

Evaluation of the Housing Planning of a Minority Ethnic Group in North Cyprus: The Maronites and Their Village-Koruçam



Architecture

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to determine the effects of different cultures and/or life styles on the use of space in housing and to find out the factors causing these effects and their results. This study, investigating the relationship between housing and ethnic minority groups are important, since this topic is mentioned in the studies on housing. Besides that, it will be a step to shed light on the uncertainty of housing types having been classified according to ethnicity (region, culture, social structure). With this study, carried out in Koruçam, the effects and results of ethnic group on housing in today's traditional and modern architecture have been investigated. The results of this study are thought to be helpful for those who are interested in identifying the relationship between ethnicity and housing and who wish to carry out a follow-up study in the future.

Introduction

Cyprus Island lies in the Eastern Mediterranean, at the cross-roads of Europe, Asia and Africa. Located in the west of Syria (Lebanon) and south of Turkey, it is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea after Sicily and Sardinia (shown in Figure 1) [1].



Figure 1: Relations of Cyprus-Lebanon and Syria

Source: (<http://www.sitesatlas.com/Maps/Maps/602.htm>)

In addition to the fact that it carries lots of the qualities that are typical of the whole Mediterranean region, Cyprus is a country with rich and wide variety of cultural values, historical perspectives and accordingly, diverse architectural heritage. In the island's history, each of the following different cultural groups: Hellens, Romans, Byzantines, Maronites, Lusignans, Venetians, Ottomans and the British, has constructed their own architectural style in terms of what one might call the mezzo-micro scale [2].

Additionally, the island has a diversity of population composed of five ethnic communities living on it: The two major ethnic groups are mainly the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots which are settled in southern and northern parts of the island, respectively. These two communities constitute the majority of the population (almost 95%) (shown in Table 1), while the remaining 5 percent includes Maronites, Armenians, and Latins as well as a small number of immigrants from different countries [3].

Koruçam village is situated on the northern coast of Cyprus island, lying at the skirts of Kyrenia. The Five Finger mountains – the largest urban settlement of North Cyprus – about 34 kilometers away from west of Kyrenia city, however rather remote from its populous areas.

Koruçam Village Population Only

Year	Population		Total Housing	Year	Population		Total Housing
	Maronites	Turkish Cypriots			Maronites	Turkish Cypriots	
1570	Not Available	-	Not Available	1931	730	6	Not Available
1831	91(Male Population Only)	-	Not Available	1946	889	-	Not Available
1841	Not Available	-	Not Available	1960	1093/(SPO: 2702)	-	Not Available
1891	423	7	Not Available	1973	1257	-	Not Available
1901	503	10	Not Available	1996	220	-	Not Available
1911	617	11	Not Available	2006	195(SPO: 236)	-	Not Available
1921	666	10	Not Available	2011	294	-	138

Table 1: Maronite populations in Koruçam Village SPO (Statement Planning Organisation), 2015 nufussayimi.dev-plan.org/Nufus-nitelikleri_index.html / <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kormakitis>

The existence of the Maronite Community in Cyprus is mentioned in the beginning of the 7th century and they originally came from the Lebanon. Koruçam village is the most dense Maronite settlement in Cyprus. The Maronites living in Koruçam maintain the economic and social relations between the two other dominating communities - namely the Turkish and Greek Cypriots - while adhering to their peculiar traditions and religion. They adapted to their new living environments in Cyprus, but still maintain their own culture and religion.

Today, only a small Maronite population lives in the village continuously, consisting of people who are 50+ (de-jure) [4]. The reason is that the young population of the culture recently prefers to move to and live in different urban areas of the island, both in northern and southern parts, due to the limited economic, political, and administrative facilities, and possibilities the village has to offer. Therefore, in order for the Maronite group to sustain their cultural heritage and traditional environments, it is necessary for these limited socio-cultural and economic activities to

be improved.

Koruçam Housings Plan Characteristics

The housing as a social control mechanism, being strong in traditional cultures, may no longer apply with as much force in a society with the formalized and institutionalized control systems of today. Under such conditions, the link between culture and form is weakened, and it may no longer be possible to destroy a culture by destroying its physical setting [5]. Within this perspective, the Koruçam settlement of the Maronite community in North Cyprus can be considered as one of the important examples for the minority ethnic groups which have/had to, in one way or another, leave their original settings and settle in a foreign environment.

It is well known that the architecture of Cypriot housings show differences in the settlement of villages. Besides some local styles differences, there are also some clear common features in those different village settlements. In the area of Koruçam, besides the geographical differences (climate, geological structure, material), traditional housings were made up by religious, economical and family structure and cultural interaction. The outward and extroverted courtyard plan layout, the common-used courtyard plan layout, masonry building technique, reinforced concrete construction technique and mixed construction (masonry-reinforced concrete) technique, stone material, the sloping roof, etc. are the common architectural features.

Open, Semi-Open (courtyard, terrace, balcony) Relations

Courtyard houses have been used in different cultures which are both crowded and hierarchic. From simple housings of Jericho, through those of Roma, India, and Latin America, to the very complex Jen houses of China, the courts had the same functions [6]. In rural mediterranean courtyard houses most of life was concentrated in the open and semi-open spaces of the housing [7]. Courtyard is in fact a place that is as private as the inside of a house; therefore it had to be separated by high walls from the public space [8]. As in the Turkish house, organisation around a garden or a court depended on extreme need for privacy of women in different regions and cultures [9].

The most important element is the courtyard, which determines the shaping of the ground floor, which is sized according to the size of housing and is the central of the housing (shown in Figure 2). It is the common area which is a certain connection between all places. Most of the daily work and social activities are done here. Especially in summer, when people are up all day and sleep whole night, it serves as an open-top chamber. In addition; wc, stairs, pit, oven and flowers can also be seen in a courtyard.

Concrete or earth materials were generally used for planking the courtyard. For this reason not many trees and flowers could be planted on concrete floors. By filling some parts of the courtyard with earth or planting some flowers in flowerpots, the green elements have not been used. Since, the house does not enclose the garden; or the garden is not in between the rooms of the house. In contrary, the garden is outside the house and is defined with both the house and high garden walls for preserving privacy. So the garden is not restricted with the length and width of the row of rooms.



Figure 2: Courtyard of the house

The traditional Koruçam housing is a one or two-storey building with front entrances developed parallel to the road, next to housing formed by the sort unit with square, rectangle or trap-ezoid around the courtyard.

The terraces and balconies are usually located in the front or rear entrance of the housing. You can sleep there at night, eat and sit there during the day. Natural marbles are usually used for the terrace and balcony. The ceilings of balconies are made together with the roof of the building, which is usual in modern buildings. In modern housings the terrace usually serves as a courtyard. There are many gardens surrounding housings and many fruits and vegetables are harvested in them. Terrace, balcony and gardens are the most frequently used areas in modern housings.

Evaluation of the Housing Planning in Koruçam

There are two different types of houses in Koruçam, such as; traditional and modern. It is detected that the traditional housing in the central livingroom planning and with courtyard planning arrangement of the one storey houses are designed in two different parts. Apart from this, it is observed that in two storey houses the traditional plan order is formed of one room on the second floor and several rooms on the ground floor (shown in Table 2). In addition, with traditional one-storey housing in the livingroom, central plans are examined on its relationship between street-houses in the street in front of the house with the courtyard [10].

On the other hand, modern housings follow the type of a compact plan. In some types of plan arrangements, connections are usually provided at the entrance of the room with a narrow corridor, livingroom entrance, hall entrance and the direct street. Two modern storey houses existed on the ground floor living room, kitchen room and bedroom.

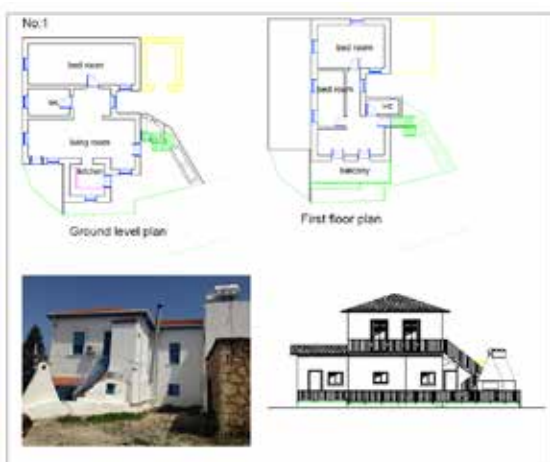
GENERAL LAYOUT OF THE HOUSE	TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL PERIODS HOUSES		MODERN ARCHITECTURAL PERIODS HOUSES	
	ONE STOREY	TWO STOREY	ONE STOREY	TWO STOREY

Table 2: General layout of Traditional and Modern Houses in Koruçam**Explanation of One and Two Storey Houses**

The mediterranean style housings are generally seen in traditional and modern house plannings. One-storey houses are planned very simple and functional, in which the ground floor plan includes living room, bedroom, kitchen and wc. The spatial organization has a compact character with rectangular or square plan.

**Figure 3: Example of Traditional Mediterranean House**

In addition, the two storey houses are planned with functions same as the one storey houses. In the two-storey housing the stairs to the top floor are placed outside the housing. The service areas (toilet, bathroom, kitchen), rooms and living space (living room) are on the ground floor (shown in Figure 3) with further rooms on the first floor. In the settlement of Koruçam village the housing of the modern mediterranean architecture period shows similarity with the settlement plan scheme. Besides that, long and narrow terraces in the entrance and rear facades can be seen in modern buildings. The rear facade terraces are in connection with the courtyard. In some buildings you can also enter the terrace from the outside.

**Figure 4: Two storey housing and outside stairs**

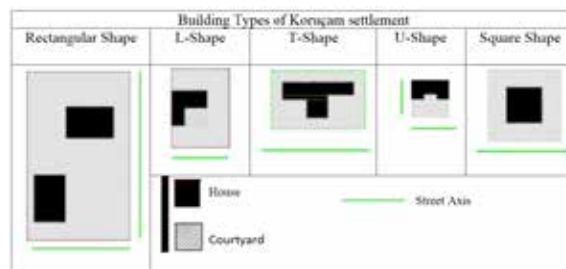
The most important factor in the formation of the traditional Koruçam housing is the climate and the topography of the area it is suited in. The topographical structure of the village settlement brings the seasonal use in the mass and the shape of the courtyard housing to the forefront. The differences in the level of topographic structure got solved by the usage of stairs and balcony.

The fact that the housing had to be developed in a limited area was the reason for preferring an understanding of design, in which we use vertical on the floor instead of spreading horizontally in some housings.

Having a different culture, today the Koruçam village still remains its privileged place. The traditional structure, the cultural diversity and social architecture order still continues today. In the formation of the traditional Koruçam housing, the main factors were the family structure, the economical, religious and geographical status of the users, and cultural interaction.

The Plan Organization of Koruçam Settlement

When the types of plans have been studied for the locations around the courtyard of the building blocks according to the coverage gap rate; classification was made as: U type, T type, L type, square, rectangle, L type and rectangle mixed type, T type and rectangle mixed type.

**Table 3: Building Types of Koruçam settlement**

The lements were taken as a result of the research and were based on the five different organizations (shown in Table 3).

Conclusions and Evaluation

The Koruçam house planning with inner-outer relations were evaluated. Consequently; the housing shows a development in two different periods: traditional and modern. In general, a courtyard plan level was used in accordance with the mediterranean houses. Modern houses were related to close, semi-open and open spaces, but traditional houses rooms were directly related to open courtyards. As a result; Maronites had a different culture, religion and social life. Although the housing planning was as like as mediterranean house styles.

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