

Investigating the Changing Process of Vineyards and Orchards in Kayseri City and Its Vicinity

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Abstract

Kayseri, a developing industrial and economy city, has a deep rooted history. According to the historian Stephanus, Kaisareia (Kayseri) is the capital of Cappadocia. The first settlement in the plateau in which the city is currently situated dates back to the XIth century BC.

The city has settled down to the north of the volcanic Erciyes Mountain, which is the highest mountain of Middle Anatolia. Vineyard and orchard areas surround the city, especially on its south side. Most of these areas are in the domain of the greater city municipality. Other vineyards are in a close spatial and functional relation with the city and they tend to spatially and administratively merge with the city.

The existence of vineyards is documented since the XVth century, and they characterized the households of Christian and Moslem communities until the XXth century. In the settlement pattern, there are natural, urban, archeological and mixed protected areas. In vineyards and orchards that have a rich cultural texture, fruit growing and making wine have been important activities for economic intentions, besides viticulture. Fruit growing and wine making have always been important economical activities: many kinds of fruits were kept as fresh or dried and molasses and fruit juice were produced.

These sloping areas are not suitable for agricultural and urban uses, due to the soil type and the geomorphological structure. Now, a lot of houses in these areas have been abandoned and neglected: some of the historical buildings have been destroyed and replaced with summer cottages, causing a stylistic chaos. Vineyards, orchards and traditional rural life have disappeared in the course of time and the plots have become smaller by division, along with an intensification of a dense urban development.

In this study, the past and present situations of vineyards and orchards will be compared and solution will be proposed for revitalizing viticulture and horticulture activities.

INTRODUCTION

Kayseri vineyards and orchards have an important place in terms of urban horticulture. Concentrating mostly on the northern slopes of Erciyes, the vineyards start at elevations of 1060-1070 m, rise to elevations as high as 1650 m and cover a wide area (Somuncu, 1993). Once extending to a much wider area, the vineyards today cover an area of 6100 hectares (Somuncu, 1996) (Imamoglu, 2001) (Topaloglu vd. 1986).

Location of Kayseri, The History of the City and Vinegrowing

Kayseri City was founded in the XIth century B.C. (Baydur, 1970). According to the documents related to 3000-4000 B.C. and XVth century about the existence of vineyards in Kayseri, at that time there were watered and terraced fruit gardens (Karatepe, 1999).

The information gained about vineyards from the documents related to the XVIth century, they have been used with the aim of creating excursion tracks and summer resorts (Somuncu, 1996).

In Kayseri, vine growing wasn't an economical activity, as recreational and personal enjoyments had far more importance in the last century. Today, fruits such as blackberry (*Morus nigra*), cranberry (*Vaccinium microcarpum*), hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.), medlar (*Mespilus germanica*), mahaleb (*Prunus mahaleb*), jujube (*Ziziphus* spp.) and oleaster (*Eleagnus angustifolia*) are still being produced in vineyards. However, shrubs and herbs such as rosehip (*Rosa canina*), viburnum (*Viburnum opulus*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), buckthorn (*Rhammus catharticus*) are used in the industries of medication, cosmetics and dye (Imamoglu, 2001). In vineyards and orchards, beside grapes (*Vitis vinifera*), fruits such as apricot (*Prunus armeniaca*), walnut (*Juglans* spp.), apple (*Malus* spp.), pear (*Pyrus communis*) and almond (*Prunus amygdalus*) are also grown.

The Current Situation of Kayseri Vineyards and Orchards

Vineyards surround the city starting from its north side and extend widely on the south side.

Initially, vineyard related activities were essentially economic. Water used to be drawn from the snow wells into the orchards. Some of the harvest obtained would be sold, some would be consumed and the rest would be stored to be consumed in the winter. Today, however, some or all of these activities cannot be performed. Vineyards, which covered an area of 43701 hectares in 1934, dropped down to 29301 hectares in 1945 (Imamoglu, 2001). Moreover, the once large number on grapes varieties has considerably decreased.

The city, where a radial expansion is observed, nearly converged with the semi-rural areas where vineyards are located (Öztürk, 2004). Talas and Hacılar, where vineyards are abundant, have recently been administratively incorporated into the city too. Though not all, the vineyards and the components of architectural texture interwoven with them are within the scope of conservation as natural, archaeological, historical and mixed sites. Nevertheless, no complete conservation can be observed in the areas in question.

The most important effect of urban transformation on vineyards is the breaking the the plots. The vineyards which the smallest ones were a few decares, are being broken into 500-1000 m² pieces. However, more area is used for buildings than that in zoning status, so garden areas are becoming smaller (Bakır, 2005).

The ecosystem of Kayseri and its vicinity must be considered with Sultan Marshes (Sultan Sazlığı), Lake Yay (Yay gölü) and Karasazlık (Hürmetçi) marshes. The controlled structuring in this region is important in terms of ecological hardening.

Though the vineyards are not accessible to general public, they enrich the city greenery store. This green texture contributes to the improvement of the air in the city with the help of the prevalent winds.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this study, books, journals, articles, reports and other investigations related to vineyards and orchards, and visual material about Kayseri and its surroundings, along with the plans made until today were used.

After the literature review, observations on site were performed: in Kayseri and its surroundings, the changing process of vineyards was investigated together with its reasons, and their past and current situations were compared.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Vineyards of Kayseri are under the pressure of urban expansion and socio-cultural changes. These areas, that affect the microclimate of the city, contribute to the increasing amount of green areas, still extremely inadequate. However, the cultural landscape constituted by vineyards together with the city is almost disappeared as a result of new plan decisions and structuring. For the consequences on both the urban and the horticultural ecosystem, and for providing the sustainability of a cultural heritage, protecting of these areas is of a great importance.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that, with changing life conditions and production relationships, vineyards and orchards are today much different from what they used to be in the past. This is the main reason of the changing of vineyard life in which the urban horticultural activity has an important role. The main aim is to gain a public interest first of all: in the city, strategic priorities and policies must be considered multidimensionally. With this aim the solution proposals are below:

- The economic revitalization of vineyards must be investigated, scientific studies must be done about the flora indigenous to the region, policies must be defined for increasing the horticultural production
- The direction of expansion of the city must be re-defined; land use decisions must be re-planned in terms of “sustainability” and “protection”
- In these areas breaking the lands into pieces must be prevented and semi-rural characters of the areas must be protected. In zoning plan, the “smallest allotment rule” must be changed
- These areas must be considered as green and recreational areas of the city. However, the amount of green areas in the city is inadequate. In vineyards the activities such as hiking, cycling, bird-watching and photography must be encouraged and revitalized (Öztürk Kurtaslan, 2006).
- Mount Erciyes must be declared a natural site and erosion must be prevented.
- Some small settlements must be declared as urban and natural sites and reconstruction plans for protection must be made.
- A transportation network that will not damage the pattern of the vineyards must be developed
- The areas which are suitable for ecologic tourism must be specified.
- Infrastructures must be developed and environmental pollution caused by waste water must be prevented.
- The image of “vineyard areas” that has constituted in urban settlers’ memory in these areas must be kept alive
- With its rural character, the image of “vineyard areas” that constituted in the memory of urban settlers must be saved.
- Construction of mass summer houses through cooperatives should be prevented
- New vineyards should be planted
- In order to ensure “conservation through use”, old buildings should be given new functions (as locations for societies, museums, guesthouses, clubs, restaurants, resorts where organic farming is done etc.)
- The region must be partially directed to ecological tourism
- The people of the city should be encouraged to settle permanently in the houses used as second homes and new construction of such homes which are incompatible with the traditional texture should be prevented.

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