

# Historical development of Darkale rural settlement in Soma, Manisa

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## Abstract

Darkale rural settlement is a village of Soma, Manisa. The main intention of this study is to make conservation aimed evaluation of the historical development of Darkale by questioning the physical characteristics of the present historical settlement with emphasis on its housing units. The way followed is literature review, archive research in the official website of the state archives; field survey, analysis and evaluation of Darkale with the tools of the discipline of architectural restoration; and interpretation of historical data together with physical data. The archive documents, monumental buildings and the settlement pattern, especially the organization of the housing units have provided a framework for interpreting Turkish period. Nevertheless, for the historical evaluation of the pre-Turkish period, further geo-prospection and archeological research are necessary. In all periods, the brook-valley system has been the gathering, production and commercial area of the settlement. The elevated plateau at the east of Darkale brook with full vista of the surroundings is evaluated as the earliest settlement area in Turkish period. It is relatively safe in terms of its elevated position and has preserved its authenticity. The latter settlement area, circumscribing the plateau at its north, west and south presents various solutions to cope with the high inclination: stone retaining walls, increase in number of stories, passages over streets, and increase in the amount of relations with neighbors including vertical interaction of housing units.

## Keywords

Darkale village, Rural architecture, Rural settlement, Settlement history.



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## 1. Introduction

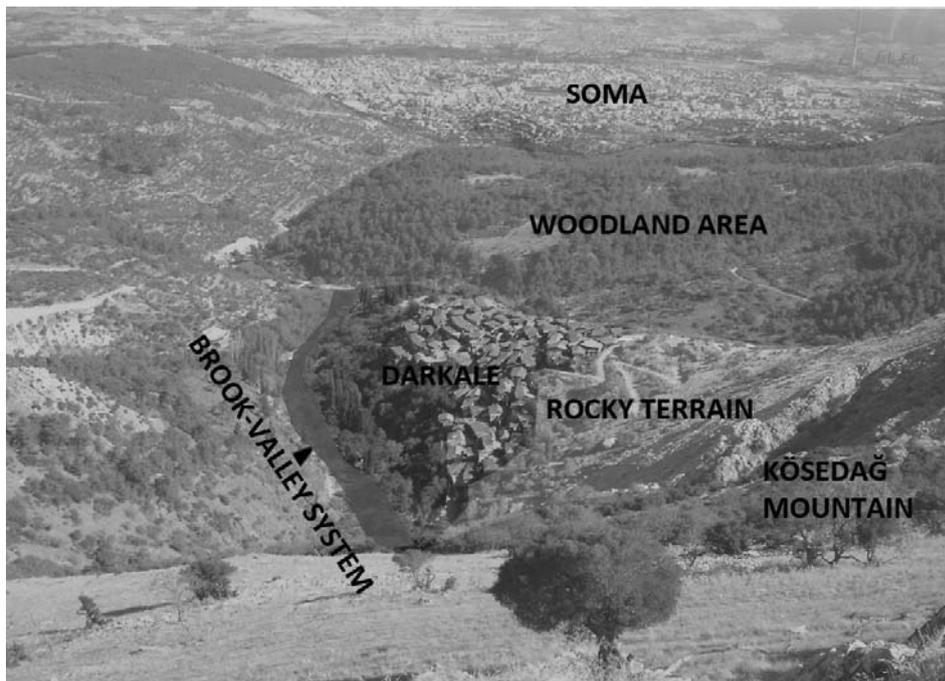
Darkale, which is a village of Soma, Manisa, is located in Bakırçay river basin. It is three km from Soma to the south-east (Figure 1). Darkale Rural settlement is composed of historical residential area on terraced, western hill skirt of Köseadağ Mountain at the southeast and the brook valley system at the west with the public gathering, commercial and production area (Etlacakuş 2015). The settlement is not independent from its surroundings labored by man throughout centuries, composed of archaeological sites at the northern and western plains, Asarkale located at the southeast, and Ottoman graveyards at the north east and west representing the historical roots of the place (Figure 1) (Etlacakuş, 2015).

The housing units were interwoven to each other very tightly in all three dimensions and carved into the rocky terrain like a sculpture so that each unit benefit from the opportunities of vista, warm western sunshine, capable of viewing the Bakırçay plain and the roads at the hill skirt just like a castle. They are characterized by living floors in piano nobile character, and service floors on the lower level, all *hayats* are oriented to the vista, while side and rear façades are blind. They are constructed

with local building material: rough cut and rubble stone blocks of various sizes (lime and slate stone), pieces of brick and timber.

There are studies providing basic information on characteristics of Soma and Darkale. Majority of these are interpretations of non-professionals based on observations; providing information on; history, physical and social characteristics of Soma district (Altiner, 1937; Kutlusoy, 1971; Ergün, 1997). The other studies are research on the geographical and/or historical characteristics of the settlement. These studies discuss the history of Manisa, Soma and Darkale in different periods; the ancient period (Sevin, 2001), the Beyliks period (Uluçay and Gökçen, 1939), the 16th century (Günay, 2006), and after the 17th century (Arel, 1991, 1992). Finally, there is a conservation aimed research on physical characteristics of Darkale (Karayazılı, et al., 2011) focusing on lower part of Darkale, and another one (Etlacakuş, 2015) making systematic identification of the physical characteristics of Darkale settlement with its cultural landscape, monuments, and housing units as a whole.

The main intention of this study is to make conservation aimed evalu-



**Figure 1.** View of Darkale and Soma from Asarkale.

ation of the historic development of Darkale by questioning the physical characteristics of the present historical settlement with emphasis on its housing units. The method of this study is comprised of literature review, archive research in the official website of the state archives; field survey, analysis and evaluation. The site survey was carried out with conventional techniques of architectural restoration in August 2013, September 2013, June 2014 and May 2015. Survey of the public buildings were limited with observations, while housing units were documented in 1 / 100 scale. 37 of 133 houses were surveyed at their interiors, and all were surveyed from their exteriors.

## 2. Historical development of the rural settlement

The social, cultural, economic and physical characteristics of Darkale are analyzed for each historical period in the below.

### 2.1. Before Turkish Period

Darkale is the historic settlement unit which is located at the historic region named Mysia. Darkale was called Trakhoula (Arel, 1992; Sevin, 2001) or Trakoula at 2th BC (Ramsay, 1890; Umar, 1993). Mysia region was enlarged towards the Apollia (Asarkale) at the south by II Eumenes (197-159 BC) in 185 BC during the Kingdom of Pergamon Period. Then, Trakhoula (Darkale), Germe (Soma) and Gambrian (Kınık) became border towns to the south (Sevin, 2001: 54).

It is thought that Trakhoula was used as a summer place and the terminal headquarters of Kingdom of Pergamon in time of II Eumenes approximately in 185 BC. The settlement was an important station to defend against attack coming from the east. It was not only located far away from Akhisar-Bergama road to the north, but also it had enough height to control the road. Moreover, location of Köseadağ Mountain supported these features (Kutlusoy, 1971: 49).

The archeological remains such as columns belonging to the Kingdom of Pergamon Period are observed at Karşıyaka (Bağarası), at the west of Darkale brook (Figure 2, M1).

Trakhoula was a densely occupied area in time of the Kingdom of Pergamon owing to its strategic position and productive lands fed by Kaikos (Bakırçay). It was the most important grain yard of the Kingdom of Pergamon (Strabon, 2005 cited in Sevin, 2001). The major natural richness of Mysia region was based on wood and mining (Sevin 2001: 55).

At the Byzantine Period; W.M. Ramsay identified the former Byzantine Trakoula and Gandia, as a two town bishopry. In addition, the first record about this settlement was the participation of Trakoula bishop to the second İznik Council at 787. Trakoula seems to have retained its name as Trakhala, a village and mountain near Soma which is near the site of Germe. The ancient Germe which probably struck no coins was a small settlement unit of Trakoula during the late Byzantine Period (Ramsay, 1890). Thus, the first settlement of Soma was located at today's Darkale and its surrounding (Kutlusoy, 1971: 45). It is thought that the first settlement area was located at the western hillside of the Köseadağ Mountain (Figure 2, S1).

There is carved marble slap thought to belong to the Byzantine Period which is detected in a garden wall on the north side of the Darkale-Soma road. Such reused material may be the remains of the ancient settlement of Trakhoula. (Umar, 1984: 99). Similarly, Texier visiting to the region in 19th century, had made observations with an eye on its Byzantine background (Texier, 1862).

There are also architectural remains which are thought to be watchtowers and water cistern of the village in Asarkale Hill which is the located at Asartepe located at the southeast of the present settlement (Figure 2, M2). In addition, there is an ancient road thought to provide access between Darkale and Asarkale. It is about 500 meters in length (Figure 2, M3). Finally, Kutlusoy (1971: 276) mentions a Byzantine gate leading to the courtyard of today's Minareli Mosque on the plateau at the eastern hill (Figure 2, M4). It is no more present. These architectural remains are thought to belong to the Byzantine Period.

Before Turkish period, it is thought that the hill skirt of Köseadağ Mountain was used for agricultural production (Figure 2). Nevertheless, there is no archaeological research started yet in Darkale and its surroundings.

## 2.2. Turkish Period

The Turkish period is evaluated under the following headings; early Turkish period, Ottoman Period and after the 1922.

### 2.2.1. Early Turkish Period (12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries)

There are two views on the first habitation of Turks in Tarhala which was the old name of Darkale. The first, Turks under the auspices of Kaleli Hoca (Kalelioğlu) migrated from Horezem because they were suffering of famine, then, they captured Tarhala (Altınar, 1937: 9). The second, the settlement was conquered by tribes of Horezem. Darkale became one of the centers of the *Beyliks* of Sarukhan (Uluçay and Gökçen 1939: 23). Suitability in term of defense and health were primary criteria in localizing settlements. Those living in Bakırçay plain suffered from malaria. So, people had to move away from the river.

Tarhala was positioned between *Beyliks* of Karesi whose center was Bursa and *Beyliks* of Sarukhan whose center was Manisa (Hammer, 1983 cited in Arel, 1992). However, Arel (1992) claims that, Hızır Şah Mosque (1791-1792) was built in Soma. Hızır Şah was an emir of *Beyliks* of Sarukhan. This should be taken as the proof of Tarhala belonging to *Beyliks* of Sarukhan in the 14th century (Arel, 1992: 120). Nevertheless, this settlement was listed as belonging to the *Beylik* of Karesi (Hammer, 1983 cited in Arel, 1992).

It is thought that the first residential area was located in the vicinity of Minareli Mosque (Figure 3, S2). The most remarkable feature of the mosque is its short, independent minaret tower which is located at the north west of the courtyard (Figure 3, M5). The base out of brick and stone in alternating order is rich in terms of spolia. There is a fountain reached from the street on the courtyard wall. The present mosque itself is relatively new with its

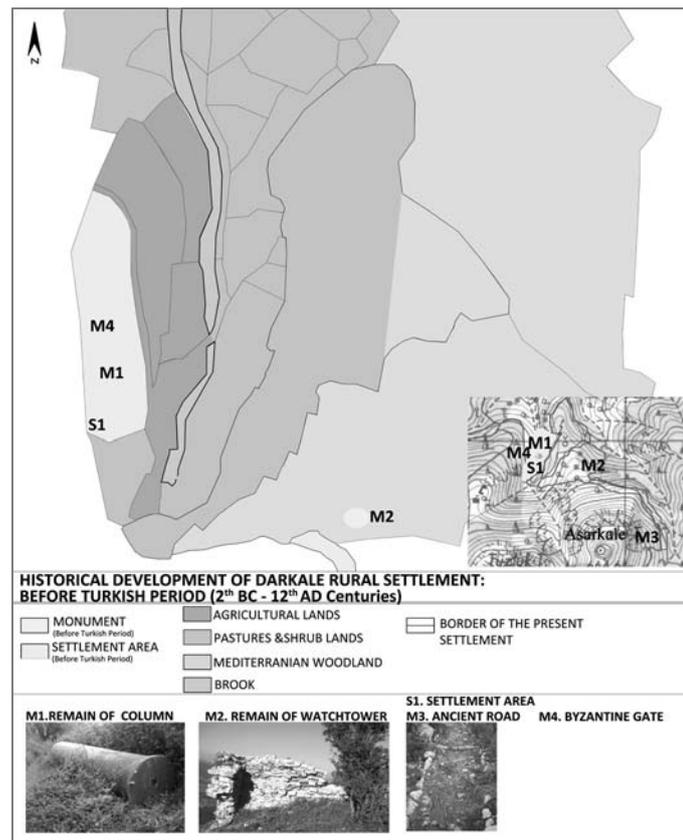


Figure 2. The map of Darkale before Turkish Period.

masonry prayer hall entered through a timber frame portico, all crowned with a hipped roof.

It is known that the minarets of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries were independent structures and they could be added to the composition during conversion of *zaviyes* (dervish lodge) to *masjids* / mosques (Kuban, 2007: 117, 119, 167). The existence of Toprak Baba and Yakibaba *Zaviyes* were mentioned in the archive documents of the 18th century (General Directorate of State Archives, 2014). There is no remain of a *zaviye* observed at present. *Zaviye*, as an antecedent building type, constituted the core of a Turkish settlement (Barkan, 1942: 278). The place of Minareli Mosque may belong to a *zaviye*. In another historical document which is the Account of the *Vilayet of Anatolia*, numbered 166, *Liva of Hüdevendigâr* dated 1530 (Department of the Ottoman Archives, 1995); one mosque and one bath were listed. This record for the mosque is questioned for the present mosques in Darkale. Orta Masjid is converted from a house. Although there is no precise informa-

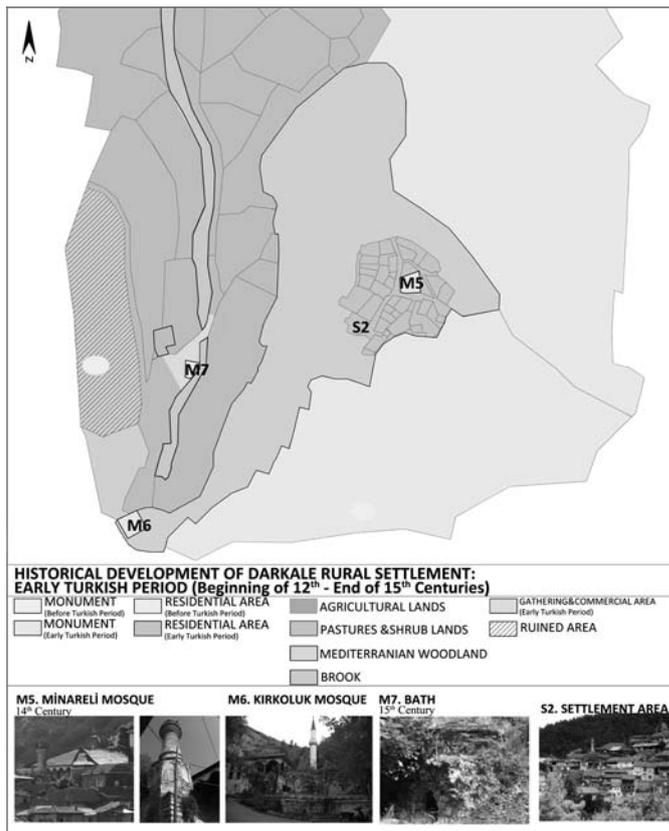


Figure 3. The map of Darkale early Turkish Period.

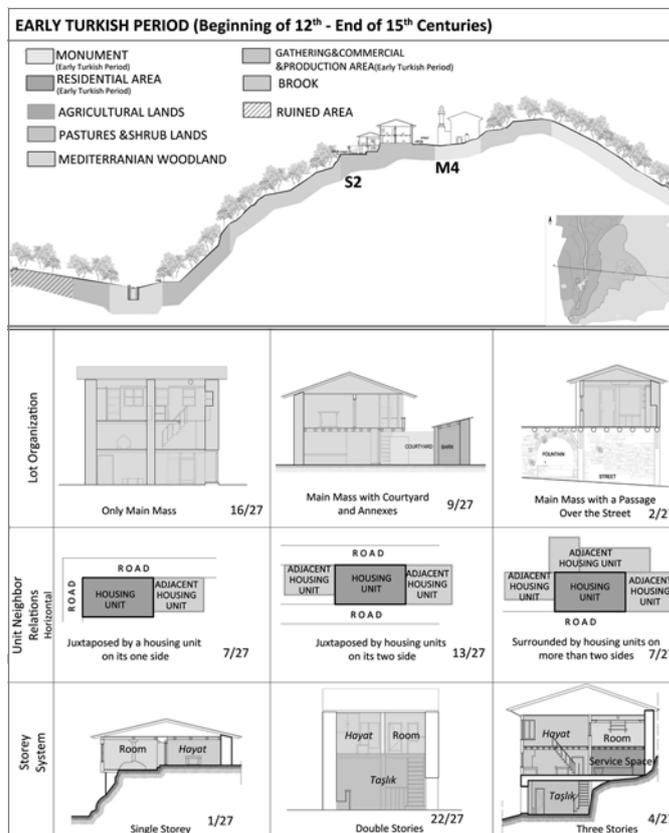


Figure 4. The section of Darkale early Turkish Period.

tion on the construction date of the Kirkoluk Mosque (Figure 3, M6), Arel interprets the mosque as a monument of Sarukhan period (Arel, 1991: 8). When the building was first constructed, it had no minaret (Kutlusoy, 1971: 276). It is expected that there should be a mosque in the gathering and commercial area. Hence, Kirkoluk Mosque is interpreted as the mosque in the historical document mentioned in the above. So, Minareli Mosque either had continued its dervish lodge function in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century or it was a relatively small and less significant mosque compared to the one in the commercial center.

The settlement of Darkale started to expand from the hill skirt to the brook valley system. The bath was constructed near the bank of the Tarhala stream, and gathering and commercial area started to develop (Figure 3, M7). The existence of this bath in Tarhala is pointed out in the above mentioned historical document. It is hard to define of the plan organization exactly because of the ruined condition of the building. Based on observation on the current remains, it is thought that, the bath had elongated rectangular *sıcaklık* (caldarium) with domed central unit and two *halvets* (hot room) plan type. This is frequently observed in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Eyice, 1960: 113). In the light of this information, Darkale Bath may be thought to be constructed in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century.

The houses around Minareli Mosque (S2) are on a plateau crowning the hill at the east of the brook (Figure 4). The total number of housing units here is 27. The lot sizes are between 27 and 59 m<sup>2</sup>, and frequently consist of only a main mass (16 / 27). Some houses are surrounded by others on their three sides (7 / 27) and some on two sides (13 / 27). So; houses juxtaposed by a single neighbor (7 / 27), courtyards (9 / 27) and annexes (5 / 27) are possible. Presence of a house with earth roof in front of the Minareli Mosque emphasizes the oldness of the neighborhood. At the center of the zone, three storied houses are preferred in accordance with the vista necessity (4 / 27). Relatively high number of fountains (0.15 per house) and ovens (0.11 per house) in

the public space, and presence of original stone street covering (2%) are eye catching. The buildings are frequently in poor state of preservation (16 / 27) and mostly abandoned (23 / 27).

In this period, the agricultural areas are thought to be along the brook, and pastures for livestock farming and shrub lands between residential area and agricultural lands. Mediterranean woodlands should had been located at the eastern hill side at inclined rocky hillside surfaces behind the residential area (Figure 3).

### 2.2.2. Ottoman Period (16<sup>th</sup> century-1922)

For a settlement to be named as a *kasaba* or small city; it must have some components and activities as well as population. These are *mahalles* (residential districts), a square, agricultural areas, a mosque, a *zaviye*, in addition, educational buildings; school, *sibyan mektebi* (children school), *madrasah*; open bazaar area, *arasta* (row of shops), *khan* or *bedesten* (covered bazaar) and health facilities; bath or thermal spring (Selen, 1948 cited in Günay, 2006). When these activities and components are considered, it can be said that Tarhala, Soma and Kırkağaç were *kasabas* in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Günay, 2006: 114).

Under the Ottoman rule, Tarhala was one of the twenty eight administrative centers of *Hüdavendigâr Liva*, the administrative unit whose center was Bursa between 14<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Emecen, 1998). The elevated position of Tarhala was the reason for its choice as the center of the *kaza* during the period of Beyazıt II (1481-1512) (Tuncel, 1977 cited in Günay, 2006). According to the Account of the *Vilayet* of Anatolia, dated 1530, numbered 166 (Department of the Ottoman Archives, 1995); the population of Tarhala was approximately 8 195 which consisted of two *mahalles*, Soma and Hisaraltı, 59 villages, 24 hamlets, nine farms and four communities. In the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, population of Tarhala had grown because of the political manners of the Ottoman Empire on the region. In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Tarhala became the center of *kaza* composed of

three *nefs* (city center), namely; *Nefs-i Tarhala*, *Nefs-i Soma*, *Nefs-i Kırkağaç*. Surface area of Tarhala reached its largest limits: approximately 1 396 m<sup>2</sup> (Günay, 2006: 112).

Tarhala was famous for its sumach, oat, barley, wheat, rice and cotton. It became the center of cotton agriculture in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and approximately whole agricultural areas surrounding the settlement were used (Figure 5). In addition, it is known that, *Tahunhane* (a factory in which oil is extracted from sesame by milling) was set up by Murat III at Tarhala in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Gökçen, 1946: 221). According to a record; there were *derbentçis* (guards for places with geopolitical significance) employed in Tarhala and Soma (Günay, 2006: 112).

Although Tarhala had been an important settlement because of its strategic location, in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, criteria for determining positioning a settlement changed based on economic reasons. Accessibility became more important than safety and health requirements. The importance of the settlement declined in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the center of *kaza* shifted from Tarhala to Soma. Its plain terrain and proximity to the trade route made Soma preferable in terms of economic reasons (Günay, 2006: 116).

The cities located at the inner part of the Aegean Region were more important than the coast one in terms of economy and demography in the classical age of Ottoman rule (Tekeli, 1992: 78). However, these circumstances changed with the increasing foreign trade starting with the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. İzmir became a significant trade center (Tekeli, 1992) and the *Ayans* (Local Notables) took advantage of the internal weaknesses and decentralization of the Ottoman central government within the provinces (Günay, 2006: 93).

In this period, the residential area at the eastern hill skirt of Tarhala integrated with the public spaces in the brook valley system. In addition to the bath and mosque; a *bedesten*, an open bazaar, an olive oil mill, a laundry, fountains and tanneries were recorded around the brook. Although there is not any remain observed today, Arel states that there was a *Bedesten*

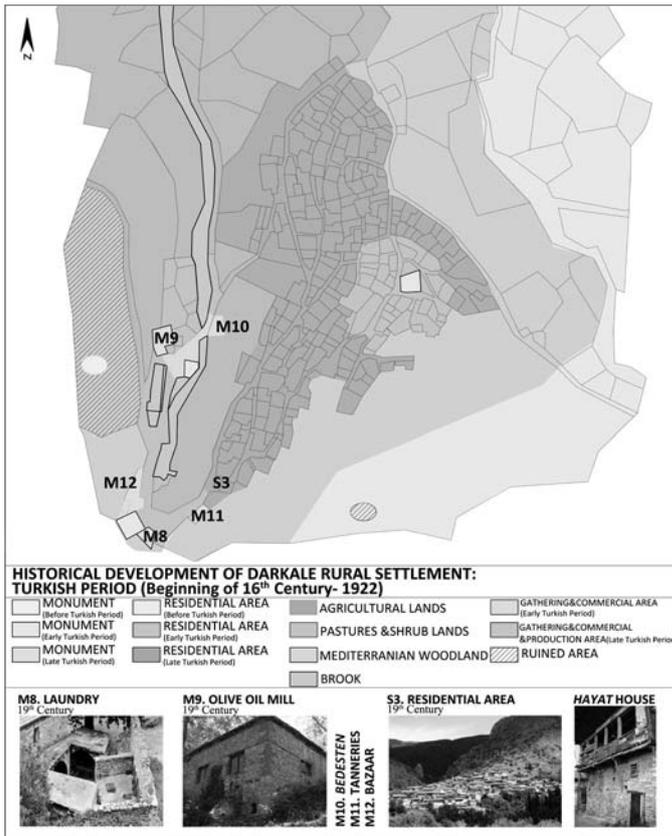


Figure 5. The map of Darkale during Ottoman Period.

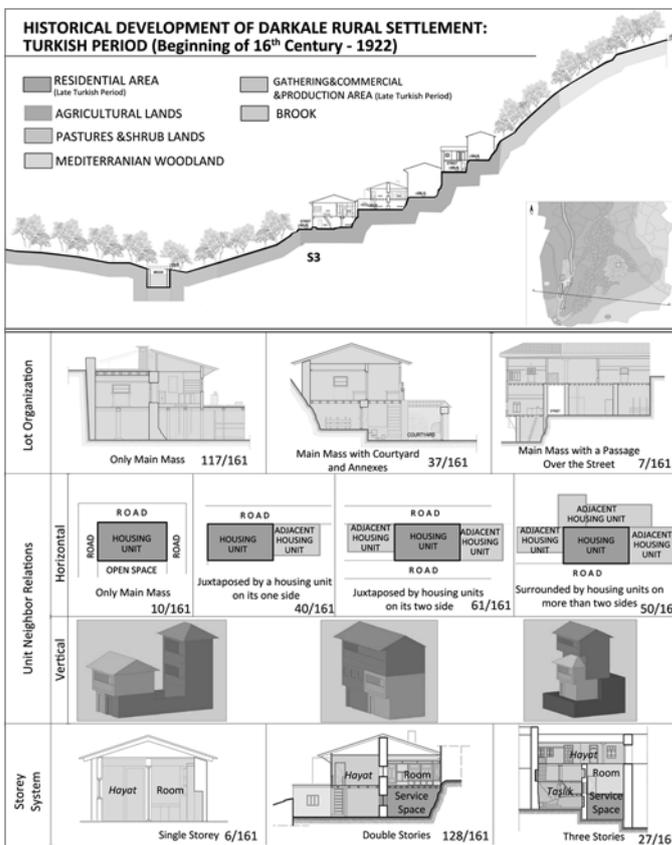


Figure 6. The section of Darkale during Ottoman Period.

(Figure 5, M10) on the Soma-Darkale road near the bank of the Tarhala stream and the Bath (Arel, 1992: 121). There was also an open bazaar (Figure 5, M12) in the settlement (Altiner, 1937: 17). In the historical document dated 1702, it is stated that the construction of an olive oil mill had started in Tarhala (General Directorate of State Archives, 2014). There is an olive oil mill positioned at the west of the road between Darkale and Soma (Figure 5, M9); and in front of the bath. The architectural characteristics of the present olive oil mill are in line with the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, the present building may be a reconstruction in the same or nearby location.

The present Kirkoluk Mosque is located at the Kirkoluk Square, center of Darkale rural settlement. It is elevated from ground level. The stone masonry ground walls are spanned with vaults. This ground space could have been used as a shop and the terrace in front of the mosque was used as a bazaar area (Arel, 1991: 8). However, the function of the basement is storage space today. Three sides of the mosque are surrounded with series of ablution spouts continuously running since they are fed by spring water. They give its name to the building: forty gouges. The minaret and the spouts were added, when the mosque was renewed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kutlusoy, 1971: 276).

In addition, a laundry is positioned adjacent to the wall of Kirkoluk Mosque (Figure 5, M8). The historic laundry was used by women until a few years ago. There is a natural spring water in the middle of the laundry which is fed by Tarhala stream. The construction technique and material usage are in line with the houses, which are thought to be constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Leatherworking was the main source of income and it is stated that there were three major and nine minor tanneries located near the Kirkoluk Square (Figure 5, M11) (Altiner, 1937; Arel, 1992). The products such as shoes, boots, cases and clothing produced in the major tanneries were sold in İzmir and its vicinity. On the other hand, products produced in the small scale ones were sold in Soma and its

vicinity and also used for daily needs (Altiner, 1937: 17). These buildings are not present today.

In addition, ice cream was made in Darkale village. During winters, snow was stored in the snow wells. It was covered with the raw pine cones which prevent melting, and it is the only natural way of making ice cream. In summers, the snow in the well was cut and taken out by saws and brought out in large pieces. These snow pieces were used making ice cream. It is difficult to date these wells.

The settlement area, which is thought to have developed in this period, includes 161 housing units (Figure 5, S3). It is characterized with its steep inclination (~50%) (Figure 6), presence of passages over the streets (9), relatively large lot sizes (140-290 m<sup>2</sup>: 20/161; 60-139 m<sup>2</sup>: 85/161; 27-59 m<sup>2</sup>: 56/161), possibility of vertical interaction between housing units (3 / 161) in addition to close horizontal interaction (151 / 161), and relatively high number of three stories (27 / 161). Independent houses (10 / 161) are only seen at the borders across streets which are sometimes supported with stone retaining walls. These are evaluated as the latest elements of the area. There are a few fountains (0.02 per house). The houses are in better state of preservation (88 / 161) and relatively more in use (54 / 161).

Pastures for livestock farming and shrub lands and olive yards are located at the outer ring of the site. These are rocky hillsides behind the residential area. Here, barns are observed within the pastures. Mediterranean woodland and rocky terrains are on the steepest hill side of the Köseadağ Mountain to the south. Mediterranean woodland and rocky terrains constitute the border of Darkale rural settlement (Figure 5).

### 2.2.3. After 1922

After the proclamation of the Republic, Tarhala became a village of Soma province of Manisa. Its name was changed as Altınlı in 1964 (İçişleri Bakanlığı, 1968: 40) and Darkale in 1968 (Kutlusoy, 1971: 275). Early Republican Period is represented with Darkale Primary School positioned close to the northern entrance of the village was designed by Hamdi ONAT

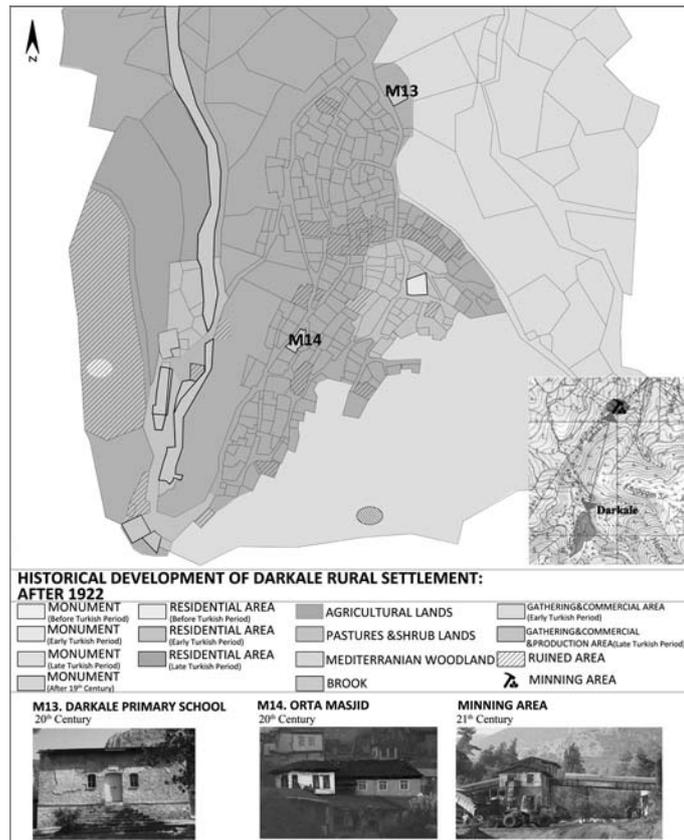


Figure 7. The map of Darkale after 1922.

in 1935, as learned from its inscription panel (Figure 7, M13). Conversion of one of the housing unit into a masjid to should have taken place also in this period. Orta Masjid (Figure 7, M14) presents similarities with the housing units with its site relations, mass and façade characteristics.

The promotion of coal mining in the region beginning with 1939 (Tören and Ünal, 2001) and establishment of a thermal power station close to Darkale in 1950s presented job opportunities for the locals of Darkale. Although the working conditions have been open to accidents (Düzgün, 2014, TMMOB, 2014), preference of mining to traditional agriculture and animal husbandry has given way to abandonment of the village. The population of villages has decreased year after year: 117 according to census dated 2013. This gave way to lack of maintenance followed by demolishment; gaps in the silhouette occurred; some of them were fill in with unqualified new construction. The abandoned agricultural land turned into Mediterranean woodlands and meadows.

The construction of unqualified mass additions, unqualified repair and further alteration of housing units to meet contemporary necessities threaten the integrity of the cultural landscape of Darkale. The other threat is the construction of a large scale, multipurpose activity area in the woodland at the northeast (Figure 7).

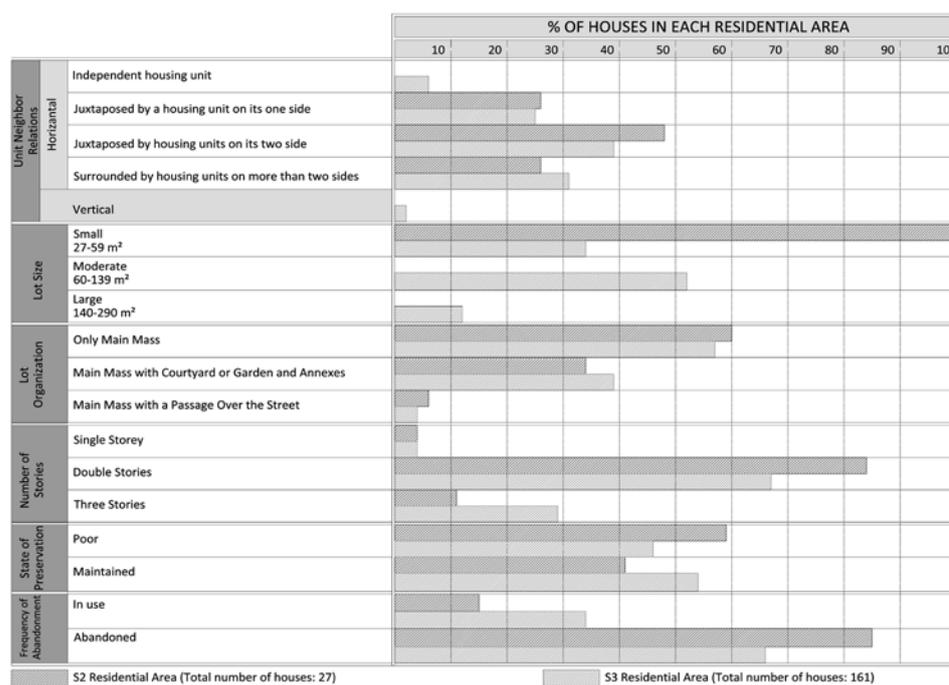
On the other hand, the conservation decision of the settlement are hopeful in terms of integrity of the settlement. The earliest listing decision at site scale is dated 1984 (numbered 134, dated 24.02.1984, the Supreme Council of Conservation of Cultural and Natural Entities decision). In 2012, the borders of the listed urban site were redefined (numbered 448, dated 20.01.2012, İzmir No 2 Regional Conservation Council of Cultural and Natural Entities decision) Today, there are seven listed monuments, five fountains and 82 residential buildings, whose of two have been demolished. The areas at the north, southeast and southwest of the urban site were declared as first degree archeological site, and the site at the south of the settlement was declared as second degree archeological site (numbered 2047, dated 28.03.2013, İzmir No 2 Regional Conservation Council of Cultural and Natural Entities decision). Moreover starting with 2010, ÇEKÜL and OPET have been working together

on a project named “Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Soma and Darkale and Provision of Local Development”. Furthermore, Darkale village takes attention with its unique and picturesque features from universities in the recent years. The village and its natural setting has become attractive for tourists (Gezi Deferi, 2017).

### 3. Discussion and conclusion

The archive documents, present monumental buildings and the settlement pattern, especially the organization of the housing units, have provided a framework for interpreting Turkish period. For the detailed evaluation of the pre-Turkish period (S1), further geo-prospection and archeological research are necessary. In all periods, the brook-valley system has been the gathering, production and commercial area of the settlement as revealed in the mosque, laundry, bath, olive oil mill, tannery, *tahunhane*, and *bedesten*. The elevated plateau at the east of the Darkale brook with full vista of the surroundings is evaluated as the earliest settlement area in Turkish period (S2). The Minareli Mosque dating earliest to the 14<sup>th</sup> century is the focal point of this portion. In time, the settlement should have expanded down the hill skirt in western direction (S3) (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The characteristics of houses units in the two residential areas.



The earliest settlement area is relatively safer in terms of its elevated position and more comfortable in terms of its flatness giving way to the possibility of small courtyards. The settlement pattern has preserved its authenticity in terms of its fountains, ovens, small lot sizes, open *hayat* façades, blind side and rear facades, stone street covering and earthen roof, but in poor state of preservation. The latter settlement area presents solutions to cope with the high inclination such as stone retaining walls, increase in number of stories, passages over streets, and increase in the amount of relations with neighbors including vertical interaction of housing units.

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