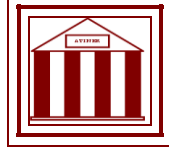


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**Urban Character of 19th Century Villages of
Kayseri: A Study on the Physical and Social
setting of Christian Communities**

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Urban Character Of 19th Century Villages Of Kayseri: A Study On The Physical And
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Abstract

Situated on the lower slopes of *Erciyes* (ancient Argaios) Mountain, *Koramaz* region is the combination of three valleys formed by three streams generated from the glaciers of *Erciyes*. Due to the irrigation advantages of the rivers, valleys have peculiar climatic and agricultural conditions like oases within the harsh steppes of Anatolia. Several small settlements lining the course of these rivers are the subjects of this study. Until the first quarter of 20th century, habitants of these villages had a multi-cultured, multi-layered population of Greeks, Armenians and Turks. Even though this social structure dissolved after the departure of Armenians in 1915 and Greeks in 1923; its physical reflection as architectural and urban character of the villages, still exists to some extent.

The rich architecture and developed urban structure of the villages in the *Koramaz* region was the outcome of the Ottoman Constitution declared at 1839; under which the Christian communities of *Koramaz* thrived socially and economically, thus created small but well reserved monumentality of the valley settlements. The architectural character of the villages is a composition of simple prisms that were executed by skillful cut-stone masonry and enriched by meticulously carved decoration. The urban pattern on the other hand is the amalgam of well proportioned streets formed in unison with the topography and small squares as inlets of daily life. The aim of this study is to present architectural and urban character of the 19th century settlements of *Derevenk*, *Gesi* and *Ağırnas* valleys (*Germir*, *Tavlusun*, *Derevenk*, *İstefena*, *Zincidere*, *Mancusun*, *Gesi*, *Efkere*, *Darsiyak*, *Nize*, *Salkuma*, *Ispıdın*, *Vekse*, *Dimitre*, *Ağırnas*, *Küçükbürüngüz*, *Üskübü ve Büyükbürüngüz*), as the outcome of a survey of 2010.

Keywords: Urban Pattern, 19th century, Village, *Koramaz* Region.

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1. Preface

Basically, Ottoman village is defined as an administrative unit composed of agricultural fields, pastures and dwellings together with other agricultural buildings. (İnalçık 2009, p.13). Ottoman city on the other hand, should be defined with its non-agricultural activities supporting the revenues of the administration and with a government represented by a *kadı* or *sancakbey* (Faroqhi 2000, p.12-13).

Despite the existence of clear definitions, in reality there is a vague line between city and village in the Ottoman society. Such that, *Kuban* and Cerasi accurately point out the overlapping functions of city and village and indicates that the difference is only in the form of the administrative structure.

2. Social Character

According to the state documents of 16th century, villages of the *Koramaz* region grew wheat, barley, walnut, flax, fruits, vegetables, and also dealt with breeding livestock and apiculture (İnbaşı 1992, p.86-93). There were also agricultural industries like producing dyers rocket, linseed-oil, weaving, silk weaving (İmamoğlu 2010, p.35). These activities were typical for an Ottoman village until 20th century. What was peculiar to rural *Koramaz* region was that the population of the region also had other professions in crafts and commerce. Cömert argues that the barren and rather infertile soil of the region might have forced the habitants to search for additional sources of living (Cömert 2008, p.91). The archives of 19th century records the professions of the villagers of *Koramaz* region as soldier, painter, blacksmith, mason. Another source of income was inter-regional trade which was realized by the mule caravans. Eventually, several of the craftsmen or tradesmen of the villages left their homelands and settled in big cities like *İstanbul*, *İzmir*, Cairo. In some cases the whole family would have left the village, lived and worked in the metropolis and only returned back for holidays. Their houses and mansions were rented by the gentry of the *Kayseri* as summer cottages. Therefore the number and the demographics of the village population varied according to seasons. The phenomenon of migration to the city immensely affected the economy, traditions, customs and consequently the physical appearance and the architectural character of the villages. The people of the city and the local people with the notion of the big city transformed the social and architectural character of the village. Tsolakis (2007), who had lived in *Zincidere* before 1923, narrates the receptions in the halls of the mansions, women in luxury dresses and carriages. In 1890 the people of *Vekse* who lived in *İstanbul*, donated the construction of sidewalks, fountains, drinking water system of the town and a bridge over the *Vekse* Stream (Cömert 2008, p.160).

All the communities of the Ottoman Empire, Muslim or non Muslim, gained the equal rights after the declaration of *Tanzimat* and *Islahat* edicts. These reformation edicts also provided freedom in architectural activity. Powered by the legal and economical benefits, villages of the *Koramaz* region not only rebuilt their dwellings in the urban fashion but also constructed public buildings like large churches or schools; which were not only new to Ottoman villages but also to most of the cities. Villages had many of the amenities of the city life, like printing press, medical service and various shops. However, the basics of village life also continued; like the local fairs which were generally conducted with temporary stalls and tents on the village square (Lewis 2006, p.74). The rural life continued on the routine of working, praying and having chats by the fountain.

3. Urban Pattern

Three valleys defining *Koramaz* region have their own unique geography. *Derevenk* valley which houses *Germir* and *Tavlusun* on the slopes, *Derevenk* in the valley, *Zincidere* at the end, is a steep rift. *Gesi* on the other hand is a wide valley, with the villages of *Mancusun*, *Gesi*, *Efkere*, *Darsiyak*, *Nize* on the slopes and *Salkuma* on the plateau. *Ağırnas* Valley is composed of several small valleys. *Ispidin*, *Vekse*, *Dimitre* and *Ağırnas* are situated on the slopes of these valleys while *Küçükbürüngüz*, *Üskübü* and *Büyük Bürüngüz* are on the plains. Inward /outward migration and urban development have immensely affected these villages. Today *Derevenk* and *Dimitre* are deserted and largely ruined. *Zincidere*, *Salkuma*, *Küçükbürüngüz*, *Üskübü*, *Büyükbürüngüz* are still inhabited, however, their historic character have been lost largely. In *Tavlusun*, *Efkere*, *Ağırnas* only small part of the original urban pattern have been preserved. Even though *Germir*, *Reşadiye*, *Mancusun*, *Darsiyak*, *Nize*, *Gesi*, *Ispidin* and *Vekse* are preserved to a certain degree, they are under constant pressure of urban development.

Valley settlements have common geographical characteristics: Some of the villages settled on both sides of the valley (*Ispidin*, *Dimitre*, *Gesi*, *Efkere*, *Darsiyak*). Those which settled on one side, mostly settled on the north of the valley to face the south, which provides great advantage in harsh winters of the central Anatolia (*Ağırnas*, *Mancusun*, *Nize*, *Tavlusun*, *Reşadiye*, *Germir*). Only *Vekse* faces north due to the steep and rugged landscape of the north side of the valley. The streams which are used in the irrigation of orchards and vegetable soften the effect of the climate. Volcanic tufa schist out of which the valleys were cut is easy to carve, therefore many of the buildings utilizes rock cut spaces.

In a traditional Ottoman settlement, the urban pattern was shaped by residential, economic and cultural/religious activities (Cerasi 1999, p.82). Urban pattern of the villages of *Koramaz* region is also formulated as a whole by houses and related commercial and industrial activities around the centrally situated church or/and mosque. These functions are connected and related to each other with open spaces. The topography imposed a street pattern that complies with the slope. Here the spine of the pattern is a main street, which runs from one end of the settlement to the other, passing through the center(s) of activity. The relationship of the main street with the slope also declares the formulation of the other streets: parallel or perpendicular to the slope. Where the slope is too steep to walk, then the steps comes to rescue. Frequently streets are enriched with *cul de sacs*, which become the private alley of related houses (Kuban 2005, p.175). The streets are not only the means of movement around the town; they are also the stages of everyday life. In order to provide spaces for social interaction, streets are enhanced with small urban spaces like miniature piazzas, niches, alcoves, gateways.

In the villages of *Koramaz* region, the urban character is the outcome of the physical relation between street and building. Since the street is basically the left over space of the building, its facades define the shape, form and borders of the street. In other words, the facades of the buildings on two sides, with their surfaces, openings and forms, become the walls of the street. Eventually, the street transforms from an urban opening into an architectural space. The perception of any architectural space depends on its definitive components and or physical boundaries. As the street runs in compliance with the topography, these components change. Fundamentally, this change occurs on the basis of single building as one move along the length of the street. To explain and perceive any street as a whole, presents a challenge due to this unfixed and changeable character. Therefore instead of studying the street as a whole,

analyzing it in momentarily fragments might offer a more accurate perception. In fact this is what actually happens as an individual moves along the street. This study proposes that the street as an architectural space should be perceived and be read in fragments which are entitled “status”. The core of the study is determining the status of the streets of *Koramaz* region, which are the outcome of various combinations of defining facades.

The spatial formation of the building also dictates the relation of street and building. Traditional *Kayseri* house is an introverted unit, evolved around a courtyard or an enclosed garden (İmamoğlu 2006, p.23). The open space is surrounded by buildings or gardens walls. The common form is the one which the open space is enclosed by the buildings on three sides and the garden wall on one side (Faroghi 2007, p.98). In *Koramaz* region, however, the preferences of the plan schemes vary from village to village. As a result, the part of the house forming the street status also varies. Nine of these status are determined in the urban pattern of *Koramaz* villages according to the formation of their walls:

1. Garden walls on two sides: The lower height of the garden wall lets plants in the garden to spill from the top of the wall to the street, therefore it softens the effect of the solid masonry. This status results in a rather loose urban pattern. (see p.7 Table 1a).
2. Two storey building facade and garden wall: The two storey facade of the building connects the activities of the house with the movements of the street via its openings. Here the visual contact with the garden injects the rural character to the urban pattern. (see p.7 Table 1b).
3. Single storey building facade and garden wall: In this case the urban character is laid back to certain degree by the lower silhouette of the buildings. (see p.7 Table 1c).
4. Two storey building facades on two side of the street: The street is defined by rather solid surfaces of the buildings, thus having a more enclosed feeling with less light. On the other hand this also indicates a stricter spatial definition. (see p.7 Table 1d).
5. Single storey building facades on two side of the street: Mostly formed by the single storey outbuildings, provides continuous wall surfaces with few openings. (see p.7 Table 1e).
6. Projections on both sides of the street: The projections provide extra room for the second storey. More importantly they provide visual contact for the whole length of the street from the side windows. This status creates a whole different concept of urban space where projections become the ceiling of the street. (see p.7 Table 1f).
7. Building facade and projection: This status combines the affects and characteristics of fifth and sixth status thus creates the feeling of a semi open space. (see p.8 Table 1g).
8. Passages: Here the building forms itself above the street and thus defines it. Passages (*kabaltı*) provides connect buildings and streets on the same spot but on different levels. In other words, building facade gives way to street to pass through. (see p.8 Table 1h).
9. Wall and river: This status clearly illustrates the direct relation of valley settlements to their geographical environments and forms the most rural part of the urban pattern. (see p.8 Table 1i).

The statues come together in different combinations, shape the streets and form the urban pattern. Main streets of three villages are described here in detail to exemplify the formation of a segment of the urban pattern, with its surfaces and spaces. The main street of *Nize* is formed by houses and a mosque. Along the street five different

status are formed, which are projections on both sides of the street, two storey building facades on two side of the street, two storey building facade and garden wall, passages, building facade and projection. The narrow street broadens in front of the mosque, creating a small square. Here the street architecturally defined with the projections, as a canopy for the public gatherings in front of the mosque. (see p.9 Figure 1).

The main street of *Darsiyak* connects the two parts of the village on either side of the river with a bridge, and passes by a mosque, a mascit, a school with the church and the vicarage behind. Statues of single storey building facade and garden wall, two storey building facade and garden wall, two storey building facades on two side of the street, single storey building facades on two sides of the street forms and defines the street. The street broadens to circumference the mosque and the school. The piazza here is emphasized by the high walls of two storey facades. (see p.10 Figure 2).

In *Vekse*, the main street curves down the valley towards the river and it splits into two. One part ascends to the upper terrace where mosque and the church are situated. This portion of the street has statues of two storey building facades on two sides of the street, projection and single storey facade, single storey facade and garden wall, two storey facade and garden wall.

The second part passes by the schools and reaches down the river while presenting statue of projections on both sides of the street, projections and single storey facade, two storey facades on both side of the street, two storey facade and garden wall and garden walls on two sides of the street. On the upper part, the entrance of the church is emphasized by a small recession of the church wall. (see p.11 Figure 3).

4. Conclusion

Social transformations of 19th century reshaped the architectural character and the urban pattern of villages. The emergence of row houses as opposed to courtyard scheme is often explained with the population increase and intensification of settlements (Cerasi 1999, p.102). This plan scheme on the other hand, created the closely knit pattern of streets and buildings, where open spaces and buildings somehow lost their definitions. Facades of the buildings turned into the walls of the streets, as streets transformed into architectural spaces rather than urban voids. The main outcome of the study is the thesis that the urban character of the villages requires new definitions for the urban elements. Our proposal is to formulate status for the street fragments according to the formation of their architectural elements. Combined with the simple prismatic geometry of the buildings and the characteristics of the topography, the status created the unique urban pattern of the villages in *Koramaz* region.

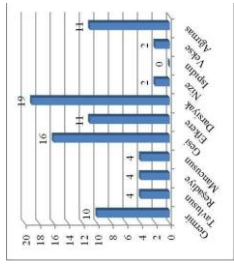

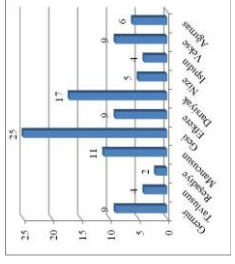
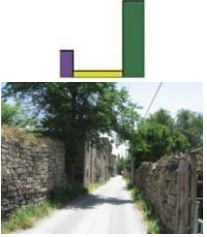
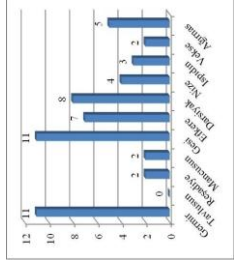
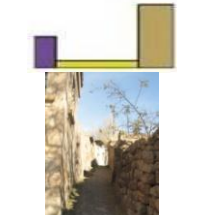
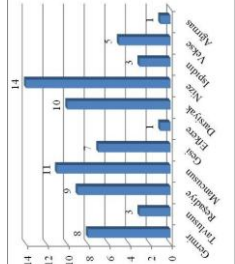
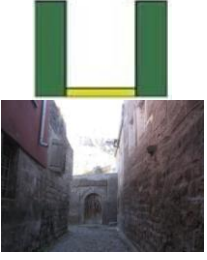
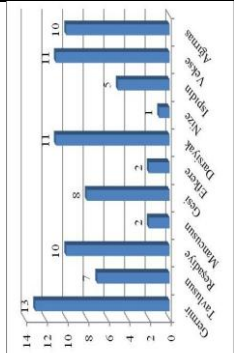
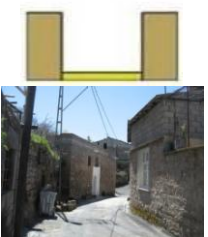
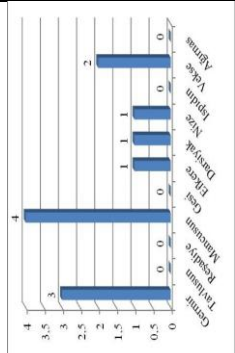

<p>Table 1a. Garden walls on two sides</p> 	 <p><i>Darsiyak</i></p>	<p>Table 1b. Two storey building facade and garden wall</p> 	 <p><i>Germir</i></p>
<p>Table 1c. Single storey building facade and garden wall</p> 	 <p><i>Ağırnas</i></p>	<p>Table 1d. Two storey building facades on two side of the street</p> 	 <p><i>Mancusun</i></p>
<p>Table 1e. Single storey building facades on two side of the street</p> 	 <p><i>Nize</i></p>	<p>Table 1f. Projections on both sides of the street</p> 	 <p><i>Vekse</i></p>

Table 1g. Building facade and projection		Table 1h. Passages	
	<p><i>Ispidin</i></p>		<p><i>Mancusun</i></p>
Table 1i. Wall and river			
	<p><i>Efkere</i></p>		

Table 2. Koramaz Region

<p><i>Derevenk Valley And Its Villages</i></p>	<p><i>Gesi Valley And Its Villages</i></p>	<p><i>Ağırnas Valley And Its Villages</i></p>
<p>Source: <i>Kayseri İl Özel İdaresi</i>, October 2010.</p>		

Figure 1.*Nize And Its Main Street*

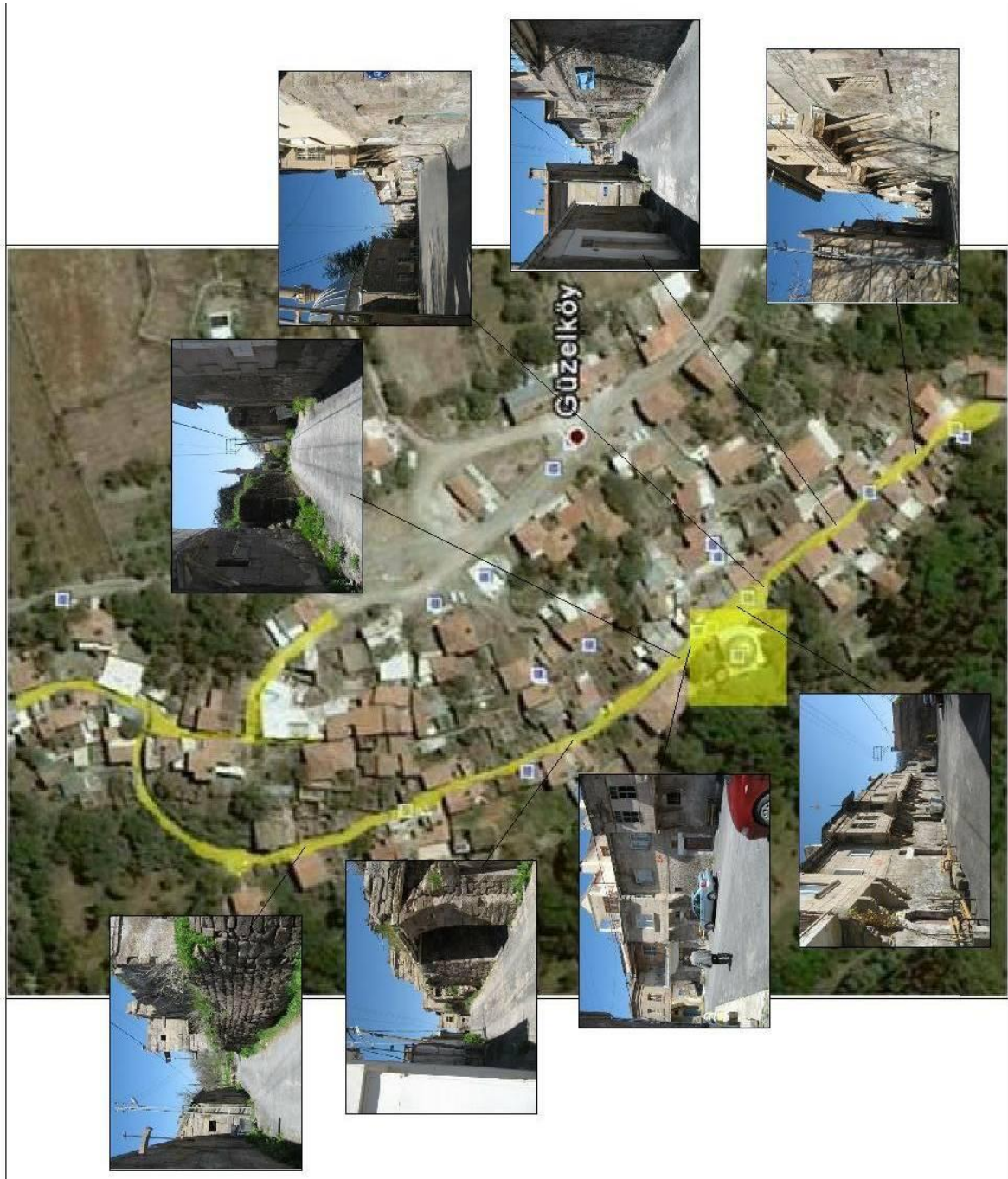


Figure 3. *Vekse* And Its Main Street



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