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**ABSTRACT**

Kayseri had always been an important administrative center throughout its history. After Istanbul's conquest it kept its importance as a Central Anatolian city. Furthermore, it is also known as Architect Sinan's hometown. Talas, which is a town of Kayseri, is situated at the slopes of Ali Mountain which is at the northeast of Erciyes Mountain, about ten kilometres from the city centre. Talas is an important town with regard to history of architecture including traditional vernacular texture occupied by Turkish, Armenian, Greek population in late Ottoman period. Harman District which is chosen as a case study, acts as a core within the housing texture of Talas. Plan formations of traditional Talas houses present information on related periods and local characteristic styles. Within the scope of this study, the local features of these houses, plan elements and plan types are going to be analyzed under basic titles. As a result of this analysis, tables of plan typologies of the houses are going to be prepared. In a culturally rich settlement of Anatolia located at crossroads of civilizations in Talas, nowadays the existing historical texture is gradually disappearing. The documentation of the vernacular architecture of Talas will have an impact on the conservation of the historical texture of the settlement as well as transferring the data to the future generations. Furthermore, this data could be a guide for the restoration in the area for site management projects prepared by the local municipality.

Keywords: Historical Buildings, Plan Typology, Refurbishment, Talas Houses, Vernacular Architecture.

## Introduction

Kayseri, is a city of Turkey and situated in the middle of the country (Figure 1). It has been a scene for so many important historical events and ancient civilizations from past to present. It was the biggest city of Anatolia after Bursa during the 16th century (Faroqhi, 2014). Talas is one of the most improved towns of Kayseri. The main aim of this study is to analyze the plan typology of Talas houses through a survey. As there are no precise results of 1831 census, according to the tax book, Talas has approximately 8600 inhabitants consisting of 7000 non-Muslims and 1600 of Muslims. The census of Bennet in 1875 shows that 2200 Armenian, 2395 Greek and 1173 Turkish men, giving a total of 5808 men, were living in Talas. If we consider the number of the men population to be same as women, there were about 11,616 people living in Talas in 1875-1876 (Cömert, 2000). There were 35 districts at Talas in 1876. Although, Han, Harman and Kçüköy districts were Turkish districts, Armenian, Greek and Turkish people were living together in them. Only Greek and Armenian people were residing at the rest of the 32 districts. Harman district was one of the largest districts comprising of 188 houses, 11 vineyards, 31 gardens, 1 mercer store, one farrier store, 1 Rüştüye school, 2 wells, 1 mosque, 1 bakery, 1 grinder, 1 Armenian cemetery, 1 freshman school and a government office (Kayseri State Special Administration Management Archive, Talas Tax Book).

**Figure 1.** Location of Kayseri on the Map of Turkey (left) Location of Talas on the Map of Kayseri (right).



Today, with 3461 houses, 140.000 inhabitants, 33 districts, almost 1100 workplaces and stores and finally 11 schools Talas is the most culturally and economically developed center in the Kayseri neighborhood. Han, Harman and Kçüköy districts are located at the lower part of Talas, while the rest of the districts are located at the upper part. Looking at the pictures taken in the 1880's in which the whole town can be seen, it is observed that there were splendid mansions and pavilions embellished by stone workmanship (Figure 2). After the population exchange following the Lozan Treaty Talas was left deserted and economically poor; most of the buildings were ruined and only 5% of these architectural structures survived until now (Cömert, 2000).

**Figure 2.** *Talas in 1880*



*Source:* CÔMERT 2000.

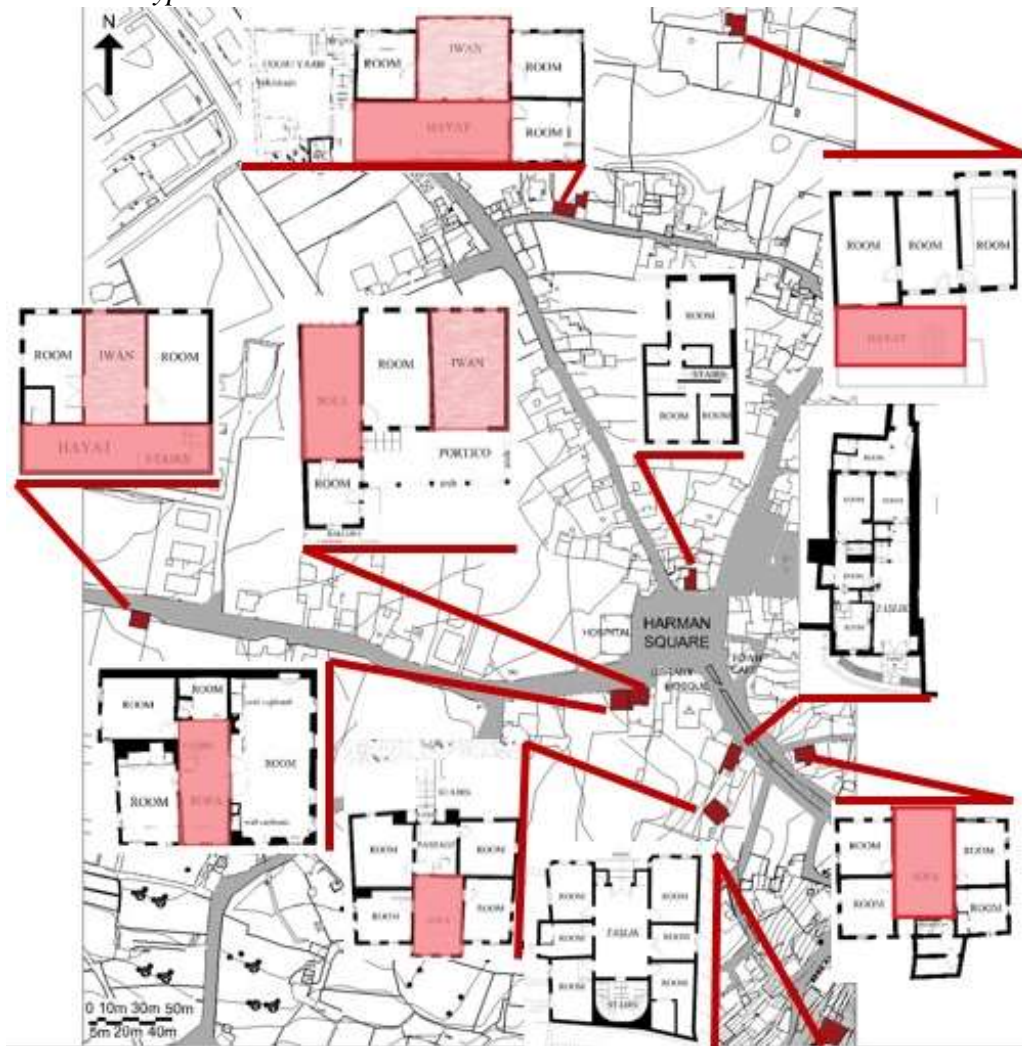
## **Literature Review**

A research has been not studied about Talas Houses in detail. However, one or two houses from Talas under the name of studies related to Kayseri houses books have been processed as examples.

## **Methodology**

Harman district, placed at the center of Talas, attracts attention with its unique dwelling buildings. 10 of these houses that show the common characteristics of Talas houses have been selected for the case study and their locations are shown on the map below (Figure 3). In the survey, the plan typologies of these houses were analyzed and their types were classified. Thus, houses are presented in the particular type table. The data from the table is evaluated to determine the plan typologies of the Talas houses in the district.

**Figure 3.** *General Harman District Plan of Talas and Ten Selected Houses with Plan Types*



### **Vernacular Architecture Features/Plan Typologies**

In Talas town, the plan schemes of the dwellings represent the living culture of the local community. The life style, socio-economical structure, land structure, landscape, building materials and techniques affect the plan schemes of the houses in the town.

In Talas, preferred sitting and resting space is *Sofa*. The most influential factor in the composition of plan of the houses is *Sofa* which an important the part of the houses. The type of the house is determined directly by the shape and location of the *Sofa*. According to Eldem (1954), as the type of the plan is best expressed by the position of the *Sofa*, it is in reference to that position that we shall make our classification. This gives us four basic types of houses, which are these types:

1. *Dış Sofalı* (With an Outer Hall)
2. *İç Sofalı* (With an Inner Hall)
3. *Sofasız* (Without a Hall)
4. *Orta Sofalı* (With a Central Hall)

First of all, the *Sofa* term should be examined. *Sofa*; wide space where the room doors in the houses are open, hall (Hasol, 2016a, b). Thus, Talas houses were grouped under four main headings when creating the plan typology.




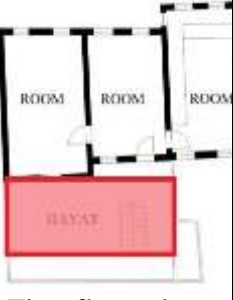

**Table 1.** *Dış Sofalı Plan Typology (a Type)*

<p>ROOM ROOM ROOM PASSAGE STAIRS</p>		
<p>Ground floor plan</p> <p>ROOM IWAN ROOM HAYAT STAIRS</p>		<p>Facade</p>
<p>COURTYARD ROOM ROOM ROOM STABLE PASSAGE ROOM ROOM</p>		
<p>Ground floor plan</p> <p>COURTYARD ROOM IWAN ROOM HAYAT ROOM ROOM</p>	<p><i>Hayat-Iwan</i></p>	<p>Facade</p>
<p>First floor plan</p>		

As can be seen in Table 1 in Talas houses, in *Dış Sofa* type plan examples often are seen a space type which is known as *Hayat*. These houses are also called *Hayat'lı* house. According to Kuban (1995a, b) *Hayat* is surrounded open space, means arbour. *Hayat* is opened garden of the house.

In these houses which have *Hayat*, iwan is semi open void. Iwan; with three sides facing the wall, courtyard facing face open, with a high floor, rectangular plan volume, usually is covered with arches and dome (Hasol, 2016a, b). According to Kuban (1995a, b) the functional distinction between *Hayat* and iwan is uncertain. As the volume behind *Hayat*, iwan is a natural sitting place. The ideal form of *Hayat* is cannot be separated from the iwan. In two of the ten selected houses is seen this feature. The houses having *Hayat* in Talas can be divided between with iwan (a type) and without iwan (b type). In Table 1, the houses of a type plan instances are seen.

**Table 2.** *Dış Sofalı Plan Typology (b Type)*

 <p>Ground floor plan</p>	 <p><i>Taşlık</i></p>	 <p>Facade</p>
 <p>First floor plan</p>	 <p><i>Hayat</i></p>	

In Table 2, the b type plan is seen. One of the ten houses has this feature. In this house with type b plan there is *Taşlık* on the ground floor. According to Hasol (2016a, b) *Taşlık* is inside of street gate in old houses.

**Table 3.** *Dış Sofalı Plan Typology*

<p>Ground floor plan First floor plan</p>	<p>Portico</p>
<p>Facade</p>	

In Table 3, another type plan house with *Dış Sofalı* is a rare example. This house has *iwan* on the ground floor and there is no relation with *Sofa*. Furthermore, this unique house has *Portico* which is covered upper, front colonnaded open gallery, *riwaq* and means colonnade entrance in front of structures like temple in Ancient Greek and Roma architecture (Hasol, 2016a, b).

Other plan type instance is *İç Sofalı* plan type in Talas Houses. In these houses *Sofa* is inside and there are certainly the opposite rooms. In Table 4, in the first instance, only one side of the *Sofa* has different windows from other windows of the houses. In these houses, *İç Sofalı* is so designed that is dynamic according to other rooms of the houses and this can noticed inside and outside of houses. Furthermore, in these houses, the façade of *İç Sofalı* space has mostly looked at the garden of their houses.



**Table 4.** *İç Sofalı Plan Typology (With an Inner Hall)*

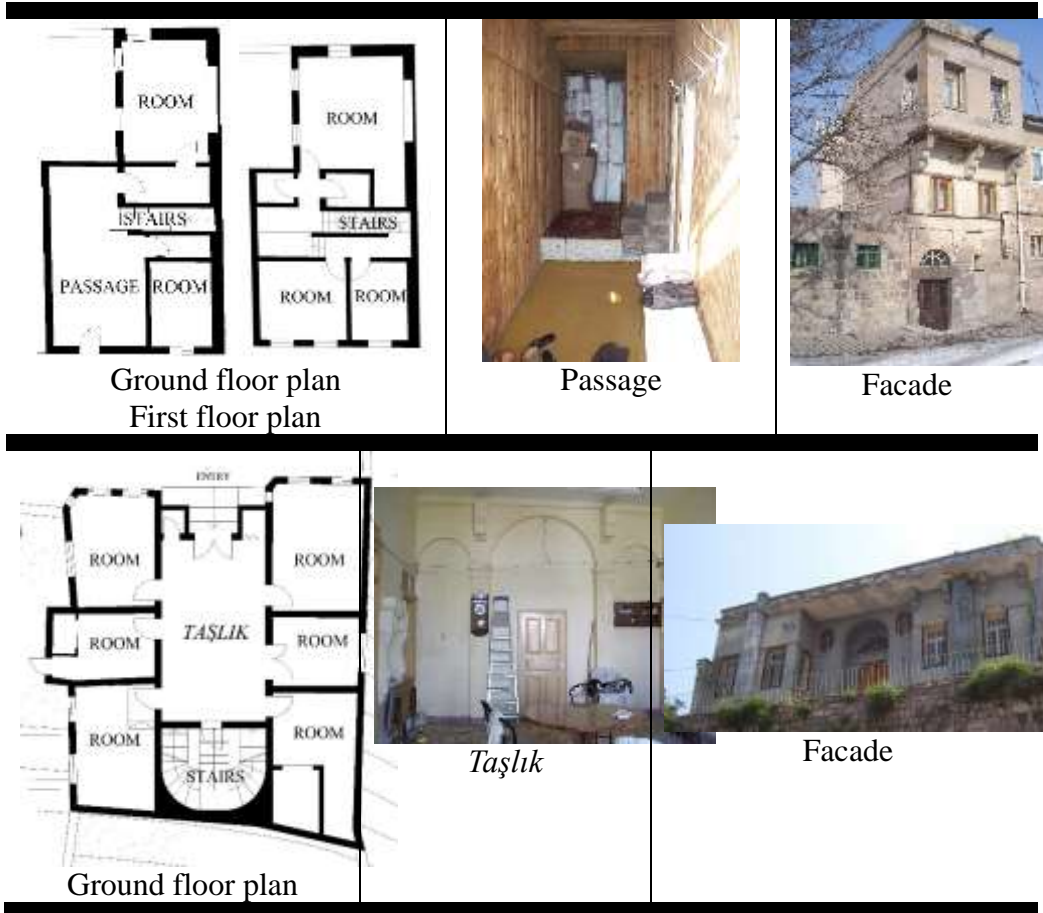
 <p>First floor plan</p>	 <p><i>İç Sofa</i></p>	 <p>Facade</p>
 <p>Ground floor plan First floor plan</p>	 <p><i>İç Sofa</i></p>	 <p>Facade</p>
 <p>Ground floor plan    First floor plan</p>	 <p><i>İç Sofa</i></p>	 <p>Facade</p>

Other plan type instance is *Sofasız* plan typology in Talas Houses. In Table 5, there are this type plan typologies. In Table 5, two of these instances have taşlık on the ground floor and other instance has passage space.

*Sofasız* plan type is one of the common plan typologies in Talas Houses. This type of plan typology is often used in neighbour houses. It may be preferred to evaluate the space in the most ideal way. Functional and multiple divisions are also noteworthy in such plans. According to Faroqhi (2014), it is true that the houses of the wealthy people at Kayseri imitate the functional division of Ottoman palaces and zawiya on a modest scale in the late 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Table 5.** *Sofasız Plan Typology*

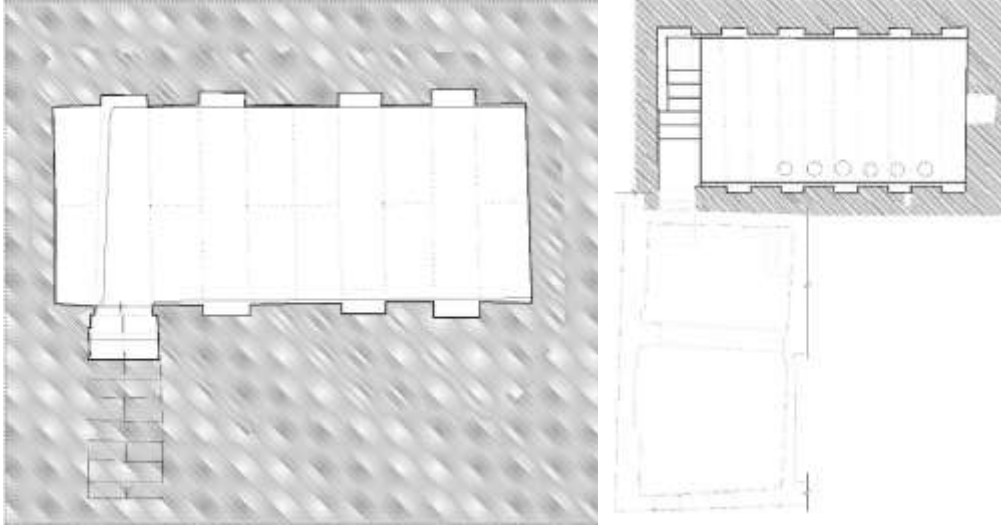
<p>Ground floor plan First floor plan</p>		



In the selected instances, there is not *Orta Sofalı* plan type. In fact, in Talas houses, this type plan is rarely used. In these type plans, *Sofa* is situated in the middle of the house and is surrounded on four sides by the large rooms. Actually, these type plans were very popular in big towns and in particular in İstanbul. One of the most characteristic features of the Turkish house is the use of junctions permitting various plan compositions. In this type plan provides scope for plan compositions which are highly original and unique for Turkish houses.

The basement floor in Talas houses is a property usually found in every house. However, in the basement floors, only for under of a small part of the ground floors was designed (Figure 4). These basement floors also served as a part of the house kitchens. If there is a basement floor, this room in the Talas houses is a vaulted room or rock carved. Even in some houses, rock carved basements have been built according to the needs of the owner of the house, and they continue to grow over time. It functions as a natural refrigerator. The importance of the dignity of the famous families of Kayseri is important to serving the cuisine and the guests, and even shows the importance of the hospitality thought kitchen and the basement floor.

**Figure 4.** *The Basement Floor Plan of the First House in Table 5 (left) The Basement Floorplan of the Second House in Table 4 (right)*



The ground floors are used service location. The upper floors are used as sitting room and bedroom. Talas house roof is flat and covered by earth just as in many places in the region. Although the roof is flat, it is not the space with a certain function used.

The evaluation of the survey give clues on the climate, geological and topographical situation, heating, ventilation, wind direction, water, sewerage, patterns of living, local materials belonging to the region. The most used material in Talas houses is stone. According to the book of Kayseri houses of Çakıroğlu (1951), the most common stone types in Kayseri houses are volcanic rocks and lavas due to geological conditions. According to the local names used for stone; “yonu taşı” (broad stone) which is a volcanic tuff is used on the facades and black stone is used at the construction of the sub-foundations. According to Çakıroğlu (1951), the wood used in the houses of the region were obtained from the oak woods named as “railings” (korkuluk) in the western part of Mount Erciyes, and pine, fir, juniper, oak and a small amount of walnut from the skirts of the Taurus mountains in the Develi district. “Tar” (katran) a kind of Taurus pine, is the most used wood type in Kayseri. This soft wood is very easily cut and carved when the tree is cut down, and as it dries with time it gets hard.

## **Results/Discussion**

Talas houses usually consist of either a basement floor that is not perceived from the facade, a ground floor and a first floor, or a basement and a high entrance floor. The design of the lower floors of the Talas houses is modest whereas that of the upper floors is as dynamic as possible. The window details and projections give a movement to the upper floor facades. In addition, the

lower floor windows are smaller and more modest than the upper ones. When considering that the lower floors are used as stables and warehouses, such design fits its function. It also shows that in Talas town there is more connected with rural works. At the same time, in this region, there is commonly bazaar culture. This shows that the plan typologies can be according to the requirements of the owners.

In Talas houses, the circulation spaces of ground floor plan are *Taşlık*, passage and courtyard. The courtyard, which is an integral part of the house which has it, provides passage to stables and stores (Figure 5, Table 1/the second instance).

**Figure 5.** *The House has Courtyard which is One of the Studied Houses*



In Talas, preferred sitting and resting space is *Sofa*. The most influential factor in the composition of plan of the houses is *Sofa* which an important the part of the houses. The type of the house is determined directly by the shape and location of the *Sofa*. The typological tables of the plan of the buildings surveyed show that:

- Four of ten selected house have *Dış Sofalı* type plan; so can be said the most common type plan is *Dış Sofalı* (With an Outer Hall).
- Tree of ten selected house have *İç Sofalı* type plan; so can be said one of the most common type plan is *İç Sofalı* (With an Inner Hall).
- Tree of ten selected house have *Sofasız* type plan; so can be said one of the most common type plan is *Sofasız* (Without a Hall).
- Nothing of ten selected house has *Orta Sofalı* type plan; so can be said rare type plan is *Orta Sofalı* (With a Central Hall).
- Nine of ten selected house have two floors, one has only ground floor; so can be said Talas houses have mostly two floors.
- *Dış Sofalı* type plans have mostly had *Hayat*.
- In Talas houses, *Hayat* which is landed on upper floor according to other Turkish house which is in Anatolia.

Two *Hayat* facade of three house which have *Hayat* look at south direction; so can be said the sun is important because there is hard climate

conditions in this region. The other house which has *Hayat* can presumably been summer house. This suggests that these houses are often used as vineyard houses which is suitable for summer use. The habit of living in the city center in winter and moving to the vineyard in summer is still favored today in Kayseri. These houses may belong to the families who live in the city center of Kayseri and migrate to Talas in summer.

In all of the houses which have *Hayat*, whose façade have looked at garden of their houses; so can be said public at Talas have valued their field, view and comfort.

In Talas houses, light and air circulation is provided from one direction mostly in the houses with *İç Sofa (with an inner hall)* plan types. Talas houses can be seen as this type plan which can be appropriated and derivable in Kayseri, which has continental climate. Therefore, the most reasons for the preference of the inner hall type are economic and communication between the rooms more easy. In addition, according to Eldem (1954) in traditional houses with a *Diş Sofa* plan type (the outer hall) it is not possible to have numerous sections unless the façade is lengthened or the house is extended along the sides of the court; but in the *İç Sofa* plan type (the inner hall) and particularly the *Orta Sofalı* plan type (the central hall type) of house, there is a great number of halls which may be related to one another in a variety of ways. This provides scope for plan compositions which are highly original and peculiar to the architecture of Turkish houses only. According as to whether these halls have identical or varied shapes, the meaning and form of the resulting plans show a great diversity. In my opinion, however, this type plan has created far from nature and garden works and then has thrived to apartment plan type as a result of this process of urban life.

In Talas houses, *Orta Sofalı* type plan is rarely used. In these type plans, *Sofa* is situated in the middle of the houses and is surrounded on four sides by the large rooms. The fact that, these type plan were very popular in big towns and in particular in İstanbul. In fact the rich merchants at Kayseri, who are in contact with big cities, were expected to make their own homes by paying attention to these kiosks. However, we see that there are not many such houses in Talas houses according to visible data. According to Eldem (1954), although this house was most prevalent in İstanbul, it would be wrong to infer from this, that its plan was derived in its main lines from the Byzantine house and through it, from relating to the ancient Greek and Roman Houses with a central atrium. Even if we admit that traces of the atrium type of plan were present in the Byzantine houses of the last period, about which we almost know nothing, we cannot deduce from this, that the Turkish house was inspired by these models. The similarities between the Turkish type and the atrium type of house are not based on a process of transformation, but are rather the result of a coincidence. The fact is that the central hall type of plan has its origins in Asia and that is where the plan of the Turkish house comes from. The plan with a central design has undergone its greatest transformations and developments in Asia. This design was used in mosques in medreses and above all in palaces and royal residences.

Not considering a certain approach, but, regarding to the façade width and plan, in two of the houses, the door is placed in a niche that makes a retreat from the façade. Here the niche is higher approximately one meter from the street level. Stairs are used in order to reach the entrance in the niche. These stairs are shaped according to the location of the door and the width of the niche (in Table 4, the first house instance, in Table 5, the third house instance).

Five of the surveyed houses have entrance gates on the garden wall. In other words, we can say that this door which provides connection to the street has become a sheltered entrance for the hosts. Greeting guests first in the garden has a functional dimension for the local people. In the garden, near the entrance door to the house, there is a sheltered and suitable place to sit — especially in the summer — where guests can chat and refresh without having to enter in to the house. In addition, according to İmamoğlu (1992) until the deterioration of traditional life, the concept of neighbourhood was very important in Kayseri. Neighbourhood was not only a physical entity within the city but also a social unit, providing social and economic cooperation among neighbours. Neighbourhood cohesion was strong and widespread. Families were considered with their neighbours and neighbourhoods. Marriages, religious holidays, circumcision ceremonies of muslim children, and funeral ceremonies were important occasions that brought the neighbours together. Neighbours shared common facilities like a bakery, a Turkish bath, a school, one or two fountains and sometimes a grocery shop. Drinking water was fetched from the street fountains; traditional pastries and sweets were prepared at home and taken to the bakery, which was at the same time a kind of winter public room for the elderly and local officials like the neighbourhood guard. Children of similar ages played together and formed sub groups according to the streets or areas they lived in and identified themselves as such. Proximity rather than religion was the important tie in interaction. Although houses included at least a small bathing cubicle, public baths were important facilities. People used to go to Turkish baths at periodic intervals (once a week, once in two or three weeks). These were social events especially for women; family members with their neighbours and relatives used to spend the greater portion of a day eating and entertaining themselves in addition to cleaning themselves.

Kuban (1995a, b) finds the uncomplicated structural and linear geometry dominating the facade design and the simple rationality of the function existing at the traditional Turkish houses successful. He adds that in the nineteenth century, the Turkish residential quarters were affected by the European motifs and compositions. In Talas houses, in addition to the traditional applications, we meet European motifs such as elliptical windows, stone columns, column bases and capitals, pilasters.

The traditional house instances in Anatolia are valuable because the houses of developed cities like Istanbul reflect less of the qualities of our traditional house architecture. In fact, while we are seeing the types of wooden residential architecture similar to Istanbul and its immediate surroundings, we can see traditional Turkish houses in Anatolia that are specific to geography, climate,

culture and material. In these houses buildings character of the dwellings represent the living culture of the local community. The life style, socio-economical structure, land structure, landscape, building materials and techniques affect the organization schemes of the houses in the town. It also has the characteristic of interpreting the qualities and quantities of Turkish houses originally. Kuban (1995a, b) said about the meeting between the stone architecture in the traditional Turkish houses of Kayseri and the stone architecture in northern Syria. In addition, these properties can be demonstrated through studies in the future.

Since the buildings of the case study are chosen among the unchanged original ones in the settlement, their data will help to decide the local vernacular architectural elements. Thus, gives information for the restoration work on Talas houses.

### **Recommendations/Conclusions**

The plan typologies of the traditional houses give information on the plan organization and reflect the adaptation and appreciation of the users who live in the region. Plan features also give us concrete data on the local characteristics of the civil architecture. In fact, the plan organization of a house reveals the region's unique characteristics and architectural language. This survey, puts forth the traditional house plan types and features such as *Dış Sofalı*, *İç Sofalı*, *Sofasız*, *Orta Sofalı* plan types that developed through a certain process were accepted in the past, and survived as well as some that are being still appreciated and used by the people at Talas. Nowadays, one of the most important issues of urban spaces is the complex and unhealthy settlement environment which brings negative developments in community relations. Historic texture of the town can reflect the construction tradition of the region with major losses; however present circumstances indicate a risk on transmission of this architectural heritage to future generations if no actions taken.

In Talas town, the plan schemes of the dwellings represent the living culture of the local community. The life style, socio-economical structure, land structure, landscape, building materials and techniques affect the plan schemes of the houses in the town. Today, the region is starting a local tourism. Traditional residential houses start being cafes, live music venues while these houses are used as their favorite areas by the young people of public and university students. The availability of these actively used sites is a welcome situation, whereas there are many shortcomings. It is possible to conserve traditional texture of the settlement efficiently if these problems outcomes are investigated. Some of the common problems and proposals for their solutions are listed due to this study. These problems and their strategies for solution for are listed:

- First of all, the infrastructure problem must be resolved in this region.



There is no drainage system in this area. Therefore, it is a negative situation for human comfort to attract people without considering the infrastructure. There is bad smell especially in the hot days during summer.

- Secondly, documentations of the houses in these areas need to be done. This data is valuable, because existing structures are disappearing over time. It is sad not to see the house I see in summer in winter. These houses should analyze and their inventory should also do. The plan and façade elements, their materials, forms, construction techniques, ornaments and details of these houses are presented in the catalogue. The data from the catalogue is evaluated to determine the plan and façade typologies of the Talas houses in the district.
- In addition, many Talas houses are not on the registration list of the government including selected many houses in the survey. One of the most important steps of strategy for protection is to register in the government these traditional houses.
- Instead of just making cafes, more cultural environments must be created. The rural life of the town which is targeted to development must be enriched with different functions. This is important for the continuity of the settlement. It will be possible to introduce the rural life culture with different communities with the activities as like as summer schools and workshops under the theme of production and education relationship which can be performed with the support of the university. Considering the historical importance of the geography the town may be included to the important cultural routes. Kayseri is a historical settlement in Central Anatolia which was on the famous Silk Road. After, during the Seljuk period, Kayseri became one of the most important centers of Anatolia with many religious and public buildings. In addition to this, the picturesque scenery cultural landscape owned by village may be an attraction point for the outdoor activities and rural tourism. In the conservation of the rural life culture the contribution of the tourism in economic terms is undeniable but the sensitive balance between the conservation and tourism should be considered well. Being close to the Kayseri city center is an advantage for the tourism activities.
- The ancient period in the region should be investigated. There is not a research about this subject. The Talas town has a big potential about this issue to be re-evaluate and return back to life. Nowadays, underground cities are found in this region. The projects should be prepared by the local municipality related to this topic. They should be developed by the co-operation of the local municipality and universities. There are three universities in this region. In addition, private sector can support these researches. There is a big and known industrial area, which has crucial private sector potential in the city. Apparently, these projects should be support by the local municipality, universities and private sector.
- The unused buildings became as a ruin. The number of the abandoned

buildings in the town is about three houses in every street. In an interview with the owner of the ruin neighbors, he said that houses have many owners, so on a mutual issue no been reached an agreement. The projects should be prepared by the local municipality related to this topic. For this reason, for a common issue does not is reached an agreement. This disagreement can be solved by the co-operation of the local municipality.

- In recent years, the projects regarding the architectural heritage are supported by municipality and governorship, is another crucial subject in terms of protection issues. Municipalities and governorships should be more conscious and reasonable on protecting traditional texture of town while they are leading up new projects. New settlement areas should be out of traditional texture as far as possible and new buildings particularly in the conserved urban texture should be appropriate with the historic building.

This study aims to present plan typologies of Talas houses. This study also intends to open a discussion on how and in what ways the forms of the traditional elements could be used in the new conservation regulations at Talas. Moreover, the documentation of the vernacular architecture of Talas will have an impact on the conservation of the historical texture of the settlement as well as transferring the data to the future generations. Furthermore, this data could be a guide for the restoration in the area for the site management projects prepared by the local municipality.

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