya (Öztürk & Aşçıkoça, 2013, p. 411; Pelin, 2021, p. 756).

Although Pomaks and migrants from Thessaloniki, Bulgaria, and Romania originate from different ethnic backgrounds, they have collectively sustained the shared cultural heritage of Balkan Muslim communities in Türkiye. Throughout the twentieth century, Konaklı evolved into a multi-ethnic migrant settlement where similar life practices, belief systems, and daily routines fostered a common cultural fabric. Today, populations of migrant origin continue to inhabit the town, and numerous elements of intangible cultural heritage remain active in everyday life. This situation necessitates that the Pomak houses of Konaklı be evaluated not solely as the architectural heritage of a single group, but rather as components of a multilayered cultural landscape continuously re-signified through shared memory and social interaction.

Despite this cultural richness, most of the stone masonry Pomak houses have fallen out of use, and physical deterioration has accelerated due to abandonment, loss of function, and insufficient maintenance. These processes threaten not only the architectural fabric but also the cultural practices historically embedded within these domestic spaces. While previous studies have examined Balkan migrant housing traditions, Pomak culture, or the relationship between heritage and rural development, relatively few investigations have addressed Pomak houses currently inhabited or reinterpreted by different migrant communities together with both their tangible and intangible components through a holistic conservation framework. This research therefore seeks to address this gap through the case of Konaklı.

The primary objective of the study is to analyze the Pomak houses of Konaklı together with the settlement's intangible cultural heritage and to explore how an integrated conservation strategy can contribute to the sustainable safeguarding of this multilayered heritage. In this respect, the research seeks to document the architectural, typological, and material characteristics of the Pomak houses, to examine the intangible cultural heritage of Pomak and migrant communities such as language, cuisine, music, and ritual practices and to discuss adaptive reuse strategies that reinforce local identity while ensuring the continuity of these cultural expressions within a holistic conservation framework.

The theoretical framework of the research is grounded in the premise that conservation strategies integrating tangible and intangible heritage foster cultural sustainability more effectively than approaches focused exclusively on physical preservation. The main hypothesis proposes that the combined evaluation of Pomak houses' architectural features and the living cultural practices of Konaklı's migrant communities enables these structures to be reactivated as components of a living cultural landscape, thereby strengthening both cultural identity and local resilience. Three sub-assumptions support this hypothesis: first, that architectural heritage gains interpretive depth and social value when addressed together with intangible practices; second, that adaptive reuse grounded in community memory offers a more sustainable conservation model; and third, that culturally sensitive, community-oriented approaches enhance the continuity of migrant identity.

Within this context, the study focuses on three principal research questions: it first seeks to identify the architectural characteristics of the Pomak houses and the tangible and intangible heritage elements of Konaklı's migrant communities, and to examine how these dimensions intersect and mutually reinforce one another within the settlement fabric. Secondly, it investigates the ways in which holistic conservation approaches can contribute to the long-term safeguarding of this multilayered rural heritage by integrating built form, cultural practices, and community memory into a coherent protection framework. Finally, the study questions whether adaptive reuse strategies that combine architectural fabric with living traditions can generate a feasible and transferable conservation model for similar rural settlements shaped by migration, thereby offering a broader methodological contribution to the preservation of vernacular heritage landscapes.

By framing the Konaklı Pomak houses as components of a dynamic cultural landscape rather than isolated architectural artifacts, the study aims to contribute to broader discussions on vernacular architecture, migration heritage, and holistic conservation practices in Anatolia.

Literature Review

Rural tourism is commonly defined as a form of tourism that supports the social, cultural, and economic development of rural areas in line with sustainability principles and that is integrated with natural environments, traditional lifestyles, and agricultural activities. By enhancing community participation, supporting local economies, and increasing the visibility of traditional cultural practices, rural tourism is widely regarded as a strategic instrument in the conservation of cultural heritage. The literature emphasizes that rural tourism allows visitors to experience local culture, participate in traditional production practices, and enjoy rural environments while preserving the distinctive character of settlements (Enk et al., 2010; Pakurar & Oláh, 2008; Perales, 2002; Sert, 2024; Simeanu et al., 2025; Soykan, 2003; Tovmasyan, 2023). In addition, rural tourism contributes to landscape protection, employment generation, local production, and the integration of ecotourism, cultural tourism, and agrotourism within sustainable development policies.

Recent studies highlight the multidimensional impacts of rural tourism on heritage conservation and local development. Kumar et al. (2024) underlines its role in fostering intercultural interaction, while Jayalakshmi and Vijayasree (2025) emphasize its contribution to the visibility of handicrafts and festivals. Tola et al. (2024) point to economic benefits and employment creation, whereas Yılmaz and Yılmaz (2019) stress the reinvestment of tourism revenues into heritage conservation. Zhao (2024) frames rural tourism as an environmentally integrated approach that ensures intergenerational transmission of heritage values, and responsible tourism practices based on community participation are frequently highlighted as essential (Jayalakshmi & Vijayasree, 2025). Tunca and Akyüz Levi (2021) further demonstrate that rural tourism strengthens infrastructure, social life, and public services in rural settlements while reducing rural–urban migration.

Ecological villages emerging within rural tourism contexts contribute significantly to the safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage through the continuation of traditional knowledge systems such as permaculture, organic agriculture, natural construction techniques, and local production. International cases including Findhorn (Scotland) and Auroville (India), together with Turkish examples such as Dedetepe (Çanakkale), Marmariç (İzmir), and Gülnar (Mersin), illustrate how rural tourism enhances the economic sustainability of such settlements and raises awareness of ecological lifestyles (Tunca & Akyüz Levi, 2021).

The integration of cultural heritage and tourism in rural contexts has become a central research topic (Aktaş & Aktaş, 2025; George et al., 2009; Lane & Kastenholtz, 2015; Yazgan & Kadanali, 2012). Tangible and intangible heritage elements constitute core components of rural destinations, while cultural practices such as music, dance, gastronomy, and handicrafts enhance destination distinctiveness and local economies (Bourdin et al., 2019; Starčević et al., 2022). Network-based cooperation among local economies, tourism actors, and heritage institutions is emphasized as a prerequisite for successful heritage-led tourism models, and participatory governance structures are seen as critical for balancing conservation and development (Paulino et al., 2023). At the same time, the literature cautions against risks such as overtourism, commodification, and loss of authenticity, thereby underlining the necessity of context-sensitive planning.

Numerous studies investigate the relationship between intangible heritage and rural tourism (Çapar, 2016; Cerquetti et al., 2022; Diker, 2019; Ekici & Avcıkurt, 2023; Özbek & Öz Çelikbaş, 2021; Pekerşen & Çalık, 2017; Pelit & Türkoğlu, 2019; Roigé et al., 2019; Shakya & Vagnarelli, 2024; Wang et al., 2019). Although these studies demonstrate the contribution of intangible heritage to destination competitiveness and sustainability, they often treat cultural practices independently from the architectural and spatial contexts in which they are embedded, thus insufficiently addressing the reciprocal relationship between tangible and intangible heritage.

In the context of migrant culinary heritage, studies conducted in Niğde also emphasize the role of adaptive reuse in sustaining intangible cultural values. For instance, Acar Ata (2023) proposes the transformation of a traditional stone mansion in Yeşilburç (Denizli) into a “gastronomy house” to support the transmission of migrant culinary culture through experiential learning. This approach highlights the importance of integrating spatial heritage with food-related practices and demonstrates the potential of reuse strategies in sustaining intangible heritage.

International scholarship and UNESCO’s 1972 and 2003 Conventions strongly advocate for the integrated treatment of tangible and intangible heritage. Smith (2006) and Harrison (2013) conceptualize heritage as deriving meaning from lived practices rather than solely from physical remains, a position reinforced by the Yamato (2004), Xi’an (2005), Quebec (2008), and Naples (2011) Declarations, which stress the importance of conserving not only material fabric but also meanings, uses, and traditional knowledge systems.

Nevertheless, a methodological divide persists in conservation research. Architectural studies frequently prioritize physical fabric while neglecting everyday practices and cultural contexts (Değirmenci & Köşklük Kaya, 2020). In Türkiye, definitional gaps and institutional fragmentation further hinder holistic approaches, particularly due to the absence of a legal definition of “rural site,” which prevents the integrated assessment of architectural heritage together with the agricultural and forest landscapes that sustain it (Soykök Ede, 2025).

Research on rural architectural heritage and migrant communities in Türkiye remains limited. Existing studies primarily focus on Balkan migrant settlements (Çalışkan, 2015), housing typologies (Karpuz, 1996), or intangible cultural heritage practices (Ersoy, 2018). Within this body of literature, scholarship on Pomaks is largely concentrated on migration histories and cultural traditions, providing detailed documentation of language, music, gastronomy, rituals, and everyday practices (Başaran, 1999; Zafer, 2001; Başaran & Tipigil Gürcüm, 2007; Koyuncu, 2013; İleri & Kemaloglu, 2013; Öztürk & Aşçıkoça, 2013; Özcan, 2013; Yiğit, 2016; Ergene, 2015; Kamil, 2017; Aksoy, 2019; Deniz, 2019; Poyraz, 2019; Vardar, 2019; Özlem, 2020; Aslan, 2020; Zafer, 2020; Pelin, 2021; Mertol et al., 2021; Güzel & Akyurt Kurnaz, 2023; Çetinbaş, 2025). However, these studies generally do not integrate architectural heritage with intangible cultural values within a unified analytical framework, particularly in relation to rural tourism and holistic conservation approaches.

A similar gap is also evident in international literature, where migrant-built rural settlements are predominantly evaluated in terms of economic utilization and tourism potential, while intangible cultural dimensions and everyday cultural practices remain secondary (George, 2010; Hall & Williams, 2002). Despite the growing body of research on rural tourism and heritage conservation, limited attention has been paid to migrant-built rural settlements in Anatolia that simultaneously address architectural fabric and living cultural traditions. In this context, both national and international studies rarely examine spatial heritage and socio-cultural practices together within a holistic conservation and rural tourism framework.

A similar gap is evident in international literature, where migrant-built rural settlements are predominantly evaluated in terms of economic utilization and tourism potential, while their intangible cultural dimensions remain secondary or underexplored (George, 2010; Hall & Williams, 2002). In the study conducted by Uğurlu and Efe Yavaşcan (2025), adaptive reuse strategies are developed for the Konaklı Greek Church, and the structure is assessed together with the underground city and surrounding Pomak houses within a holistic conservation framework. In this context, Pomak houses are acknowledged as integral components of the settlement's cultural landscape, highlighting its multilayered heritage structure. However, the study does not provide a detailed focus on the architectural characteristics, typological features, or adaptive reuse potential of Pomak houses (Uğurlu & Efe Yavaşcan, 2025).

Although existing studies on Konaklı and its cultural heritage address individual components such as the Greek Church, underground city, and broader migration history, these works generally approach the subject either from an architectural conservation perspective or from a socio-cultural heritage perspective in isolation. In particular, research specifically focusing on Pomak houses remains limited, and these structures are typically referenced only within broader settlement analyses without in-depth typological or spatial examination.

In this respect, the present study addresses a clear research gap by integrating architectural analysis with living intangible cultural heritage practices within a unified holistic framework. Unlike previous studies that tend to treat built heritage and cultural practices separately, this research combines spatial organization, construction techniques, domestic architectural typologies, and the everyday cultural practices, rituals, and memory structures of the community. In doing so, it offers an interdisciplinary contribution that not only documents Pomak houses as physical heritage assets but also interprets them as active cultural environments shaped by migration processes, collective memory, and the continuity of tradition.

Within this context, the lack of comprehensive literature specifically focusing on the Pomak houses of Konaklı constitutes a key theoretical and original contribution of the study. By documenting architectural characteristics and evaluating living traditions in an integrated manner within a rural tourism framework, the research proposes a holistic conservation model that links spatial heritage with socio-cultural practices and highlights the potential of rural tourism as a tool for the sustainable safeguarding of multilayered migrant heritage. This study does not argue for the complete absence of research on Pomak houses; rather, it underlines the absence of a focused and systematic analysis of the Konaklı case. This specific gap defines the principal originality of the research and reinforces its contribution to both architectural conservation and cultural heritage studies.

Methodology

This research is designed as a qualitative case study that investigates the relationship between architectural heritage and living cultural practices in a rural migrant settlement through a holistic conservation perspective. Rather than approaching rural environments solely as tourism resources, the study conceptualizes Konaklı Town and its Pomak houses as components of a multilayered cultural landscape shaped by successive migration processes. The case study method was adopted to enable in-depth, context-sensitive analysis of the spatial, material, and socio-cultural dimensions of the settlement and to examine how tangible and intangible heritage values intersect within everyday life.

The study area consists of Konaklı Town in Niğde Province and the Pomak houses located within the settlement. The site was selected through purposive sampling because it preserves significant elements of its vernacular architectural fabric, intangible cultural practices continue to be maintained in daily life, and the settlement represents a rare example of a multi-ethnic Balkan migrant community in Central Anatolia. In addition, the researchers' positionality is explicitly acknowledged, as they were born and raised in the study area and have maintained continuous engagement with the settlement through ongoing visits and close familial ties. Many of their relatives still reside in Konaklı, which has enabled sustained access to local knowledge, social relations, and everyday spatial practices over time. Within this context, the researchers have grown up immersed in the local cultural environment and have directly experienced intangible cultural heritage practices, including rituals, oral traditions, and daily cultural expressions, as part of their lived experience. This long-term and embedded familiarity provided a significant methodological advantage, allowing for a deeper understanding of both tangible and intangible heritage elements within their socio-cultural context. However, the potential for subjective bias arising from this insider position was carefully considered throughout the research process. To ensure analytical rigor, all observations were systematically documented, critically reflected upon, and cross-checked with architectural survey data, field records, and relevant scholarly literature. This reflexive approach aimed to balance experiential knowledge with academic objectivity, thereby enhancing the reliability, transparency, and interpretive validity of the study.

The data collection process began with a comprehensive review of national and international literature addressing vernacular architecture, migrant settlements, Pomak culture, cultural landscapes, and holistic conservation theory. This review established the conceptual framework of the research and clarified the theoretical foundations underlying the research questions.

Fieldwork focused on the in-situ documentation of selected Pomak houses and their immediate surroundings. Architectural survey techniques were employed to record plan typologies, construction systems, materials, spatial organization, façade characteristics, and relationships to the settlement pattern. Data were gathered through measured drawings, photographic recording, and systematic on-site observation, and were interpreted with reference to rural architectural heritage studies and conservation literature. Particular attention was paid not only to physical attributes but also to how domestic spaces are or were formerly used in everyday life.

Intangible cultural heritage was investigated through the observation of traditional practices related to daily life, food production and preparation, rituals, music, and social interaction within the settlement. These practices were examined in relation to architectural spaces to reveal how cultural continuity is spatially structured and how domestic environments act as carriers of collective memory. The analysis was framed with reference to UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and contemporary holistic conservation approaches, allowing the built environment and living traditions to be evaluated as interdependent heritage components.

Data analysis combined descriptive and interpretive methods. Architectural and cultural findings were categorized under thematic headings such as building typology, materiality, domestic use, ritual space, and community practices and cross-read to identify patterns of interaction between tangible and intangible heritage. Rather than producing purely technical inventories, the analytical process sought to interpret architectural form within its socio-cultural context and to assess how adaptive reuse scenarios could sustain both material fabric and living traditions. These interpretations formed the basis for developing conservation-oriented reuse proposals compatible with the historical character of the settlement and the cultural practices of its inhabitants.

In conclusion, the methodological framework adopted in this study treats rural architectural heritage not as isolated physical artifacts but as socially embedded cultural systems shaped by memory, practice, and migration history. By integrating architectural survey techniques with cultural analysis and conservation theory, the research proposes an interdisciplinary approach applicable to the study and safeguarding of migrant-built rural landscapes in Anatolia and comparable contexts.

Findings

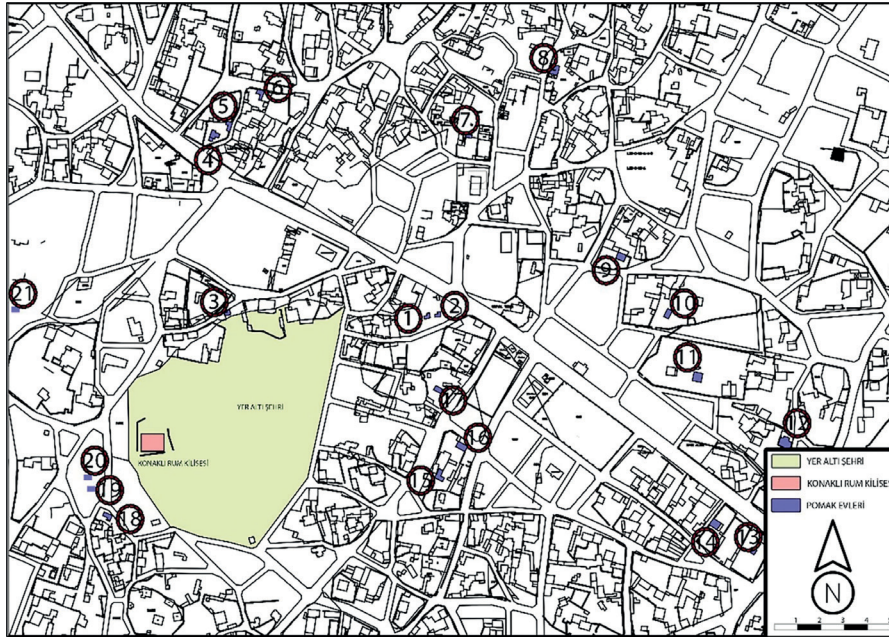
Settlement Characteristics of Konaklı and Architectural Features of Pomak Houses

Konaklı Town is located approximately 30 km northeast of Niğde within the Cappadocia Region and was referred to as “Buntak Ova” during the Ottoman period (Chantre, 1999). Its former name, Misthi, derives from the Greek mercenary soldiers (Mist-hioi) who once inhabited the area (Chantre, 1999). Following the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, the Greek Orthodox population migrated to Greece; Turkish immigrants arriving from Thessaloniki settled in the town in 1924, and Pomak communities from Bulgaria and Romania followed between 1936 and 1951. Due to climatic and agricultural incompatibilities, the Pomaks soon migrated to other regions of Anatolia. The name of the settlement was later changed from Misli to Konaklı in reference to the hospitality of its inhabitants, and the town acquired municipal status in 1989 (Niğde Konaklı Belediyesi, 2025).

Today, Konaklı’s economy is primarily based on potato cultivation. In earlier periods, wheat and barley were grown due to water scarcity, while irrigated agriculture and livestock breeding developed after wells were opened after 1975. Tangible heritage assets in the settlement include the Greek Church built in 1844, the Underground City, the Pomak houses, and a limited number of ruined Greek dwellings. The Pomak houses are largely concentrated around the church, while others are dispersed across different parts of the town.

The Pomak houses reflect both architectural traditions specific to Pomak culture and the vernacular rural building practices of the Cappadocia region. In Pomak cultural life, domestic space is not merely conceived as shelter but as the setting of rituals, collective memory, and major life events (Güzel & Akyurt Kurnaz, 2023, pp. 202-203). Practices such as birth, marriage, death, guest reception, and food preparation have shaped domestic layouts, rendering these dwellings significant as spatial expressions of migrant identity. In Konaklı, most Pomak houses were constructed by the state according to standardized projects during the population exchange process and were subsequently left behind when Pomak communities relocated.

Field surveys identified a total of twenty-one Pomak houses within the settlement (Fig. 1, Fig. 2). Only a small number of these buildings continue to be used as residences, while the majority function as storage spaces or remain abandoned. Changes in use and lack of maintenance have resulted in the deterioration of original plan schemes and architectural elements, placing the Pomak houses under both physical and cultural threat (Fig. 6, Fig. 10).

**Figure 1**

Locations of the Immigrant Pomak Houses in the Town / *Kasabadaki Göçmen Pomak Evlerinin Konumları*

**Figure 2**

Examples of Immigrant Pomak Houses in the Town / *Kasabadaki Göçmen Pomak Evleri Örnekleri*

The Pomak houses typically display an L-shaped plan typology and consist of three principal units: the kitchen, the main living room (salon), and the storage room (kayıt odası) (Fig. 3, 4, Fig. 6, 7). In the single-storey houses, the entrance on the eastern façade opens directly into the kitchen, which also serves as a circulation space. The salon accommodates sitting, sleeping, and guest reception within a single multifunctional room and is characterized by a wooden beam ceiling. Floors were traditionally covered with reed mats and kilims, while walls were arranged with cushions and pillows. The storage room is generally located on the northern side and was originally used for keeping food and household goods; today it mostly retains a storage function, while some houses have been enlarged with additional volumes to create secondary living spaces.

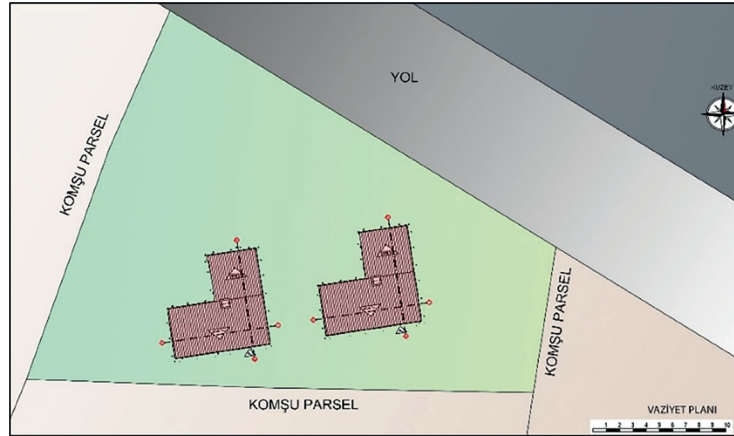


Figure 3

Site Plan Showing Two Pomak Houses / *İki Pomak Evini Gösteren Yerleşim Planı*

In the aralık-kitchen area, a hearth serving both cooking and heating functions is present (Fig. 4, 5, 8). This hearth is connected to a shared chimney system with the living room, enabling smoke evacuation while simultaneously heating both spaces. Such an arrangement constitutes an energy-efficient vernacular solution in which architectural form and everyday practices are closely integrated. Another traditional cooking device associated with Salonika immigrants is the *kapama*, an oven-like installation composed of a tray and a lid placed within a wall niche; this feature continues to demonstrate cultural continuity in Konaklı (Örnek, 2023, p. 162), (Fig. 9).

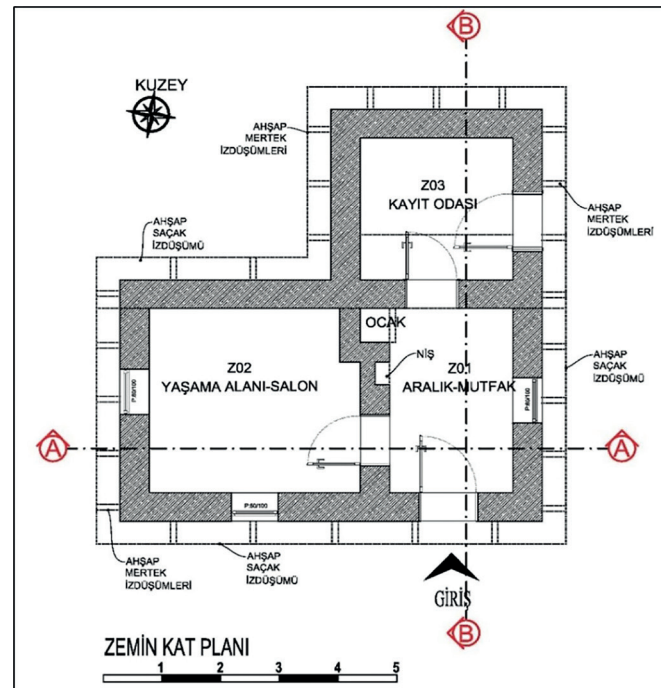


Figure 4

Ground Floor Plan of the Pomak House / *Pomak Evi Zemin Kat Planı*

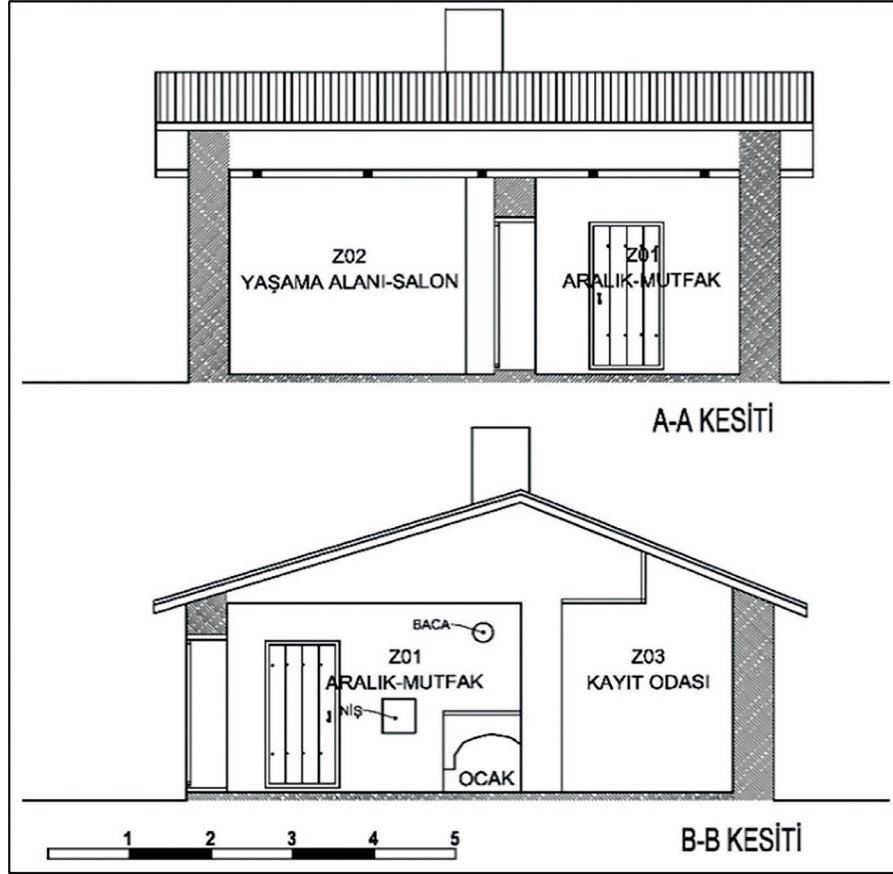


Figure 5
Sections of the Pomak House / *Pomak Evi Kesitleri*



Figure 6
Living Room Spaces in Pomak Houses (Living and Guest Reception Areas); Examples of Dwellings, Storage Uses, and Abandoned Buildings are Shown / *Pomak Evlerindeki Yaşama Alanları (Oturma ve Misafir Ağırlama Alanları); Konut, Depolama ve Terk Edilmiş Örnekler*

**Figure 7**

Interior Examples of the Kayıt Odası (Storage Room) / *Kayıt Odasının (Depo) İç Mekan Görüntüleri*

Rectangular wooden doors and windows are used throughout the buildings, and simple square or rectangular niches that support daily activities are incorporated into the kitchen, living room, and storage spaces. Some of these niches are detailed with wooden frames (Fig. 10). The survival of the Pomak houses to the present day can largely be attributed to their original and durable construction techniques. Foundations were formed through shallow excavation and hard stone; corner stones ensured structural integrity, while infill material provided additional stability. The walls were built of roughly dressed stone laid in a cross-bonded pattern and reach a thickness of 40–60 cm, providing both load-bearing capacity and thermal insulation. Horizontal wooden tie beams and lintels were inserted at door and window openings (Fig. 10).

**Figure 8**

The Traditional Hearth and Chimney System That Has Survived to the Present Day (The Chimney on the Right is Closed)
/ *Günümüze Kadar Ulaşmış Geleneksel Ocak ve Baca Sistemi (Sağdaki Baca Kapatılmış)*



Figure 9

The Traditional Cooking Device “Kapama,” Representing Migrant Identity in Konaklı Town
/ Konaklı Kasabasında Göçmen Kimliğini Temsil Eden Geleneksel Pişirme Aracı “Kapama”



Figure 10

Building Materials, Construction Techniques, and Architectural Details of the Pomak Houses / Pomak Evlerinin Yapı Malzemeleri, İnşaat Teknikleri ve Mimari Detayları

The ceiling system was constructed by placing wooden beams at intervals of 40–50 cm and covering them with floorboards; the upper layer was plastered with soil- or clay-based mortar to prevent moisture and air infiltration. Interior walls were finished with lime plaster and whitewash, while exterior stone surfaces were left exposed in order to preserve material authenticity (Fig. 10).

The most distinctive architectural feature differentiating the Pomak houses from other traditional buildings in Konaklı is their roof system. Instead of flat earthen roofs, gable roofs were employed. These roofs consist of wooden purlins and boards placed on load-bearing beams and are covered with red tiles. With slopes of approximately 30–35%, they facilitate snow and rain drainage, while projecting eaves protect the façades. Projecting eaves protect the walls; the wooden soffit boards of the eaves have survived to the present day in only one house (Fig. 10). In accordance with the L-shaped plan layout, the roofs slope in two directions; additional floor layers are present above the kitchen and living spaces, whereas part of the storage room lacks a floor covering (Fig. 4, 10).

Immigrant Pomak Cultural Identity and the Identification of Intangible Cultural Heritage

According to the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, intangible cultural heritage is defined under five domains oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship-and aims to ensure their transmission to future generations (UNESCO, 2025). This approach foresees the sustainable safeguarding of cultural diversity through community participation. Oğuz (2007, pp. 31-32) emphasizes that cultural space is central to the protection of intangible heritage and that culture is preserved not only through products but also through context. Detaching traditions from the spaces in which they emerge disrupts their authenticity and integrity; therefore, tangible and intangible elements must be addressed together in conservation strategies (Kuşçuoğlu & Taş, 2017, p. 64).

In Konaklı, the intangible cultural heritage of Salonika immigrants and Pomaks has been identified on the basis of these five domains (Table 1). The tangible heritage elements include the Pomak Houses, the Greek Church, and the Underground City, while the intangible elements comprise oral traditions, handicrafts, performing arts, social practices, and rituals. These components reflect Konaklı's multilayered immigrant identity and shared cultural values.

Within oral traditions, language functions both as an independent form of expression and as the carrier of other intangible heritage elements such as ceremonies, folktales, prayers, and music. Pomak language (a dialect of Bulgarian) is distinguished through folktales, legends, lullabies, manis, prayers, and nickname-giving practices, as well as through its unique linguistic structure (for example, the use of the suffix *-ma*, the absence of the letter *h* at the beginning of words, and the dominance of the letter *r*). Despite digitalization, Pomak language is under threat of extinction (Poyraz, 2019).

The rich handicraft tradition of Pomaks and immigrants includes a wide range of traditional woven products such as mintan, headscarf (karpa), entari, fistan, ferace, saya, bedding and yüklük covers, floor textiles, prayer rugs, cacala, runners, pillows, tablecloths, Pomak cloth, bundles (bohça), saddlebags (heybe), waistbands (uçkur), and aprons (Table 1; Fig. 11). These products play an important role not only in daily life but also in weddings, engagements, and other ceremonies. In particular, needle lace worked on the edges of peşkir cloths constitutes indispensable ornaments of engagement bundles in Konaklı. Kiçona kilims and mekik (weft shuttle) lace formerly symbolized women's skill, while knitting, slipper and sock making, and bead-sequin embroidery are also widespread. Wool spinning is referred to as "predene" by Pomaks and "kirmen spinning" by immigrants. These handicrafts play a significant role in maintaining social belonging and cultural identity; today, women sustain the culture while generating income through needle lace and immigrant-style slippers. Pomaks wear layered woolen garments against harsh climatic conditions and prefer dark and vivid colors, while women's clothing is made of cotton, wool, or aba fabrics and decorated with beads, sequins, and plain-weave techniques (Başaran, 1996, pp. 50-51).



Figure 11

“Saya,” the Outer Garment of Immigrant Women in Konaklı; Right: Front View, Left: Rear View / *Konaklı'daki Göçmen Kadınların Giydiği Dış Giysi “Saya”; Sağda: Önden Görünüm, Solda: Arkadan Görünüm*

The performance arts of the Pomak and immigrant communities include folk songs (pesna), immigrant ballads, and tambourine (def) playing, which occupy a central place (Table 1). The ability to sing folk songs is developed from childhood, and lived experiences and emotions are reflected in these songs, through which collective memory is transmitted via oral culture (Zafer, 2001, p. 570).

Social practices, rituals, and festivals are highly diverse within Pomak and immigrant culture (Table 1). Bocuk Night, Mantufar çıkarma, Sedenka, Hıdırellez, religious holidays, birth and death ceremonies, circumcision and wedding traditions, superstitious beliefs, folk medicine, and food culture constitute the main components of this diversity. Bocuk Night is a ritual celebrated by Pomaks at the beginning of winter; cold weather and frozen waters are associated with the year's fertility. Wishes for magic, abundance, and prosperity, together with entertainment and social solidarity, come to the fore in this ritual (Güzel & Akyurt Kurnaz, 2023, p. 202; Özcan, 2013, p. 69-71). Sedenka is a cultural gathering where women engage in handicrafts and strengthen neighborhood relations (Özcan, 2013, p. 72-73). During Hıdırellez, rituals associated with health, healing, abundance, and good fortune are performed.

Mantufar çıkarma is an important ritual performed by women on 24 March to celebrate the arrival of spring (Örnek, 2022, p. 119). Also known as mantuvar in Anatolia and the Balkans, this practice functions as a wish-making game similar to Hıdırellez (Aktürk, 2014, pp. 71-72). The ritual begins when a previously appointed person collects the women's personal items. On the following day, women of Selanik immigrant origin wear their traditional clothes, braid their hair, and adorn themselves. The collected items and newly bloomed spring flowers are placed into a clay jar filled with water. Women gather at a designated place in the village, link arms, sing folk songs, and dance. Items are drawn one by one from the jar, and a *mani* (rhymed verse) is recited for the owner. The ritual continues throughout the day with games and entertainment, reinforcing social bonds among women. Within the intangible cultural heritage of Selanik immigrants,

another ritual called “dernek” holds a special place. Symbolizing the arrival of spring and the new year, this celebration begins early in the morning with boiling eggs in onion skins. With competitions, games, and courtship and mate-selection rituals for young people, it takes the form of a local festival that strengthens community solidarity. Today in Konaklı, this tradition survives only in the memory of second-generation exchange migrants, thus representing a form of cultural continuity embedded in place.

For Pomak Turks, religious holidays hold an important place in social life; greeting and hosting guests are among the fundamental rituals of social attachment (Ergene, 2015, pp. 47-48). They are equally significant for immigrants in terms of cultural identity and solidarity. On the eve of the holiday, no work is done, and cemetery visits are made after the afternoon prayer. On these days, Selanik *kapama* bread and Bulgarian *kolacı* are baked and consumed on the morning of the holiday. On the evening of the eve, children go door to door in the tradition known as *şivri gezme*, collecting pastries, candy, and money while loudly chanting: “Şivri şivri şişirtme, yalı börek pişirtme, vermeyenin tavuklarını tilkiler yesin.” This tradition both enhances children’s holiday joy and strengthens social solidarity. On the first evening of the holiday, married women visit their natal families for a *ziyafet*, meaning a banquet invitation (Niğde Konaklı Belediyesi, 2025).

Circumcision and wedding ceremonies among Pomaks and Selanik immigrants are traditional events that include numerous rituals and occupy an important place in social life. In both communities, consanguineous marriages are not preferred. The ritual of asking for a bride is completed in three stages, and the groom does not participate in these ceremonies (Kırtıl, 2019, p. 204).

The promise ceremony (söz kesme) constitutes the first official step of the marriage process, during which the groom’s family sends gifts such as a headscarf, gold, or a ring to the bride’s family and thus declares the girl “promised.” The purpose of this practice is to prevent the girl from marrying someone else and to establish a bond between the families (Zafer, 2001, p. 572). The tradition of *peşkir alma* (receiving embroidered towels) holds an important place in engagements and weddings; the bride’s family sends decorated *peşkir* to the groom’s side as a message of goodwill and commitment. The family receiving the *peşkir* is then visited by townspeople, thereby reinforcing the tradition socially. At weddings, Selanik immigrants use three different local costumes: *üç etek* during the daytime, *köylü biçimi* on the henna night, and *don yelek* during the groom’s shaving ceremony. Today these costumes have largely been replaced by a single outfit; however, *don yelek* is still recognized in the town as an important local garment with its distinctive design and cultural significance. Many rituals such as engagement, *sini*, *mendil alma*, finding money in baklava, and taking the bride’s chest key are performed at weddings; therefore, the ceremonies last for an extended period. After the wedding, the newly married couple is successively invited to banquets (*ziyafet*) by relatives.

Birth rituals hold an important place in Pomak and immigrant communities. Women who wish to have children use traditional remedies, and making vows (*adak*) is common (Mertol et al., 2021, p. 901). For women who cannot conceive, a healing ritual of passing through a holed stone is practiced; in Konaklı this is performed by passing through the narrow gap between two large stones next to “Gölcük Suyu.” Various rituals are applied during periods such as predicting the baby’s gender, naming, the fortieth day (*kırk çıkarma*), teething, the six-month henna ceremony, and the first walking of the child (Mertol et al., 2021, pp. 901-905). Prayers are recited for the baby’s health, and protective practices against the evil eye are performed. During the postpartum period, beliefs and protective practices against evil spirits such as *al karısı*, *karabasan*, and *al basma* continue (Özcan, 2013, p. 73).

Death rituals are practiced similarly in both communities. No food is cooked in the house of the deceased; neighbors bring meals. On the 7th, 40th, and 52nd days after death, the Qur’an is recited, a *mevlid* is held, and food is distributed. On the seventh day, distributing halva is common. In addition, a chair covered with a towel is placed at the door of the deceased’s house. These rituals are performed to show respect to the deceased, to ensure the peace of the soul, and to strengthen social solidarity (Özcan, 2013, p. 74).

Among Pomaks and immigrants, the rain prayer performed for abundance and prosperity during drought periods is an important ritual. In Konaklı Town, the ceremony, usually held in May, is carried out by collectively cooking and consuming meals prepared with the material and moral contributions of the community. This ritual both ensures harmony with nature and reinforces social solidarity.

In Pomak and immigrant communities, there are numerous superstitions shaping daily life, health, fertility, and protection. These beliefs consist of a combination of Islam and ancient Turkic, animist, and regional folk beliefs carried from the Balkans to Anatolia. Folk medicine includes natural plants, medicinal herbs, prayers, and magical practices transmitted from generation to generation. The ritual of *göz kapama*, still practiced in the town, aims to protect against the evil eye and harmful influences.

The culinary culture of the Pomak and immigrant communities living in Konaklı Town is rich and constitutes an important part of intangible cultural heritage (Table 2). Various soups (*düğün-göçe, ovmaç, tarhana, tavşan, kesme, tranu*, etc.), pastries and pies (*kombarnik, bide-pita, nobutlu ekmek, kartina, cornbread, pita, Pomak böreği, kol böreği, çarşaf böreği*, etc.), desserts (*un helvası, hoşaf, baklava, pumpkin and black-squash desserts, hoşmerim, adım çöreği, sweet gözleme*), snacks (*kaygana, kupriva, popara, kobelek*), and distinctive dishes (*kapama, keşkek, tutmaç, softulu*, etc.) reflect this diversity (Table 2). Food culture does not merely satisfy biological needs; it plays a central role in transmitting cultural knowledge, language, collective memory, belonging, and identity. In migrant communities, food is an important tool for preserving and reconstructing the cultural memory of the places of origin. Foods whose preparation, presentation, and consumption are ritualized nourish collective memory. In particular, dish names, cooking techniques, and local terms make the community's identity visible and support cultural continuity. For example, immigrants call their bread "Selanik bread," thereby keeping the place they came from alive in their memory. In Pomak society, dish names such as *kapama, kaçamak*, and *düğün-göçe soup* are symbolic in the intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural memory (Örnek, 2023, p. 156).

In immigrant and Pomak communities, the folk calendar is connected to nature and agriculture. The year is divided into Kasım Days (8 November-5 May) and Hızır Days (6 May-7 November). The arrival of spring is explained through the falling of the *cemres* (to the air on 20 February, to the water on 26-27 February, and to the soil on 4-5 March). However, the days known as *Mart Dokuzu, Dokuzun Dokuzu, Mart Otuzu, April Beşi, Aprilin Beşinin Beşi*, and *Sitte-i Sevr* are associated with the risk of cold and storms. Hıdrellez on 6 May is celebrated as the definitive arrival of spring (Table 1).

Konaklı Town is characterized by a multilayered cultural structure formed through marriages between Selanik, Bulgarian, and Romanian immigrants and the local population. The food cultures, languages, rituals, and spatial production practices of different communities have developed through mutual interaction; this is reflected in both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the town. As stated in Örnek's study, differences in the preparation of *keşkek* reveal cultural boundaries and interaction: while Selanik immigrants prepare *keşkek* only with wheat and milk, Romanian immigrants add chicken; today, chicken *keşkek* has become a heritage element representing the transformation of culinary culture through shared living (Örnek, 2020, pp. 134-135). Similarly, potato production, referred to by Pomaks as *kumpir* and long practiced by Selanik immigrants, demonstrates the continuity of agricultural heritage. In addition, the sharing of meals at round floor tables and the indispensable presence of soup and potatoes at meals in both communities (Çavuşoğlu, 1993, p. 165) indicate that collective memory and everyday life practices are sustained within the context of intangible cultural heritage.

This rich heritage in Konaklı Town reveals the holistic cultural identity of Pomaks and Selanik immigrants, encompassing not only their architectural character but also language, culinary culture, rituals, and handicrafts. Therefore, conservation approaches must be based on holistic methods that address both tangible and intangible heritage elements together.

Table 1

Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements of Konaklı Town (Başaran, 1999; Özcan, 2013; Örnek, 2022; Niğde Konaklı Belediyesi, 2025; Authors' Personal Observations¹) / *Konaklı Kasabasının Somut ve Somut Olmayan Miras Unsurları* (Başaran, 1999; Özcan, 2013; Örnek, 2022; Niğde Konaklı Belediyesi, 2025; Yazarların Kişisel Gözlemleri)

Tangible Cultural Heritage	Intangible Cultural Heritage
- Konaklı Pomak Houses - Konaklı Greek (Rum) Church - Konaklı Underground City	1. Oral traditions and expressions - Pomak language (a dialect of Bulgarian) - Pomak and immigrant tales, legends, and prayers - Lullabies and folk verses (manis) - Nicknaming, coinage of words, and abbreviation of some words among Pomaks and immigrants - Use of the suffix “-ma” in sentences among Pomaks and immigrants - non-use of the letter “h” at the beginning of words - Dominant use of the letter “r”
	2. Tradition of handicrafts - Pomak and immigrant hand-woven textiles - Traditional every day and wedding costumes - Pomak and immigrant peşkir (embroidered towels) - Embroidery - Kıçona rugs - Immigrant needle lace (oya) - Pomak and immigrant knitted works - Immigrant slippers (patığı) and socks - Sequin and bead embroidery and sewing - Shuttle (mekik / atkaçe) lace - Spindle spinning (kirmen), distaff (furka), predene
	3. Performing arts - Pesna (Pomak folk songs) - Immigrant folk songs - Playing the tambourine (def)
	4. Social practices, rituals, and festivals - Bocuk Night - Mantufar Ritual - Sedenka - Hıdırellez - Dernek - Religious holidays (bayrams) - Rain prayer - Birth rituals - Death rituals - Circumcision and wedding traditions - Superstitions - Folk medicine - Food and beverage culture (Table 2)
	5. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe - Agriculture - Animal husbandry - Weather knowledge - Nature-based calendar

¹ The authors of this study Efe Yavaşcan and Uğurlu were born and raised in Konaklı Town, and grew up within the immigrant culture alongside their family elders who migrated from Thessaloniki. In this context, they were in direct contact with these culinary traditions, daily practices, rituals, and social values, and witnessed firsthand both oral transmissions and practical experiences.

Table 2

Local Dishes of the Immigrant and Pomak Cuisine in Konaklı Town (Özcan, 2013, p. 79; Güzel & Akyurt Kurnaz, 2023, p. 211; Örnek, 2023, pp. 159–163; Çetinbaş, 2025, pp. 57–65; Niğde Konaklı Belediyesi, 2025; Authors' personal observations) / *Konaklı Kasabasında Göçmen ve Pomak Mutfağına Özgü Yerel Yemekler* (Özcan, 2013, s. 79; Güzel & Akyurt Kurnaz, 2023, s. 211; Örnek, 2023, ss. 159–163; Çetinbaş, 2025, ss. 57–65; Niğde Konaklı Belediyesi, 2025; Yazarların Kişisel Gözlemleri)

Main and Traditional Dishes	Soups	Breads – Pastries – Dough Products	Desserts	Side Dishes and Snacks
- Örfene / Erfene (slow-cooked small ruminant shared communally) - Kapama (rice dish with meat or chicken, cooked in a covered pan – ceremonial dish) - Nohut kapama (chickpeas fried in the kapama method) - Keşkek - Tutmaç (yogurted cut-dough dish) - Papuda (dried black-eyed pea dish) - Listo (dumplings / manti) - Şumnu (chicken and corn dish) - Sarma (sarmi, sarmoa) - Tapkana çuşka (red peppers stuffed with beans) - Labada (herb dish) - Softulu (head-meat broth with dough)	- Düğün-göçe soup (meat and legume soup) - Ovmaç–Umaç soup (dough and yogurt soup) - Tarhana soup (milk-based or tomato-paste based) - Rabbit soup - Tranu (wheat and milk soup) - Kesme soup (broth made with finely cut noodles) - Kaşa / Kaşe / Kaşinka / Retka Kaşe / Slatka Kaşe --Kaşinka (cornmeal soup)	- Breads – Pastries – Dough Products - Muhacir bread (Thessaloniki “kapama” bread) - Pomak “kravay”; among - Thessaloniki immigrants “bukimekikra, rufteynu” (chickpea bread) - Corn bread - Pristapalka pastry - Rice börek - Poğaça - Hidrellez börek - Yufka börek - Luçnik (fresh onion pie) - Pita (dough-based, yogurt and buttered dish) - Çarşaf börek - Kol börek - Pomak börek (leek pie) - Gevrekli börek (phyllo, cheese and potato pie) - Kolaç (sesame and black-cumin bread)	- Aşure - Flour halva - Helva (milk-based, semolina) - Höşmerin/ Höşmerim (cheese halva) - Tarayenisa (milk-and-egg pudding) - Compote (Hoşaf) - Baklava - Brakana / Rakana (oil-dough dessert) - Adım çöreği - Gözleme dessert - Tikvenik (pumpkin dessert) - Kara pumpkin dessert (with milk) - Paleze / Palezu (starch-based jelly dessert) -Bulamaç (pudding of milk, flour, egg and sugar)	- Ayran - Urda (fresh cheese) - Pickles - Gölle-göce (boiled corn) - Kavurga (roasted boiled corn, wheat and chickpeas) - Kumpir (potato dish) - Kupriva (nettle dish) - Borani (spinach dish) - Black plum dish - Popara (fried stale bread with sweet or spicy sauce) - Kaygana / Kaygan (fried batter with yogurt or colostrum) - Kobelek (fried dough) - Brekunek (mushroom and flour dish) - Kabalka (yeast dough baked/ fried) - Dızmana - Garlic water

The Strategic Position of Konaklı Town within the Cultural Landscape of Cappadocia

Konaklı Town is not merely a rural settlement located within the administrative boundaries of Niğde Province, but also an important cultural threshold area that must be evaluated within the historical, spatial, and touristic integrity of Cappadocia. The town is located on the southern boundary of Cappadocia, along the Nevşehir, Derinkuyu, Niğde axis, and is in direct spatial relationship with Derinkuyu Underground City, one of the region's strongest tourism attraction centers (Fig. 12). This proximity makes Konaklı not just a peripheral settlement, but an integral component of Cappadocia's multilayered cultural landscape.

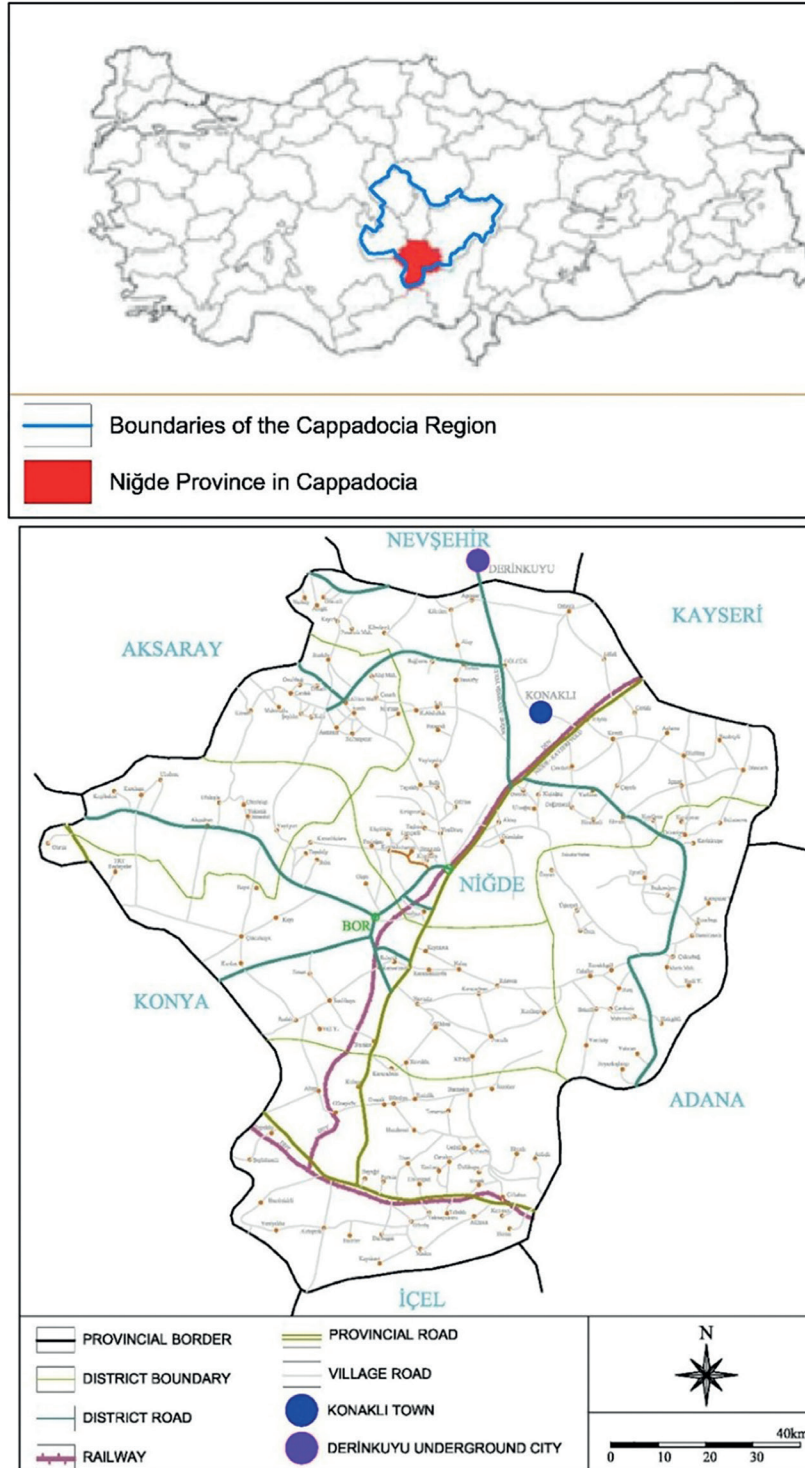


Figure 12

Location of Niğde in Cappadocia and the Location of the Konaklı-Derinkuyu Underground City / *Niğde'nin Kapadokya'daki Konumu ve Konaklı Kasabası'nın ve Derinkuyu Yeraltı Şehri'nin Konumları*

Derinkuyu Underground City is one of the globally recognized archaeological and cultural icons of Cappadocia and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors to the region every year. Konaklı Town's close proximity to this focal point renders the town a secondary cultural destination that can be directly integrated into the Cappadocia tourism system. This condition enables the Pomak houses and migrant cultural heritage in Konaklı to gain visibility not only at the local scale but also within the broader Cappadocian context (Fig. 12).

Cappadocia tourism has long been structured predominantly around geological formations, rock-cut architecture, and underground cities. However, this approach has largely left the region's living cultural fabric and its migration-shaped rural heritage in the background. The Pomak and Thessaloniki migrant settlement in Konaklı represents one of the rare examples that complete this missing dimension of Cappadocia. Therefore, Konaklı offers a cultural layer interpreted through people, migration, memory, and everyday life, as opposed to Cappadocia's history that is primarily read through stone and rock. An integrated cultural tourism and heritage route to be established between Derinkuyu Underground City and the Pomak houses of Konaklı would enable visitors to experience Cappadocia not only through underground spaces, but also through the everyday culture of the communities that historically inhabited this geography. In this respect, Konaklı can be evaluated as an important stop within Cappadocia's living rural cultural landscape, complementing the historical depth of Derinkuyu with contemporary cultural practices.

This spatial proximity and functional complementarity strengthen the feasibility and regional relevance of the adaptive reuse model proposed for the Konaklı Pomak houses. In this way, Konaklı can be positioned as a distinctive cultural destination integrated into the main tourism axis of Cappadocia, where migrant identity, intangible cultural heritage, and rural architecture are presented together.

Immigrant Pomak Houses: A Holistic Adaptive Reuse Proposal Integrated with Intangible Cultural Heritage

The process of assigning new functions to historic buildings is of critical importance not only for ensuring physical continuity but also for transmitting cultural values and identities to future generations (Yaldız & Asatekin, 2016, pp. 161-162). In adaptive reuse practices, the architectural and technical characteristics of buildings are generally foregrounded; however, their place in social memory, user experiences, and everyday rituals are often neglected. Yet these intangible elements constitute the fundamental components that define a building's cultural identity and sense of place (Mısırlısoy & Günçe, 2016, pp. 91-92).

Within this framework, the Pomak houses in Konaklı represent a multilayered cultural heritage area integrated not only with architectural qualities but also with language, food culture, rituals, handicrafts, and collective memory. The adaptive reuse proposals developed in line with the spatial, typological, and cultural data presented in the Findings section aim not only to ensure the physical conservation of the buildings but also to sustain the intangible cultural heritage that embodies Pomak and immigrant identities. Accordingly, based on the findings presented in Tables 1 and 2, the proposed functions for the Pomak houses and the rationales for selecting these functions are summarized in a holistic framework in Table 3. The selection of two abandoned Pomak houses located in the town center, along the main street, in close proximity to one another and with spacious courtyards as the pilot area supports the feasibility of cultural functions in terms of location, accessibility, and spatial capacity (Fig. 13).

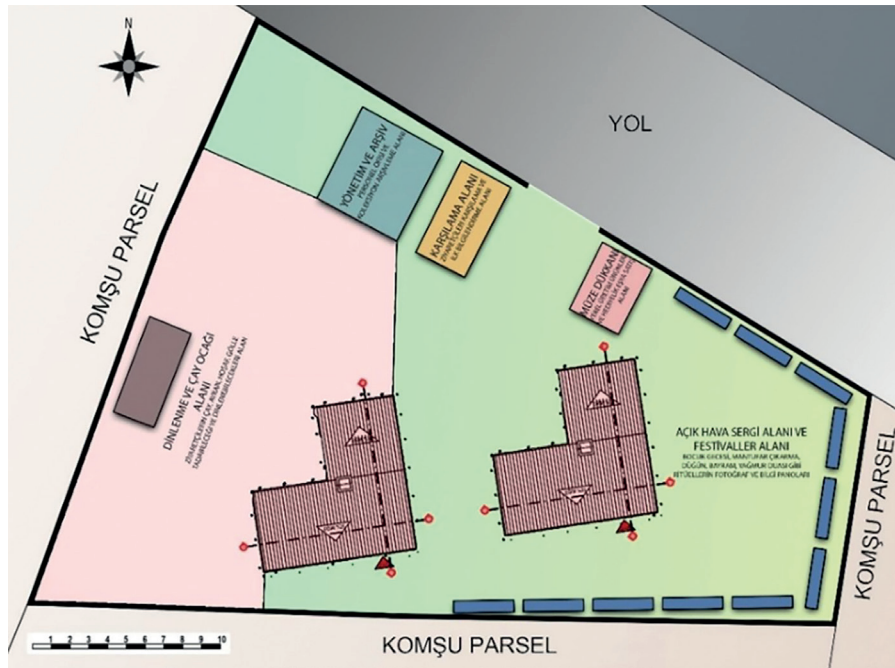
Table 3

Functionalization of Pomak Houses within the Scope of the Holistic Conservation of Tangible and Intangible Heritage and the Reasons for Function Selection / *Somut ve Somut Olmayan Mirasın Bütüncül Korunması Kapsamında Pomak Evlerinin Yeniden İşlevlendirilmesi ve İşlev Seçiminin Nedenleri*

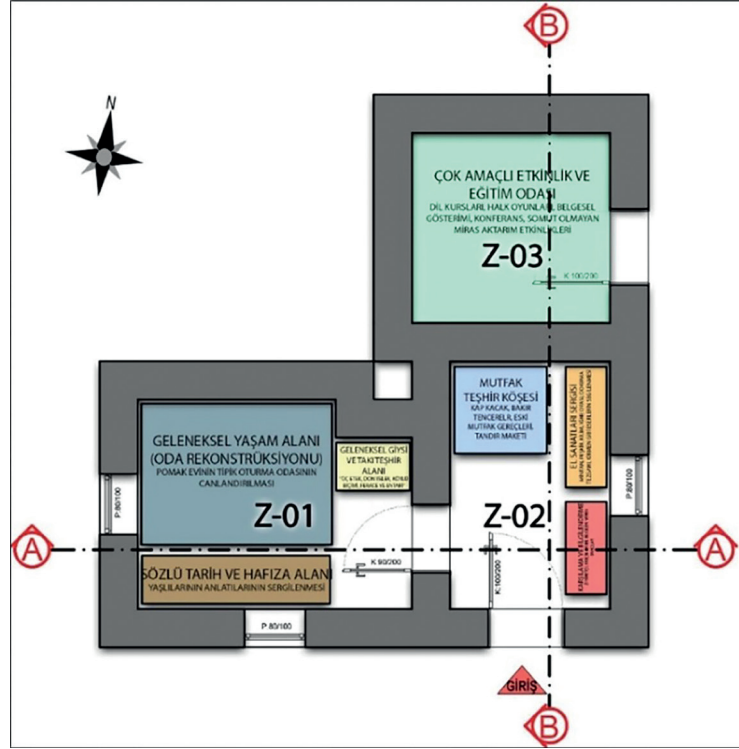
Proposed Functions for Pomak Houses	Definition of the Function	Reasons for Selecting the Function
Pomak and Immigrant Cultural House and Museum	A center where the oral traditions, handicrafts, and rituals of Pomaks and immigrants are exhibited and where educational activities are conducted.	To strengthen cultural memory, make cultural identity visible, and transmit intangible heritage to future generations through education.
Pomak-Immigrant Culinary Experience Center	A culinary experience space where traditional dishes are prepared and presented together with their associated rituals.	To preserve traditional culinary culture that is under the threat of disappearance, to stimulate tourism, and to support cultural transmission.
Immigrant Local Production and Sales Point	A venue for the production, exhibition, and sale of handicrafts, food, and textile products.	To safeguard and promote cultural products and to provide economic benefits for the local community.

Pomak and Immigrant Cultural House and Museum

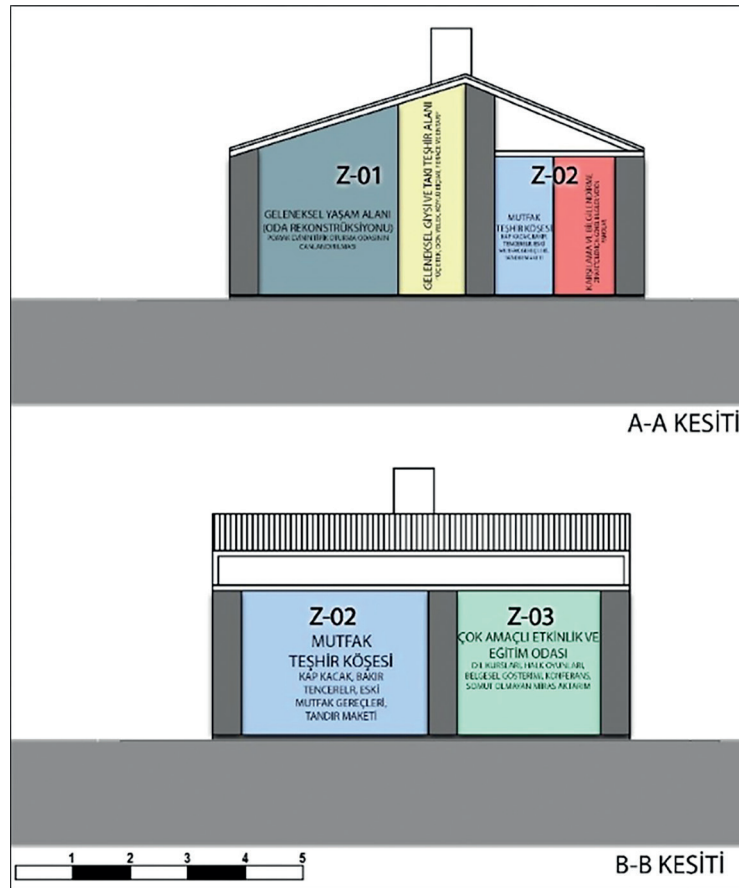
The Pomak and Immigrant Cultural House and Museum aims to present the region's multilayered cultural heritage in a holistic and multifunctional manner. Visitors are directed in the reception and information area, while elderly narratives are conveyed in the oral history room through audio and visual recordings. The main hall is arranged as a living room, kitchen, and bedroom with traditional furniture and household items, and exhibition areas are created for handicrafts, clothing, rituals, and festival representations. The multipurpose hall serves educational and cultural activities, while the kitchen exhibition is dedicated to the transmission of traditional culinary culture. The courtyard accommodates reception, resting areas, a tea house, administrative units, an archive, a museum shop, and open-air exhibitions, thereby ensuring the continuity of rituals and social practices within the spatial setting (Fig. 13–15).

**Figure 13**

Schematic Representation of the Site Plan and Functional Layout Proposal for the Pomak and Immigrant Cultural House and Museum / *Pomak ve Göçmen Kültür Evi ve Müzesi İçin Vaziyet Planı ve Yerleşim Önerisinin Şematik Gösterimi*


Figure 14

Schematic Representation of the Ground Floor Adaptive Reuse Proposal for the Pomak and Immigrant Cultural House and Museum / *Pomak ve Göçmen Kültür Evi ve Müzesi için Zemin Katın Yeniden Kullanım Önerisinin Şematik Gösterimi*


Figure 15

Schematic Representation of the A-A and B-B Sections of the Adaptive Reuse Proposal for the Pomak and Immigrant Cultural House and Museum / *Pomak ve Göçmen Kültür Evi ve Müzesi için A-A ve B-B Kesitlerinin Yeniden Kullanım Önerisinin Şematik Gösterimi*

Pomak–Immigrant Culinary Experience Center

The Pomak–Immigrant Culinary Experience Center begins with an orientation area where visitors are introduced to the culinary culture of the Pomaks and the Thessaloniki immigrants through panels, screens, and brochures. In the *Living Kitchen Workshop*, traditional dishes are prepared using copper cauldrons, stone ovens, and tandoors, while the *Communal Dining Area* offers a collective dining experience around round tables. The *Food Culture Exhibition Area* supports cultural transmission through displays of regional dishes, cooking techniques, and kitchen utensils, whereas the *Product Sales Corner* strengthens economic sustainability by offering women's products such as noodles, tarhana, and jams. The *Event and Training Hall* is allocated for workshops, documentaries, and talks, and the *Rest and Tasting Corner* is dedicated to beverages and snacks specific to Pomak cuisine. This spatial organization integrates the conservation of the building with local participation and the preservation of cultural memory (Fig. 16, 17).

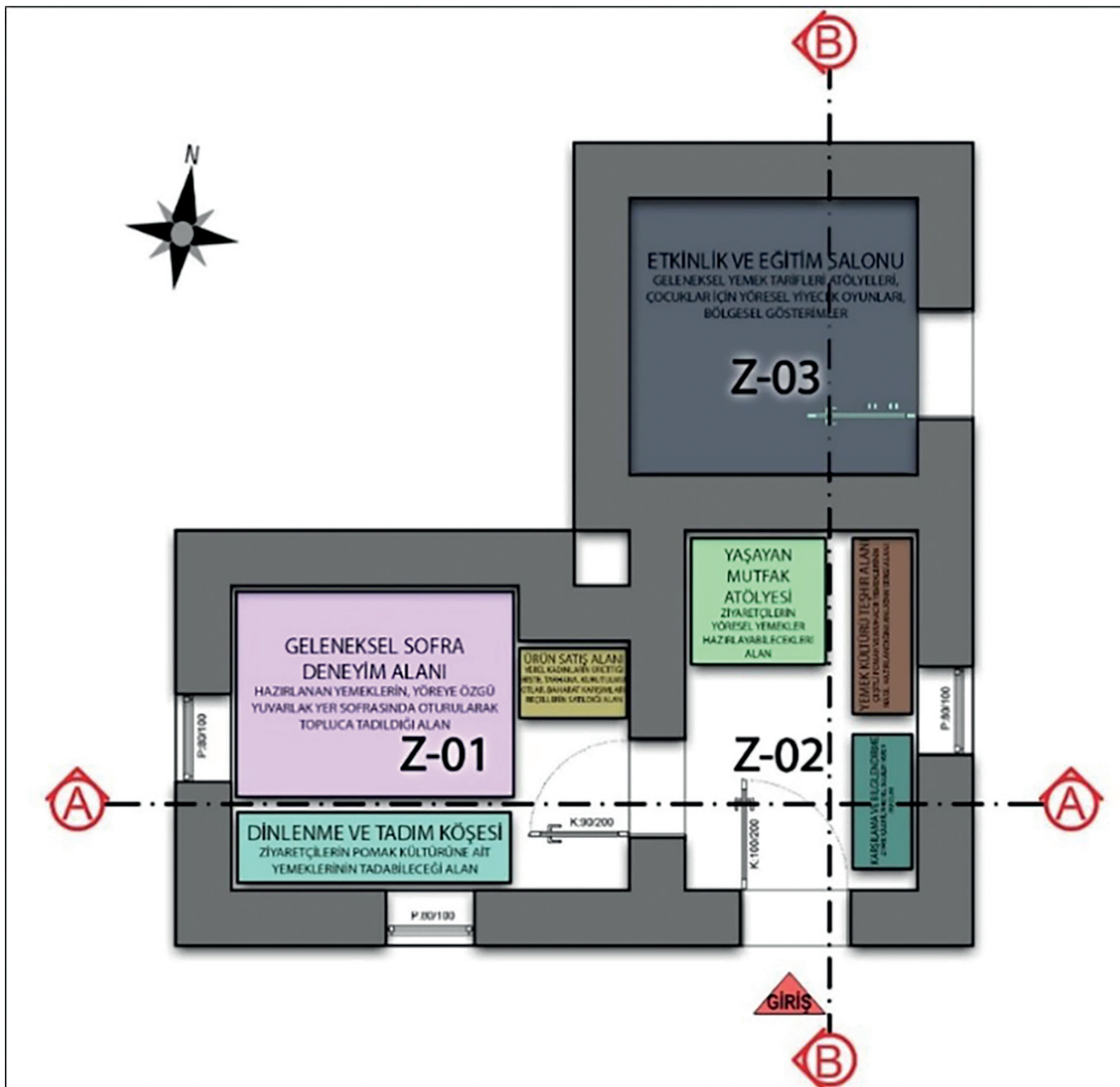


Figure 16

Schematic Representation of the Ground-Floor Adaptive Reuse Proposal for the Pomak–Immigrant Culinary Experience Center / Pomak–Göçmen Mutfak Deneyimi Merkezi İçin Önerilen Yeniden İşlevlendirmenin Zemin Kat Planında Şematik Gösterimi

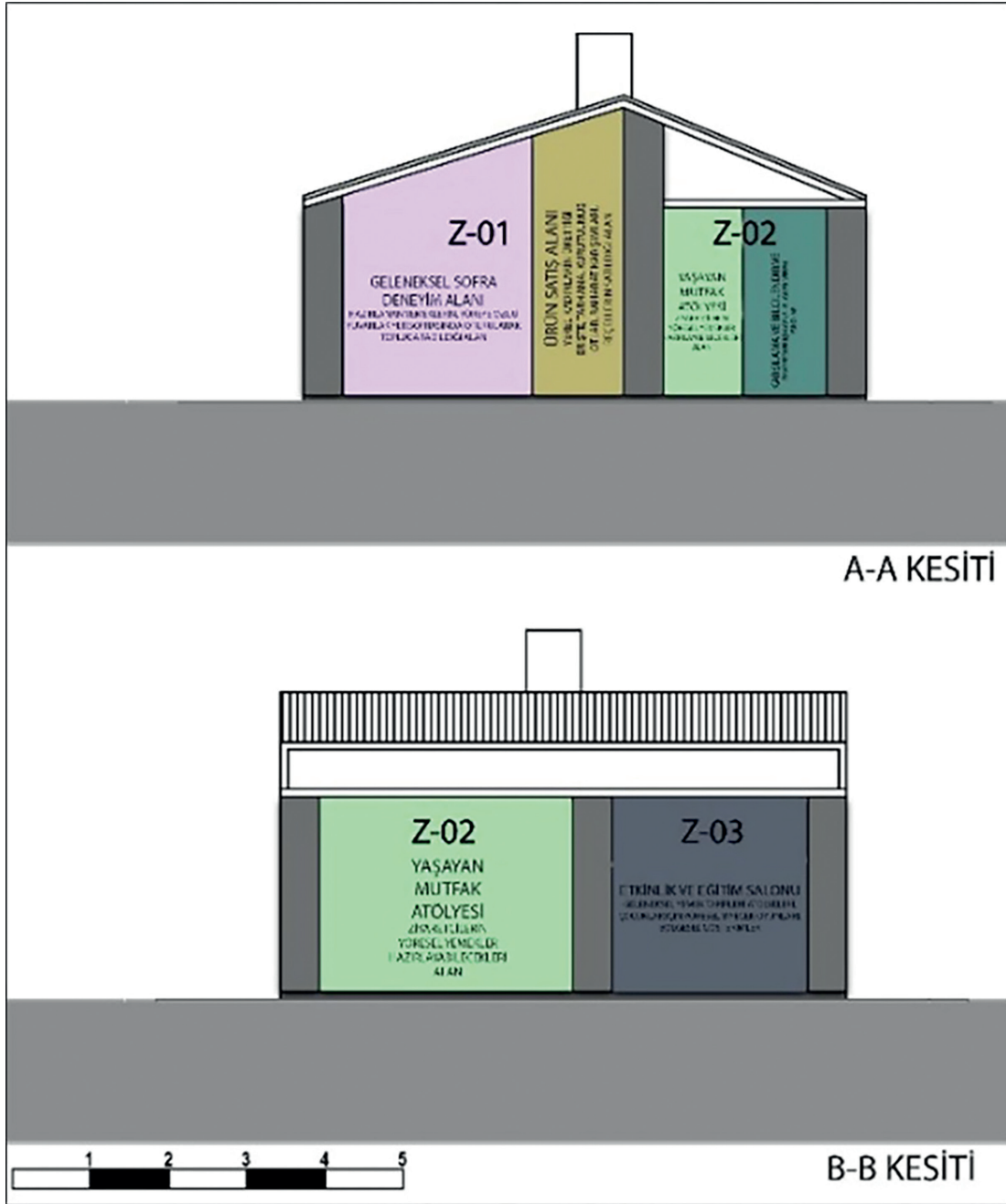
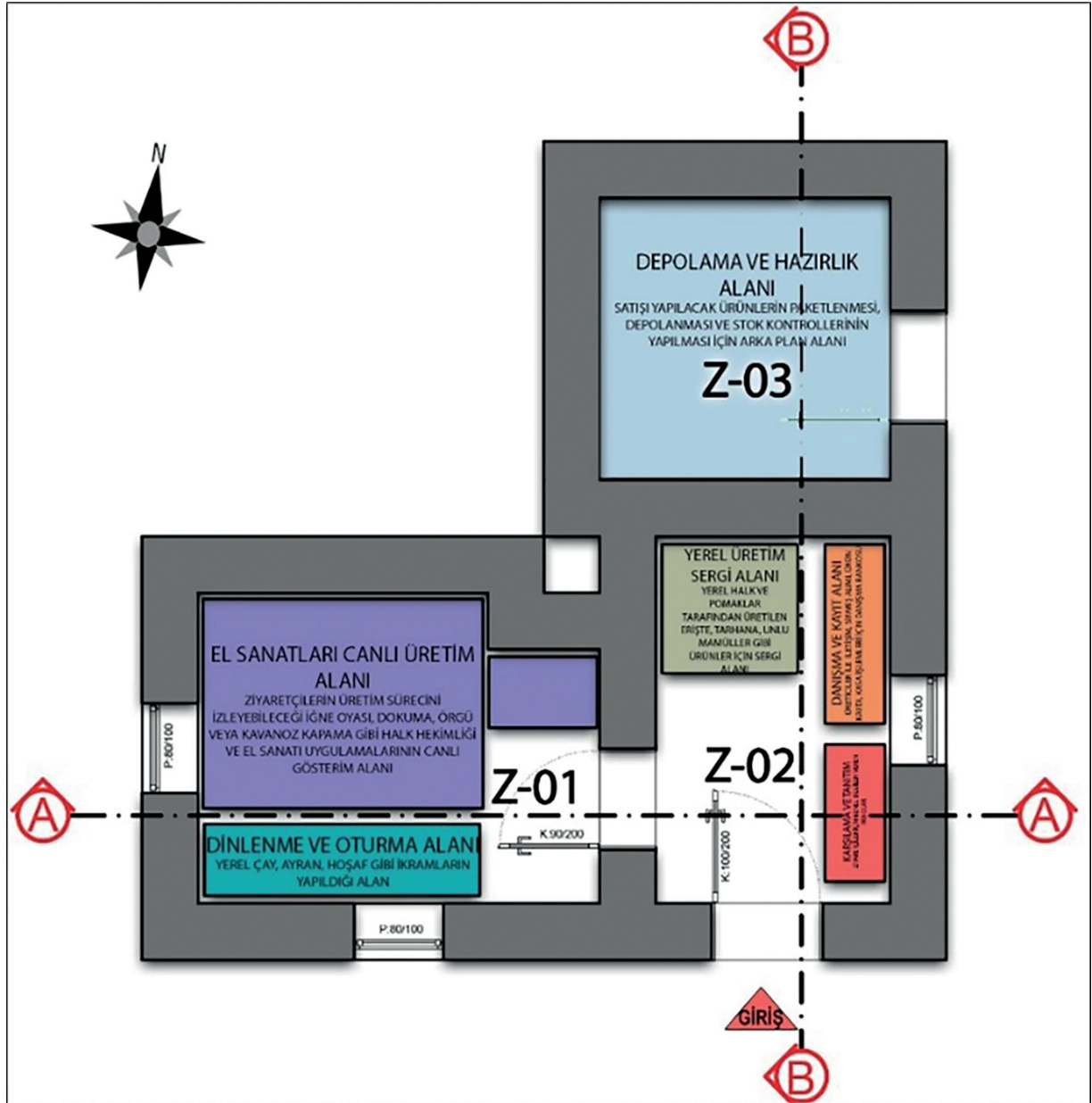


Figure 17

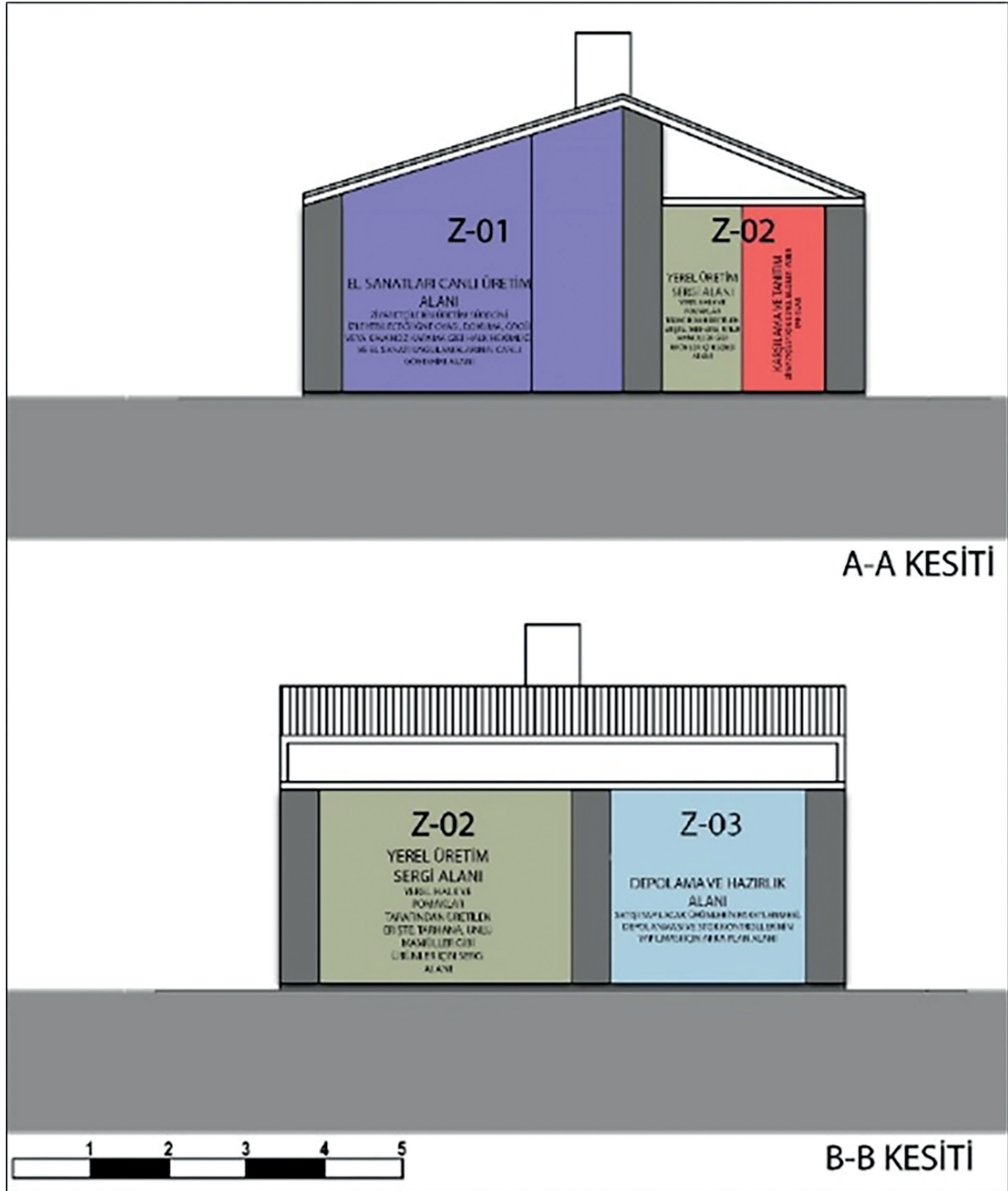
Schematic Representation of the A-A and B-B Sections of the Adaptive Reuse Proposal for the Pomak-Immigrant Culinary Experience Center / *Pomak-Göçmen Mutfak Deneyimi Merkezi İçin Önerilen Yeniden İşlevlendirmenin A-A ve B-B Kesitlerinde Şematik Gösterimi*

Immigrant Local Production and Sales Point

The Immigrant Local Production and Sales Point begins with an entrance area that welcomes visitors through information panels, audio-visual presentations, and short films. In the exhibition and sales section, products such as noodles, jams, knitted socks, and needle lace produced by Pomak and Thessaloniki immigrant women are presented together with their production stories. In the Live Handicrafts Production Corner, weaving, knitting, and needle-lace making are demonstrated in practice, enabling visitor participation. The storage area ensures the hygienic preservation of products, while the information desk organizes orders and records. The seating area creates an environment that encourages cultural interaction through local refreshments. This spatial configuration presents a sustainable conservation model that integrates economic benefit with cultural transmission and community participation (Fig. 18, 19).

**Figure 18**

Schematic Representation of the Ground Floor Adaptive Reuse Proposal for the Immigrant Local Production and Sales Point / Göçmen Yerel Üretim ve Satış Noktası İçin Yeniden İşlevlendirme Önerisinin Zemin Kat Planında Şematik Gösterimi

**Figure 19**

Schematic Representation of the A-A and B-B Sections of the Adaptive Reuse Proposal for the Immigrant Local Production and Sales Point / *Göçmen Yerel Üretim ve Satış Noktası İçin Yeniden İşlevlendirme Önerisinin A-A ve B-B Kesitlerinde Şematik Gösterimi*

Conclusions

Konaklı Town exhibits a multilayered migrant identity shaped by successive waves of population movement and represents a distinctive rural cultural landscape produced through the coexistence of Balkan immigrants and Pomak communities. This demographic diversity has generated a complex heritage structure embedded in the town's collective memory, reflected not only in the tangible architectural fabric but also in intangible elements such as language, culinary traditions, rituals, and social practices. In this respect, Konaklı constitutes a significant case for understanding how migrant-origin cultural heritage is formed and sustained at the rural scale in Anatolia.

The Pomak houses should be interpreted not merely as stone-built dwellings but as cultural carriers historically integrated with everyday life, production patterns, family organization, and ritual practices of the Pomak community. As a result of demographic change and the gradual departure of Pomak households, many of these structures have lost their original functions; while some survive as storage spaces or secondary residences, a considerable number remain abandoned and have entered advanced processes of physical deterioration. This situation leads not only to the degradation of architectural fabric but also to the accelerated erosion of the intangible cultural heritage associated with these buildings. The decline of the second generation of exchange migrants further intensifies the risk of losing the social bearers of this cultural memory. Accordingly, the study underlines the necessity of conservation strategies that extend beyond the building scale and incorporate community-based and culturally embedded dimensions.

Within this framework, the proposed adaptive reuse functions namely the Pomak and Immigrant Cultural House and Museum, the Pomak-Immigrant Culinary Experience Center, and the Immigrant Local Production and Sales Point are presented as spatial instruments through which holistic conservation principles may be operationalized. These functions aim not only to support the physical safeguarding of the buildings but also to enable the continuation of intangible heritage elements such as language, culinary practices, handicrafts, and social rituals as living traditions. The selection of a group of abandoned Pomak houses located along the main street of the town as a pilot intervention zone increases the spatial coherence and potential public visibility of the proposed model.

Konaklı's proximity to the Nevşehir-Derinkuyu Underground City, one of the major nodes within the Cappadocia tourism system, constitutes an important regional advantage for integrating the settlement into existing cultural tourism routes. Cappadocia's high visitor numbers, heritage-based tourism infrastructure, and international recognition may facilitate the wider visibility of Konaklı's Pomak houses and migrant culture. In this respect, the study suggests that Konaklı could be evaluated as a complementary rural destination within the broader Cappadocia tourism corridor.

Local community participation emerges as a critical component for the long-term viability of the proposed approach. The involvement of residents in museum operations, culinary activities, and production-sales units, together with the sharing of household objects, clothing, handicrafts, and oral histories, is expected to contribute to both cultural continuity and local economic sustainability. Such participatory structures help prevent the reduction of heritage to a purely touristic object and instead support the reinforcement of local identity and sense of belonging.

At the implementation stage, technical and financial assistance that may be provided by national and international institutions such as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the General Directorate of Foundations, municipalities, and universities, as well as UNESCO, Europa Nostra, EU Creative Europe, and the World Monuments Fund could support restoration works and the systematic documentation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the holistic, community-based, and rural tourism-oriented conservation framework developed for the Pomak houses of Konaklı is presented not solely as a site-specific proposal but as a reference model that may inform future interventions in Cappadocia and comparable regions characterized by migrant-origin rural heritage. By addressing architectural fabric and living cultural practices together, the study contributes to emerging conservation paradigms that emphasize integrated, socially grounded, and sustainable heritage management strategies.

In addition to its site-specific findings, this study contributes to the literature on rural heritage conservation and rural tourism by addressing a gap in both Turkish and international scholarship, where migrant-built rural settlements are rarely examined together with their living cultural practices. By focusing on the Pomak houses of Konaklı, the research moves beyond typological architectural documentation and integrates spatial analysis with ethnographic data on language, rituals, food culture, and everyday life, thereby operationalizing

the conceptual relationship between tangible and intangible heritage emphasized in UNESCO's 1972 and 2003 Conventions and subsequent international frameworks. Moreover, the community-based and tourism-oriented adaptive reuse model proposed in this study structured around cultural, culinary, and local production functions advances existing discussions on rural conservation by demonstrating how architectural heritage can be reactivated through intangible cultural practices while strengthening local participation and economic sustainability. By positioning Konaklı within the wider Cappadocia tourism system rather than treating it as an isolated case, the research further contributes to regional-scale heritage planning approaches and offers a transferable analytical and methodological reference for future studies on migrant-origin rural settlements in Anatolia and comparable geographies, supporting integrated strategies that reconcile architectural preservation, community engagement, and sustainable rural development.

Despite the significant potentials outlined in this study, it is essential to critically acknowledge several limitations and risks. The integration of rural tourism into heritage conservation processes may lead to the commodification of cultural values, where traditions, rituals, and everyday practices risk being transformed into staged or consumable experiences for visitors. Such processes may weaken the authenticity of intangible cultural heritage and alter its meaning within the local community. In addition, increased tourism pressure particularly due to Konaklı's proximity to the Cappadocia tourism region may generate challenges related to carrying capacity, environmental impact, and spatial transformation, potentially disrupting the rural character of the settlement. From a socio-economic perspective, unequal distribution of tourism-related benefits and the possible exclusion of certain local groups also constitute potential risks. Furthermore, the proposed model relies heavily on sustained community participation and institutional support; therefore, its long-term viability may be constrained by limited financial resources, governance challenges, or declining local engagement. In this regard, future studies should further investigate mechanisms for balancing conservation and development, ensuring community-centered governance, and safeguarding cultural authenticity against market-driven transformations.

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