

## Traditional Akseki Houses as a Regional Architecture in Turkish Meditarrenean

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*Abstract-* As well as being buildings to meet shelter people need, they reflect social structure, culture livelihood, traditions, history and geography of those who constructed them or who had them built.

In formation of houses variations appear in material used and their functions due to various elements in Anatolia. Different architectural constructions emerged in various parts of Anatolia based on environmental and climatic factors, distinctive traditions and cultures, which are all infact interrelated and integrating regional features as different elements of the whole Turkish building traditions. Visual variations are suggestive of richness of architectural plan. Considering the house built together with settlement, geography, landscape, composed of gardens, orchard, mountains, rivers, forest, people and animals or beasts; it tends to be of different quality. In other words house is a combination of significant values included in the culture and geography to which it was born.

Traditional Akseki houses as a regional architecture unique to the Mediterranean zone of Turkey discussed in the communiqué are of a distinctive and privileged nature. The houses concerned were constructed considering history, geography and socio-economic parameters of the region in which Turkish Mediterranean architecture appeared. They were examined and analyzed in terms of their general aspects, constructive material and elements, types of plan, exterior orders and embroidery characteristics.

*Key-Words:* - Cultural Heritage, structure, Vernacular Architecture, Mediterranean, Akseki,

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Akseki is a settlement to the south-west of Taurus Mountains overlooking the Gulf of Antalya, which means it has both properties of central Anatolia and the Mediterranean regions in climate and vegetation. Town of Akseki is geographically located on hill slope of the Taurus succession, spreading across the southern plains in settlement whose north, west and east are mountainous that is it is a geography where water and soil is limited and stones and hills are abundant[1,2].

There seem to be significant relationships between proven achievements of Akseki people in trade, state administration and justice and the geography they were born in. It is highly possible that lack of fertile soil could lead local people to activities not directly related to farming such as trade and craftsmanship's or to movement for earning living. Absence of livelihood resources calls for productive and fair utility and management of the present resources. The reason for ability of native people in administration and

justice must be such compulsive and difficult circumstances of the region concerned [3]. Lack or insufficiency of agricultural land requires settlement sites to be fairly distributed for houses to be built. Houses are mostly constructed in terrace-house building however they do not close the landscape view of one another's.

Traditional Akseki houses have managed to survive to preserve their own general features within an environmental and regional integrity in a given region or area. What is determinant is that houses have been constructed using stones and wood material easily available in and around the nearby settlement present in the natural landscape. Bearing system of the houses is a determining element which wooden plank masonry construction is used, according to which Akseki buildings are called button houses "düğmeli evler" unique to Akseki environment and cannot be seen in Anatolian traditional building patterns. Their exterior is simple and plain while interior is richly embroidered with

high quality wooden workmanship and decoration.

Because, Traditional Akseki houses have attracted attention in recent years, the town of Akseki and neighbouring settlements have been officially registered as urban site areas. Akseki urban site area consists of about 2/3 of the whole settlement whose texture is located on the slope covering neighbourhoods called Hacıilyas, Fakılar, from which it follows that slopes where people inhabit are included in concept of urban site area. The plain area is allocated to concrete-built settlements from Demirciler to the road to Dutluca Çimi village [4].

## 2. TRADITIONAL HOUSE ARCHITECTURE IN ANATOLIA

In general terms, house is a phenomenon defined by socio-cultural psychological, political and economic factors which define the space in as a physical unit sheltering and protecting people to live in it. In another words, house is a general name for the shelter in which people live. On the other hand, traditional house is a type of building reflecting traditional way of living, culture, customs and values and exhibiting farm and plan properties suitable for the above [5].

Traditional types of houses worked on reminisce of ways of living of Turkish tribes used to lead in central Asia before they came over to Anatolia. Harsh climating and difficult living conditions have a long been influencing in psychology and culture of people in central Asia [6,7].

The processes which farmed traditional house in Anatolia dates back to 17th century, only after which can however the development which could be established by documents and patterns be traced. Most of the patterns described as traditional houses date back to 18th and 19h centuries when there were no significant differences between the houses ordinary people lived in and residences of tradesmen, which are interesting considering richness of embroidery and precision used in the plans of architecture. The reason for it is that native tradesmen gloated about the way of living of governing class in Ottoman Empire.

The major components are rooms and sofas which constitute a house. Other sections such as doors, windows, and stairs and servant rooms are very essential details to facilitate life in it. Every room has closets into which to place beds and related articles in a way to serve functions such as sitting, eating and sleeping. Some sections of

the closed is a bathroom called “gusülhane”, divans, units of seats, extended windows cupboards and hearths are essential elements for the rooms of a house (Photo 1). Doors, shutters of closed and cupboard, hearths and high ceilings are decorated by the precise techniques corresponding to the material used sofa is a space prepared for entrances to the room as well as a social meeting passage were family people spent time together (Photo 2) [8,9].

The places other than circulation sections in sofas are used as sitting processes which are all terraces wooden throngs to view. Extensions have three- way views. Plan orders of the houses are composed of the above mentioned elements aligned and arranged according to the given standardized principles. Modifications in the plan are based on the geography on which to build, the material used social, economic and cultural status of those who built the house or had it built [10]. The form of the house to be shaped up by the above is a parameter suitable for the way of living adopted or functionality. Most elements used to give functionality dependent or independent of the space of a house could exist to the extent that they would benefit to the user and exaggerations would be avoided. Moreover, ability to adjust to the environment is an important issue. Those who made traditional houses tended to adjust themselves to nature in which they live and avoid struggling against it, which could be easily seen in traditional Akseki houses.



Photo. 1- Interior view of a room.

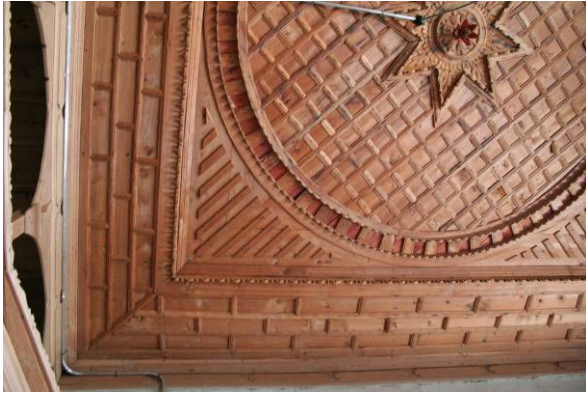


Photo. 2- A detail of ceiling.

### 3. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL AKSEKI HOUSES

#### 3.1. Architecture

Harsh climatic and mountainous nature of Akseki influences livelihood, social structure and way of living of people there, with spaces as houses being governed by nature itself. Inhabitants of Akseki have built their houses using stone and wooden material they could easily find around due to their habits of long centuries to create buildings invariably resistant to potential earthquakes in the region, achieving the summit of wooden workmanship in doing so. Stones native to the region were bonded with wooden beams without mortar to construct button houses, "Düğmeli evler" (Photo 3) [11,12].



Photo. 3- Detail of construction

Slopes of the settlement created vertical stair shape streets unique to the rough topography. Traditional Akseki houses have two-storey buildings constructed by masonry building supported with wooden planks and beams. Exterior walls were coated with a mixture of sand and lime. Beams and planks were obtained from pine and tar trees while wooden bonds from juniper tree called "düğme". Of Akseki houses were covered with ridge roof and hip roofs coated with Spanish tile. Previously houses were covered with wooden planks named "Yonga Çatı" which would be replaced by new ones when they were old enough to be rotten therefore roof tile had to be used instead. Rain gutters were wooden in traditional building system in which only wooden and stone material was available. Wooden planks of 2-3 m cut in 10-12 cm V-shape in the middle were overlapped on one another and fix with metal rings to be nailed into the end of the rafters ("mertekler") along the friezes (Photo 4).





Photo. 4- Detail of exterior

Exterior of houses is simple and plain. Wooden material is extensively used interiorly. Exterior of Akseki houses includes major elements of architecture such as pavilion “cumba” and pergola “çardak” (balcony). Pavilion is supported by “eli böğründe” with an extension from the main wall and or the roof independently of and dependently on it. Wooden made pergola extends over on two columns. The room section used as summer spaces on the exterior are made of wooden planks or “yalıbaşkı”, (weatherboarding) in exterior typology. Houses have structures without extensions in four sides, with summer room, unit extension, double extension. Exterior has no exaggerated decorations or embroideries but wooden window shutters, gates and supporting columns of extensions are particularly decorated. Windows without glass are covered with wooden carved cage and fortune’s wheel “çarkıfelek” patterned shutters. Basement has no windows or small windows are used for aeration. Upstairs have rectangular wooden windows are guillotines on which are interesting top windows. Octagonal sectioned wooden baluster, railing and benefit from solar sunlight’s. As basements of traditional houses are used as shops or stores, corresponding benches interiorly and shutters are exteriorly available. One enters through the gate of two panels into the yard or house directly. Wooden gates generally do not have handles but Traka, a kind of lock unique to the region is used instead, which is a locking system to have a hole and behind it is a springed wooden part to move to open the gate.

The walls or the yard are made up of masonry rubble structures without mortar and supporting beams. The walls are as high as the gate itself, ending with a wooden “harpuş” on them called “Semerkandi” in the yard is a stone covered platform on which a staircase to climb upstairs. Basement is planned a stable in which livestock

stays because it is of great importance for people to live in the region. In addition there are affiliated units such as cellar, warehouse and hayloft attached to the house upstairs is a living section where there are furniture and armchairs as well as service units. Topography of the area enables an additional basement used as a stable to be constructed below the three storey building thanks to slopes.

General plan of the upstairs is a central sofa with a crosswise scheme. Doors of the four corners open into sofa with their corner splays (chamfers). The extension with a terrace and separated from interior by a wooden arch is called “şahniş” which mostly has generally large windows in some houses, one of the extensions opens to “pergola” (balcony).

Part of the upstairs used has summer space with wide windows are made of wooden “yalıbaşkı” (weatherboarding), with an open and covered sofas existing together in such buildings. A window of one or two rooms opens out into the section to let sunlight’s in. It seems quite likely that such places could be used as open sofas then covered over on them because a banister still exist in the windows.

Plan designing of Akseki houses is L-shape sofa described as external sofa plan type while internal sofa is crosswise and iwaned or middle sofa design. Sofas of Akseki houses with middle sofa are arranged in a way that all family members could easily get together which can be proven by divans placed in front of windows in iwans between rooms. The main floor is upstairs. Rooms are placed across themselves in L sofa houses. At the end of L sofa are units used as bathroom. The other leg L sofa is used as a living room. Extensions of rooms and sofas can widen the spaces, enabling people to communicate with outer life through windows and adding movement to the inner spaces [13]. In inner sofa iwan crosswise plan houses, rooms could be entered through splayed corners of iwan opened to them. The other room is across these rooms. The spaces near the staircase to upstairs are used as kitchen cellar and other service units. The rooms are arranged in a way that all functions at home could be performed properly. In the same cupboard is bathroom, toilet and other cupboards. Divans are in the rooms or near the windows in sofas although they are no longer used. Hearths with smoke jacks are in the rooms or they are simple shape a hearth in which cinders is placed. In mezzanines are arched hearths. Shelves are used as decorative processes

other than their main functions. Niches in a corner or in the middle of the cupboards are used as lamp and flower bed niches set in shelves “musandras” on the upper sections of cupboards are oval, Bursa arched and banister forms [14].

Staircases to upstairs are simple, plain and without embroideries but quite functional. Staircases can be closed with a suitable wooden cover upstairs for security purposes when occasionally necessary. Akseki ancient city texture is declared as urban site area considering historical, socio-cultural and economic features from olden time until today. Trade and movement to Akseki created interactions in architecture and decoration inspired by neighbouring provinces and capital city. Socio-cultural, socio-economic characteristics as well as climate and topography could influence building typology and domestic embroideries with and original and unique style appearing.

### 3.2. MATERIAL AND STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Traditional Akseki houses are two storey and having stone walls. Topography in Akseki without lime stone caused buildings to be constructed with wooden beamed small stone masonry the walls are 60-70 cm wide [15]. Wooden skeleton and stone masonry combine the main structure of the house which does not resemble other structures present in Anatolia therefore can be said to be unique to Akseki as a blending construction. The rough ground is first dug than the foundation is formed in to which stones are placed as a dry foundation wall on which to build typical Akseki house. The stone walls are combined with wooden logs on top with 50-60 cm intervals whose ends are left in 20-25 cm outside. On interior and exterior stone wall is placed wooden layers along the wall. As the wall is built higher, 20-25 cm wooden extensions are used as stairs without needing a scaffold. The section between two wooden layers (bonding timber (hatıl) is called “destur” while short wooden parts across the wall are colloquially named buttons “düğme”. That’s why, people call such houses “düğmeli ev”, button houses. Wooden columns are placed 2 m internally are bonded with buttons to the roof and with rafters on it, with the wooden skeleton is firmly stabilised and strengthen. Wooden locks to carry the floor in masonry system are placed on wooden sections in 40-45 cm intervals. The wooden logs placed into the stone wall 20-25 cm interiorly are nailed with wooden parts vertically

called “pişduvan” wooden lintels are named “dökkü” placed on windows and doors among people. Inner walls are mortared with white soil on them.

### 3.3. EMBROIDERY CHARACTERISTICS

Techniques used in wooden workmanship “oyma, yalancıkündekari, çatma and çekme” which are all popular in construction of Akseki houses with middle sofa.



Photo. 5- Door

Big iron nails are used for decorative purposes on gates and doors in stylistic patterns (Photo 5). Doors, gates, cupboards, shelves and hearths are embroidered and coloured with floral motifs created with carving technique. In addition mirrors on doors and cupboards are painted in different colours to give interesting impressions the doors into rooms are decorated with floral and geometric patterns including “çarkıfelek”, fortune’s wheel. Hearths in the house are with “yaşmak” decorated with Rumi and leave motifs placed on the branches using “carving technique”. In the rooms of some houses are shelves called “sergen or üzümlük” made of wooden material which are heightened up to ceilings supported with banisters [16].

Upper covering of sofa plan houses are wooden square, octagonal or trapezoidal patterned plain ceilings while middle section of the sofa heightened with a wooden dome or decorated with square, oval, octagonal sectioned parts. Some rooms are decorated with star or çarkifelek forms made of wooden material placed on the ceiling which is coloured with “yalancıkündekari technique” a classic Ottoman decoration in different sections of the star to give interesting impressions such as pomegranate placed as fecundity symbols. Plaster is another material added to embroidery programme of Akseki houses using “kalem işçiliği/ chasing” but floral plaster decorations are rarely used on ceilings [17].



Photo. 6- Detail from a room

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Houses, vital necessity for social life to be maintained in settlements are constructed according to plan types and architecture previously tasted progressed over time in different forms. Houses in different parts of Anatolia have similar and different properties in terms of decoration, function and construction. Resemblance and difference are inevitable even in the same geography, which stems from economic, social, cultural, political and religious variations among people.

Different traditions and faiths in the same community or region created interesting architectures of houses. Therefore, it seems difficult to conclude a generalization from decoration and architecture of houses built in a close geography or among similar communities of people. Considering the above parameters, every house, every architecture and every decoration should be studied carefully without any given inference or prejudice regarding any social or geographical formation. In Akseki, houses are built by a plan in which a given way of life is considered such as in other regions of

Anatolia. Variable plan types can be met as well as pre-designed standard plan types used in buildings. Exterior material differs regionally embroidery motifs could vary or resemble one another from region to region and even from town to town. Specific and unique properties are interesting on the basis of the plan used in construction. Extensions gates, doors, windows and their wooden or brass surfaces, door handles and locks are all produced used considering architectural parameters floral and geometric patterns are used by engraving technique in wooden and plastic material unique to the region, area or zone in which houses are built. Floral patterns are used uniquely on gates, doors, windows and cupboards and their related surfaces. Plaster and wooden material decorated by “kalem işi” embroideries which are similar in other parts of Anatolia seems to have distinctively and uniquely different since they are produced by different people or different viewpoints. Akseki houses have both variations and resemblances considering other Anatolian houses which are all necessary cultural presence to be left to next generations. Within Akseki urban protection area and programme are 136 premises worth being preserved and restored.

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