

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS: CASE OF GÜZELYURT (GELVERI-KALVARI) - TURKEY

Ümmügülsüm Ter

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Summary

The relations between culture and living styles have important roles on the composition of the space which reflect the traditional settlement's characteristics. Güzelyurt (Gelveri-Kalvari) has the unique traditional residential pattern protected up to now in which the characteristic properties of the spatial structure have been formed by the cultural structure and the living styles. A traditional residential area exhibiting unique vernacular characteristics is severely threatened by physical, functional and image obsolescence as many other historic settlements in the world. This study aims to define the impacts of the socio-cultural characteristics of the traditional residential area and to evaluate them in terms of continuity when it was faced with new culture and life style. In this context spatial, functional, morphologic, contextual and visual features of the traditional environment were analyzed in order to evaluate the physical environment and socio-cultural qualities.

Keywords: cultural continuity, conservation, traditional environment, Güzelyurt (Gelveri).

1 Introduction

Historical environments that establish a relationship between the past and the present are cultural assets that allow us to know and understand our past by means of the clues left by our forebears. Historical and cultural values conveyed through historical environments allow us to be acquainted with older concepts of the urban space, street texture, location of the buildings in the parcel, construction materials and techniques, socio-cultural structure, economy, traditions and customs, religious beliefs and levels of technology.

Traditional settlements which sustain their cultural continuity and protect their unique characteristics are special places not only due to the cultural heritage that they have, but also due to their urban pattern. While some traditional settlements are successful to protect their cultural identities up to now, the others are in danger of losing their traditional characters faced with the problem of deterioration and collapse caused by the social transformation and technological changes particularly during the last five decades.

Güzelyurt (Gelveri-Kalvari) has the unique traditional residential texture protected up to now in which the characteristic properties of the spatial structure have been formed by the cultural structure and the living styles. Although the archaeological findings indicate that the life in this region has been present in the Paleolithic period, the definite trails of “life in Güzelyurt” have been determined for the “Appearance of Christianity” period. Since the urban development has been thought to begin after A.D. 4th century, the development trails and continuity could be observed at the traditional houses. Throughout the historical period in the traditional residential area, the continuity of the urban pattern could be observed in newer urban production potentials; however the divergences from the traditional characteristics has begun with the 20th century due to the modern construction and material techniques used for building houses.

2 Factors determining the Güzelyurt (Gelveri) settlement

2.1 Location and geographical values

Güzelyurt is a town in the Aksaray area of the Central Anatolia Region. It is situated to the southwest of Turkey’s famous Cappadocia region. The acreage of Güzelyurt, located on in the foothills of Hasan Mountain, is 422 km². It has an altitude of 1485 m. Generally, this geologically volcanic area is characterized by continental climate characteristics.

Cappadocia’s geological structure impacted its historical background, and human structure influenced the formation of the physical environment. There are volcanic hills, upright cliffs, large plains and low foothills formed by cooled volcanic lava. The tectonic movements and formations formed by the Hasan Mountain have led to the formation of canyons such as Ihlara Valley and Manastr (Monastery) Valley, which have depths reaching 100 – 200 meters. At the same time, tuff stones formed as a result of volcanic spray impacting the structural characteristics of the environment. Deeply formed fairy chimneys of different appearances and colors eroded due to wind, erosion and other natural factors (**Fig. 1**).



Fig. 1 Güzelyurt scenery

2.2 Historical characteristics of settlement and its vicinity

The earliest definite findings indicate that life in Güzelyurt (Gelveri) began with the appearance of Christianity. However, obsidian and pots and pans in the region prove that

there was life in this area in Paleolithic Age. In antiquity Güzelyurt was known as Karballa and then Gelveri. It was founded on an important Neolithic (B.C. 6500 – 5000) settlement. The appearance of stone axes engraved from obsidian (volcanic glass) and ceramic pieces in the tumulus known as “Analipsis Hill” shows that the area was also settled by "Chalcolithic Age" people. Local inscriptions and reliefs pertaining to the Hittite period show that this area was settled by Hittites in B.C. 2000s.

Güzelyurt came to be a religious center of Greeks living in the Cappadocia region between the 4th and 6th centuries A.D. It is supposed that Saint Gregorios Teologos, one of the first Christian proselytizers in Anatolia, was born in Güzelyurt. Ideas proposed by Saint Gregorios Teologos, together with Kayseri bishop Basilus, formed the basis of Greek Orthodoxy in the following years. Accordingly, monasticism had its birth in Güzelyurt [1][2].

Güzelyurt became an important settlement also during the periods of the Cappadocia Kingdom, Ancient Greece, Roman Empire, Byzantine Empire, Seljuk and Ottoman Empires. The Seljuk and Ottoman periods played a great role in formation of the settlement's current physical and socio-cultural structure. The Seljuk who ruled over Anatolia in the 12th century granted some privileges in order to prevent the immigration of the area's Greek population. Accordingly, Christian and Muslim people started to live together. Güzelyurt's Christian population came under domination by the Ottoman Empire in 1470 and continued their lives with an increasing population until the treaty of Lausanne. It was determined in a census conducted in 1815 that there were 300 Christian houses and approximately 100 churches in the settlement. Accordingly, in this period, Güzelyurt was a Greek village maintaining its social and cultural traditions. The fact that Greeks had privileges, benefited from capitulations and did not join the army was one of the important reasons for their economic superiority. In accordance with the Population Exchange Convention in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1924, during the Republic period, Turkish people living in the Salonika settlement of Greece were moved to and installed in Greek houses in Güzelyurt (Gelveri). Greek people living in Güzelyurt were moved to and installed in a village established with the name ‘Nea Kalvari’ in the vicinity of Kavala, Greece[3][4][5].

Güzelyurt town also has a rich natural and cultural history on account of its underground cities, rock-carved buildings, ancient Byzantine buildings, churches and the proximity of the Manastır (Monastery) Valley [5]. In the center of the city, approximately 70 civilian, antique architecture samples were registered and taken into preservation programs. Also, the area where natural and cultural values exist together was declared an urban protected area on 30 September 1988.

2.3 Social and cultural structure and living sources

The townspeople mainly make a living from agriculture and stockbreeding. Viniculture, tile-making, ceramics and home-made wine production are other income sources. An increase in transportation vehicles as a result of technological developments since 1960 caused the area's young population to immigrate to big cities, Aksaray being the first destination. A scarcity of cultivable land and lack of wetlands led the population to work in the construction sector. The population exchange in 1924 is the most influential factor in the area's rich cultural structure. Stone craft, hand-knitting and weaving activities, tile-making and ceramics are primary handicrafts. A rich cuisine boasting a variety of meals, as

well as other traditions and customs are the most crucial examples of this rich culture's presence in urban life.

The region's architectural and cultural values of rich history of the region enabled establishment of a tourism sector. The most important historical and cultural values of the region are St. Gregorius Teogolos Church, built by Great Teodosius in A.D. 385, Kızıl (Red) Church built in the 6th century, Yuksek Church (Analepsis Monastery) built by Byzantines in the 19th century; Sivişli Church, Koç Church, Cafarlar Church, Kömürlü Church located in Manastrır (Monastery) Valley; and Kalburlu Church, Cevizli Street, the Underground City and Greek houses featuring ancient architectural styles [3]. Ihlara Valley, Manastrır (Monastery) Valley and Hasan Mountain (the second highest mountain of Anatolia and a center for winter sports tourism) are historical and touristic natural resources around the settlement (**Fig. 2, Fig. 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 5**).



Fig. 2 Manastrır (Monastery) Valley



Fig. 3 Kızıl (Red) Church

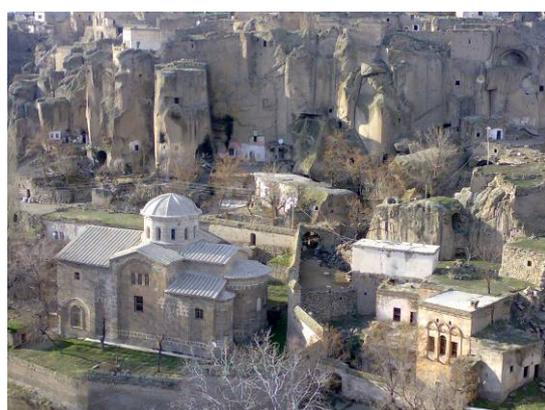


Fig. 4 St. Gregorius Teogolos Church
in Manastrır (Monastery) Valley



Fig. 5 Yuksek Church
(Analepsis Monastery)

The “*Turkish - Greek Friendship Culture and Tourism Festival*” is organized in Güzelyurt every year. This event plays a great role in ensuring the continuity of cultural links between the past and present day. Greek people who moved to Nea Kalvari (Kavala) from Güzelyurt and Turkish people who emigrated to Güzelyurt from Salonika in 1924 come together and become friendly at once. This legacy is an important element for maintaining the culture and cultural interaction [4].

2.4 Architectural Characteristics of Güzelyurt

Architectural characteristics of Gelveri houses generally display a regional integrity. This integrity seen in the Cappadocia region within the frame of Ürgüp, Uçhisar, Ortahisar, Niğde, Nevşehir and Kayseri has unique characteristics. We observe that the use rock-carving and load bearing wall construction together is influential in formation of traditional texture. In the urban texture, elements of the traditional architecture accord with all of the local features and natural components. Considering the fact that Gelveri urban development started from A.D. 4, it is possible to say that there was a continuing development in traditional houses [1][6].

The storey number of the houses in Güzelyurt changed according to the size of the houses, and houses were either one-storey or two-storey. Houses have different entrances in accordance with slope of the land they were built on. For instance, while entrance of the house facing the street is opened to upper floors in big houses, its entrance on the other street is linked to the downstairs of the house. The relationship of houses with streets and squares is closely related to garden walls shaping the street and front lines setting the street boundaries. While the house's access to the street is ensured sometimes through a garden wall and door, other constructions ensure access with the front of the traditional house extending towards the street [1].

In traditional architecture, rock-carved spaces are general plan elements of the houses in the region. Rock-carved spaces are ground floor units of the houses. Masonry structural units were built over these units.

There are three kinds of houses in accordance with the construction system [1];

Rock-carved houses: Rock-carved houses, mostly located in the lower neighborhood, have an organic planning scheme formed from carving square or rectangular spaces in accordance with the need. There are spaces such as toilet, storehouse and stable built in a masonry system in the courtyards bordered with rubble walls. This distinctive texture flourishing with rock-carved streets, stairs, chapels and shelters made up the traditional settlement texture of Gelveri until the 19th century (**Fig. 6**).

Rock-carved + masonry houses: Most of these kinds of houses, located on the slope, are units having a front entrance with masonry system annex. In some houses it was made up of one volume opening to an external anteroom with colonnade accessed by stairs from the courtyard. There are also very special units called "hospitality room" thanks to the stone ornaments in the exterior front, wooden cupboards and ceiling ornaments within the space. These allow for actions such as eating, sitting and sleeping. Houses with their front towards the road and whose outbuildings overflow to the road attract attention both from the courtyard and the street thanks to their monumental structure. In these kinds of buildings, the ground floor is in the form of rock-carved units. These units are generally used as service spaces such as kitchen, storeroom, hayloft and stable. Masonry units are used as life spaces. The main fronts of masonry units facing towards the landscape were made from cut-stone, and they are mostly ornamental (**Fig. 7**).



Fig. 6 Rock-carved houses

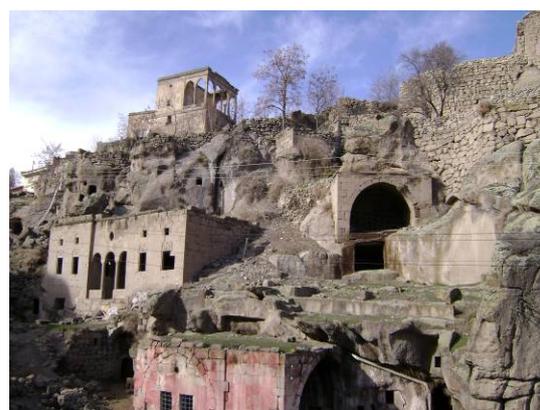


Fig. 7 Rock-carved + masonry houses

Masonry houses: This is the last ring of housing typology development in the region. They were planned on road fronts of the courtyards in different sizes and order in accordance with household needs. There are living rooms, tandoori huts and kitchens on the ground floors two-storey houses having iwans. Upper floors are made up of bedrooms and anteroom. Annexes such as hayloft, stable and toilet are located as masonry or carved units in courtyards of the houses (Fig. 8-9).



Fig. 8 Masonry houses



Fig. 9 Karballa Hotel (built as a school in 1856 dedicated to religious education)

Stone is the main construction material of Gelveri houses. While delicate manipulation of the stone obtained from tuff quarries is conducted during the construction, remaining pieces are used in garden walls. While the connection of houses to the street was ensured through the garden wall and door sometimes, it was ensured via the traditional house front extending towards the street in other examples. Front elements make up the most decisive element of Gelveri houses' distinctive texture. On the second floors of the houses, outbuildings varying between 15 and 20 cm. from ground floor walls with two or three rows of stone brackets extend towards the street. There are geometric ornaments between cantilever stones [6](Fig. 10).



Fig. 10 Front elements of Gelveri houses

The courtyard has a great impact on the house plan and formation. While the house's service units are located around the courtyard, life spaces are in direct or indirect connection with the courtyard. Courtyard floors are generally covered with stones. In recent years, concrete pavement has begun to replace stone courtyards. Tuff stone was used as courtyard pavement in the houses going through restoration [6]. The stables are the initial spaces that open onto the courtyard in Gelveri houses. Generally, kitchen and tandoori hut are unchangeable spaces in traditional Gelveri houses and Cappadocia region houses.

One of the other most important components of Gelveri houses is the windows. Windows are generally simple. However, they are placed on the front by considering certain proportions. There are ornaments over the windows in some houses (**Fig. 11**).



Fig. 11 Proportion and ornaments of the windows

Doors opening to the street in courtyard houses bear monumental values. These doors are larger compared to the house doors that open directly onto the street. Street doors of courtyards and houses are generally constructed as wooden wings. While big courtyard doors have two wings, smaller ones have just one wing (**Fig. 12**).



Fig. 12 Street doors of courtyards

Balcony or summer openings face the courtyard or street. These openings, located in upper floors, open towards the street or inside of the courtyard via two or three arches. Generally, a single depressed arch order is used in arrangements. Arches are located on columns with circular sections. Geometric and vegetable ornaments with half circular sections appear over the arch stones. Roofs are generally plain and of packed soil [6] (**Fig. 13**).

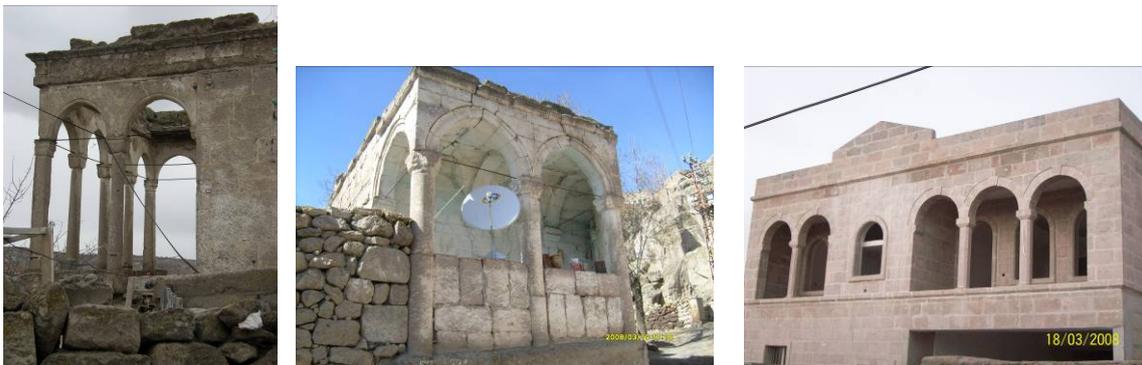


Fig. 13 Balconies samples of Gelveri houses

With the exception of newly opened roads, streets shaping the traditional texture are just large enough to allow pedestrian transition; and they were formed through carving the rock. We observe that streets reaching social, administrative and commercial buildings vary in terms of quality, though not in size, and are gradated among themselves [1][5]. High garden walls and fronts of the buildings came to be components setting boundaries for the street (**Fig. 14-15**).



Fig. 14 Akropol Street



Fig. 15 Meneviş Street

3 Causes of degradation of traditional textures

We can see that in the historical process, continuity of urban texture in Gelveri houses was ensured until the 20th century when traditional housing construction techniques changed. But from the 20th century on, traditional texture started to deteriorate as a result of modern construction and material techniques. In addition, the fact that the Greek population leaving Güzelyurt in the process of population exchange was more than the population of Turkish people settling there caused many unique buildings to remain empty and be destroyed. While front lines creating an influential view in most of the study area can still be seen, they have cuts between the street alleys due to new buildings or new urban texture occurring on the old building. The houses were abandoned because of differences in standards of judgment, seeking and asking for comfort conditions, and they were passed into other hands via rental or sale. Since the new owners of these houses did not know the value of immovable properties, certain degradations took place in the architectural characteristics of immovable properties generally as a result of poor maintenance.

Window openings and sizes went through changes in the course of time as a result of interventions in the houses. Narrow windows were enlarged with large windows, and balconies were annexed. Window frames were changed with PVC. Characteristics of the door deteriorated as a result of poor maintenance in the following periods, and just the lintels of some of them survived intact until the present time. Without taking the flow of flat roofs into consideration, they were changed with Marseilles tile, concrete or corrugated iron roofs. Materials such as briquette and brick that does not match with the quality of the area were used in repairs and annexes [6]. New houses were built over the old walls of buildings destroyed completely or partly in the traditional texture. Buildings were divided physically and proprietarily due to reasons such as legacy, and lost their original scheme.

In traditional texture, uncontrolled interventions such as enlargement of the streets, turning the areas where destroyed buildings are located into green texture, constructing disharmonious buildings in addition to the original buildings, disregard of texture in new constructions, disassembling traditional street paving, and covering the roads with concrete parquet and asphalt led to the loss of texture integrity.

4 Conclusions

Historical buildings and their environments considered as living documents have the feature of heritage in terms of bearing socio-cultural and economical features, material qualities and construction characteristics, as well as details such as rock-working and wood-working pertaining to their age. At the present time, historical environments are damaged and even faced with the threat of disintegration because of reasons such as society's general disinterest and lack of awareness about treasure hunting, historical artifact smuggling, the desire to have modern life conditions, pretensions of modernism, faulty maintenance, disrespect towards historical artifacts, taking commercial advantages, alterations in social structure and the necessity of historical preservation.

Güzelyurt settlement is a place where many civilizations settled and we can still observe architectural characteristics and ancient cultural traces at the present time. It is one of the most important settlements in the Cappadocia Region thanks to its spatial texture shaped by its socio-cultural structure. The practices to make streets healthier and development plans for protection purposes are important steps for protecting traditional texture and ensuring cultural continuity in the region whose historical texture has been eroded due to the reasons mentioned above. In addition to these, raising civic awareness about protecting historical environments, enabling buildings to continue their lives with original or new functions balanced between preservation and use, and sustaining traditional texture by regarding historical buildings together with their environments will greatly contribute to the transfer of this huge heritage to future generations.

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