

## **Population Exchange Museum in Immigrant Town Çatalca, Istanbul**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In this study the author examines Çatalca which is a district of province İstanbul emphasising the Population Exchange Treaty (1923). Çatalca has hosted many civilizations, with a history of 2500 years. The Population Exchange Treaty signed between the Turkish and Greek Governments in 30.01.1923 was the first of its kind in history because it was legalized by international laws, which enforced the citizens of the two countries be exchanged compulsorily on the basis of religion. Greek Orthodox Turkish citizens, and the Muslim Greek citizens were both forced to leave their houses and homelands. Çatalca was a residential area where Orthodox Greeks and Muslim Turks used to live together before the population exchange. The immigrants from Greece were settled in Çatalca in the residences left by the immigrants from Turkey. Çatalca has 9 different protected areas and one of them is historical urban site in Kaleiçi neighborhood, which has unique traditional residential texture. In Kaleiçi there are significant civil buildings and architectural structures which need immediate restoration and preservation projects. Population Exchange Museum is located also in this neighborhood. The aim of the study is to evaluate the architectural and cultural heritage of the district in the context of population exchange and the story of how the Museum was founded in 2010.

**KEYWORDS:** Architectural and cultural heritage, Population Exchange, Population Exchange Museum, Çatalca, History.

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

In this study the history of Çatalca and foundation of Population Exchange Museum is evaluated in the context of population exchange. Ottoman architectural heritage of the exchanged population has mostly survived in the Kaleiçi neighborhood of Çatalca. This registered historical urban site, has a unique residential texture including the historical Museum Building. The Museum in Çatalca, is documenting the tragic story of Population Exchange by means of the objects in her collection.

### **2 GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

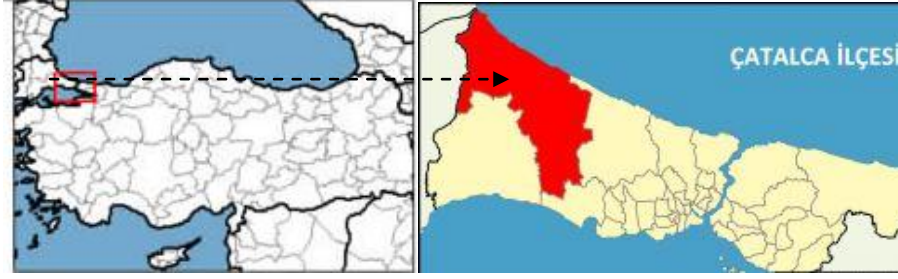


Figure 1: Map of Turkey Map of Çatalca

## 2.1 Geography

Çatalca is located linearly on the west of İstanbul's European side and on the skirts of İstiranca mountain range with 104.358 hectares area with a North coast on the Black Sea. The region has a significant geography with rich agricultural lands and forest areas as well as water resources. In Yalıköy village there are two major dams (Düzdere and Kuzukludere) which provide water for İstanbul. The district has a rural nature, and agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the people. Besides from Byzantine and Ottoman cultural legacy, Çatalca serves as a "summer excursion and beach region" for İstanbul. Its economy is reliant on agriculture, animal husbandry, and industry. ( Ali, 1925)

## 2.2 History

Çatalca has been inhabited by different cultures since 450BC. The region had strategic importance of defense, besides meeting the agricultural and fuel needs of İstanbul. Çatalca is evaluated in the cultural history of the Thrace Region and was known as "Ergiske". Throughout the history she had other names such as 'Matrai', 'Metron', 'Metris' and 'Çatalburgaz' too.

**The Roman Period:** First organized settlement in the region was founded in İnceğiz village by the Romans in B.C. 450. İnceğiz caves were used by early Christians for a shelter with rooms, stairs, gates and a church.



Figure 2: İnceğiz cave settlements (Photo by F.Yıldız)

**Byzantine Period:** It was known as "Matrai" (Metris in Turkish which means bulwark) in the Byzantine Period. The city walls, of which the ruins still exist today, were built by the Emperor Anastasios in between years 507 and 511 to protect Constantinople against raids. Some foundations of Byzantine castles, canals, churches (see Fig.3 Evcik Church) have survived also to the present day. (Anon,1994)

Çatalca, has been the scene of many battles. The region has maintained its importance throughout history with her forests providing İstanbul's needs for firewood and charcoal. Furthermore, her forests served as a hunting center.



Figure 3: Evcik Church: It has built where the Anastasios Walls meet the Black Sea. The building, which is thought to be a work of the 11th century, is now only a ruin.[18]

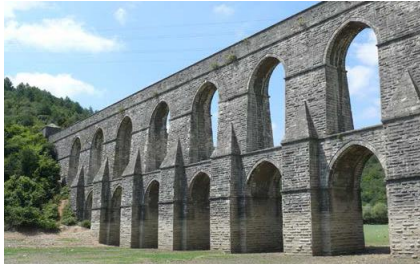


Figure 4: Çatalca Aqueducts [18]



Figure 5: Anastasios City Walls[18]

**Ottoman Period:** Çatalca entered Ottoman rule in 1371 by I.Murad. In the Ottoman period it was called ‘Çatalburgaz’. At that time in order to co-inhabit the Turkish and Greek populations, zoning conditions were reorganized. Muslims had established and moved into a new settlement named Ferhat Paşa neighborhood, leaving Kaleiçi to the Greeks. (Tuğlacı, 1985)

This new neighborhood took her name from the grand vizier Ferhat Pasha, who realized the above mentioned zoning development. A school, a hammam(public bath), a fountain and a mosque were built by the architect Sinan upon his request also water was brought to the region in his period.

Sultan IV.Mehmed (1642-1693 also known as Mehmed the Hunter) came often to Çatalca for hunting, which made the region popular. Evliya Çelebi described the 17th century Çatalca in his *Seyahatname* as a region with full of vineyards and gardens with water features. Existence of palaces, a dervish lodge, a khan and 270 shops were also mentioned in his book. (Zillioğlu, 1970) 13 farms of Sultan Abdülhamid were also in Çatalca as his personal property. In the Ottoman period, the region was an important agricultural center, and was one of the sanjaks (a sub-province) which was obliged to send a certain amount of sheep to İstanbul every year.

**From the Balkan Wars to the Republic (1912-1923):** During the Balkan-war of 1912-1913 Bulgarians attacked, destroyed and set fire to all of its neighbourhoods except Kaleiçi. Çalık, F., (2000), Çatalca preserved her Christian culture until the exchange of populations. Throughout history Çatalca showed significant changes both demographically and ethnically. After 1935 new villages were established for the Muslim immigrants from Bulgaria and Romania. According to recent administrative reorganization in 2008, Çatalca has 27 villages and 9 neighborhoods. The population is 62.339 according to the census of 2011. The majority of the population consists of immigrants from the Balkans.( D.İ.E)

### 3 POPULATION EXCHANGE TREATY

Migrations also occurred during the Balkan Wars (1912/13) and the First World War (1914-18) but they were among the volunteers. The Population Exchange Treaty signed between the Turkish and Greek Governments in 30.01.1923 was the first of its kind in history because it was legalized by international laws, which enforced the citizens of the two countries be exchanged compulsorily. (Goularas, 2012)

The most remarkable about the treaty is, its key criterion which was exclusively religious. There was no reference to linguistic categories or to ethnic ones (Ş. Chousein,). People were ascribed new identities as either Greek or Turkish merely on the basis of religion. The majority of the Muslims from Macedonia were Greek speaking and a considerable proportion of the Greek Orthodox of Central Anatolia spoke Turkish. The population exchange was seen as an integral part of the nation-building process. Approximately, 1,700,000 people (1,200,000 Orthodox Greeks and 500,000 Muslims) were subjected to the Exchange. (Zürcher,2013) The immigrants were carried port to port by ships and settled first in temporary refugee camps. (Ari,1995),

As a result of this mandatory migration, the lives of thousands of people were changed; they became victims of the treaty and they had to rebuild their lives from the beginning. The exchanged population tried to preserve their identities and cultures of origin homeland while struggling to integrate to the new community.(Anon, 2005)

### 4 ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Throughout history the town has experienced many wars, invasions and migrations. The surviving architectural heritage of Çatalca may be listed as the city wall, monumental buildings, fountains, mosques, a public turkish bath, traditional wooden houses, trees and archeological ruins found in the village settlements. In this study Kaleiçi neighborhood is selected because there are significant civil buildings and architectural structures which left by the immigrants.



Fig.5:Topuklu Fountain [11] Fig.6:Traditional House[11] Fig.7: KaleiçiMosque[11] Fig.8: The old Greek School[11]

#### 4.1 Exchange Culture And Çatalca

Prior to the 1923 exchange, Çatalca was a residential area where Orthodox Greeks and Muslim Turks used to live together. They have had a shared cultural heritage in the context of an urban life. These folks exchanged their cultures throughout the history. Convention has been a turning point on the history of the district where the population had to be changed with the group of Turkish population migrating from Greece. Immigrants from Naslıç, Grebene, Langaza, Drama, Kalkış, ve Kesriye were settled in the residential areas of Çatalca, replacing the Greeks



who had to abandon their homes. The immigrants have preserved their cuisine and still dance and sing the songs of their native country. The majority of the population consists of immigrants from the Balkans.

Ottoman architectural heritage of the exchanged population is mostly survived in Kaleiçi neighborhood in district. This neighborhood is the core of Çatalca, and surrounded by ancient walls and forms the traditional urban fabric with its museum, houses, fountains, mosque and trees. Therefore it registered as historical - urban site in 1985. The map below shows nine different protected areas in the district, Kaleiçi is shown as number 5.

There are totally 36 registered historical buildings that have to be preserved since they reflect the living conditions and the construction techniques of the period it was constructed in (İBB-KUDEB). They need immediate restoration and preservation projects because most of them are abandoned and ruined. In terms of house form, the typical two-story wooden Turkish houses of the late nineteenth century dominated the neighborhood, and also apartment buildings are existed as the new dwelling form. (Binoğlu, N., 1986, Zoroğlu, B., 1986)

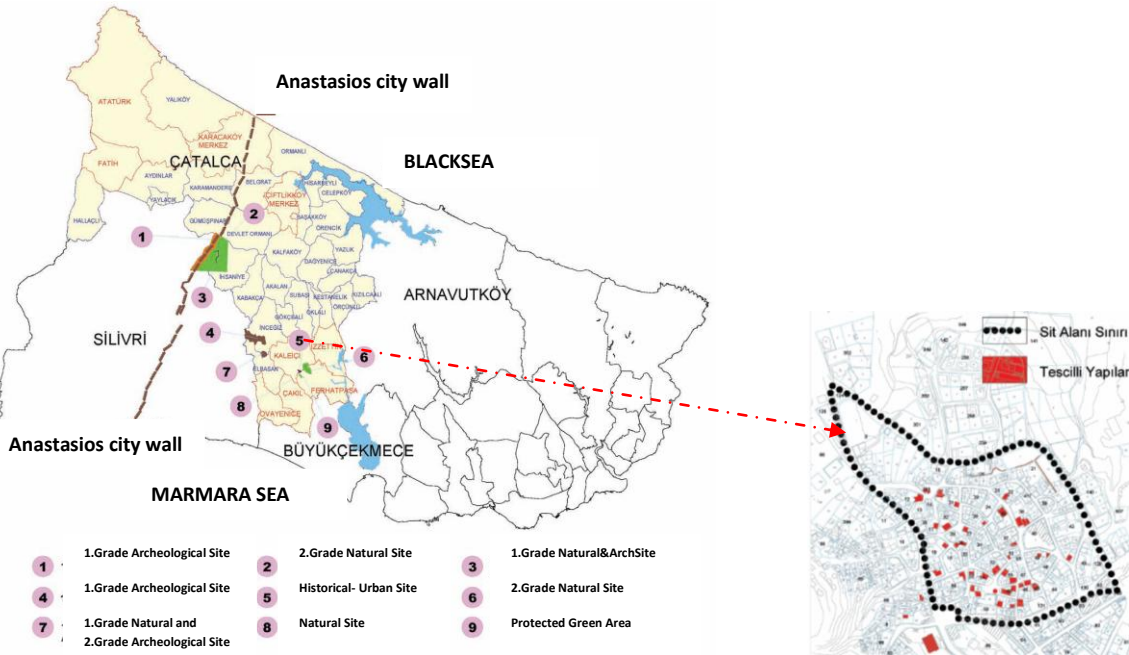


Figure 9: Protected areas of Çatalca & Registered in Building in Kaleiçi Neighborhood (İBB-KUDEB)

## 5 POPULATION EXCHANGE MUSEUM

Museums play an important cultural role as they reflect the history and identity of the society. They manage our cultural heritage and exhibit it in various ways to the visitors. Museums are learning institutions, by inspiring and engaging people of all ages as they offer formal and informal learning possibilities.

ICOM (The International Council of Museums) has defined museums as:

*'A museum is a nonprofit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible*

*heritage of humanity and its environment, for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment*'. (ICOM, 2006).

In the urban context museum architecture has important considerations such as forms of civic representation, urban regeneration, and cultural tourism. Museums also play a key role in developing the area around the building, have an impact on the planning decisions made in that area. (The Social Significance of Museums, 2011)

Foundation Exchange Museum Building is located in Kaleiçi neighborhood. The idea to transform the historical tavern (explained in detail below) to a museum was proposed by master architects Sadrettin Soylu and Nushet Ak (who are also a second generation members of immigrant families) and approved by Foundation of Laussane Treaty Emigrants. It should be mentioned and appreciated that these architects designed and realised these projects free of charge. They designed not only the building but also its environment as a museum complex, which consists of the;

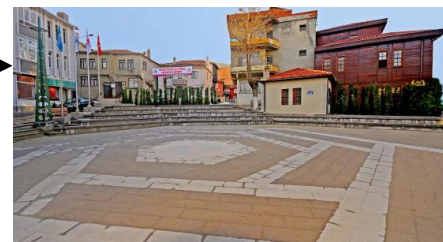
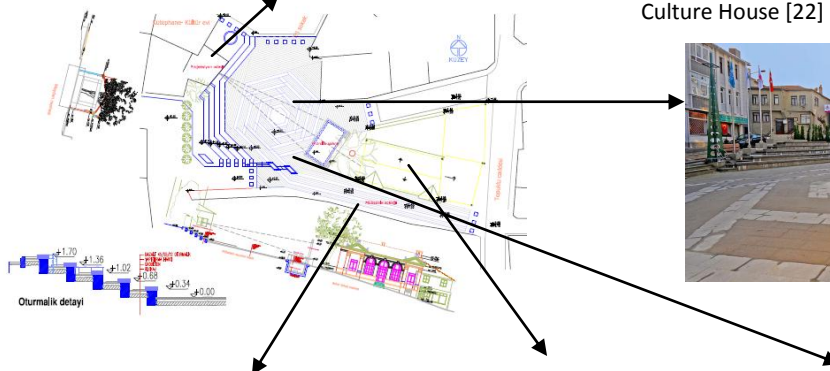
- Museum Building itself as a main block,
- Existing Culture House,
- Registered historical tree,
- Outdoor Panels,
- The Square and the Monument
- Registered traditional houses (36)

While approaching to the museum from the Square, a garden wall of a traditional house is used to mount the panels for outdoor exhibition. The west exterior wall of the Museum is also used for outdoor exhibition. The square was remodelled by adding sitting places, matching the topography for multi-purpose open air cultural activities by the architects. They also designed a stainless steel two-parts monument which symbolises the tragic exchange.

Another historical building The Cultural House, which has been restored in 2004 and remodelled as a cultural house as part of the above mentioned exhibition complex, is used as administration office of the museum. This complex has a positive contribution to Kaleiçi neighborhood's revitalisation.(Ak and Soylu, 2014).



Culture House [22]



Square [22]



Open Air Exhibiton Wall [22]



Museum [18]



Monument[18]

## 5.1 History of the Museum Building

The building was designed in 1913 and served as a tavern in between years 1913-1923, which ran by a Greek named Yannis. After the above mentioned Convention of Population Exchange, Greeks had left Çatalca and a Turkish health officer named Fethi Onuk ran the Tavern for a short period of time. Later the building was used as a branch of Ziraatbank until 1961 which is a state bank. Then it was sold to Fikret Tatari and served as a sewing and embroidery school for 6 years. In 1967 it was again sold to Ölçer family and used as a warehouse for white goods and coal respectively. It has registered as a grade 1 monumental historical building in 1983. Finally in 2010 the Ölçer family allocated the building to the Foundation of Laussane Treaty Emigrants to be used as a Population Exchange Museum. Museum opened to the public in 20.12.2010 after restoration, with the Çatalca Municipality's partnership and the support of the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency. It is concerned with collecting and preserving examples of a disappearing history. It is a unique museum founded ever in Turkey which is dedicated to Population Exchange (Ak and Soylu, 2014).



Figure 10:Photos from the restoration process[22]



Figure 11: The Museum Building after restoration[19]

## 5.2 The Architecture of the Museum Building

The Museum is a rectangular building laying on the east- west axis and the main entrance opened on the long side, facing the south. On the north side there is a back yard garden with a staircase descending to the basement floor for utilities and to restrooms. Originally it is a single storey masonry building (ceiling height is almost 5m) which has a floor area of 88 m<sup>2</sup> with 26 m<sup>2</sup> basement floor. To make more room for the collections held by this small scale Museum, the exhibition area is increased by adding a steel constructed mezzanine during transformation of the building to a museum in 2010. This suspended mezzanine is hung on to the roof structure, reinforced by steel trusses and beams.

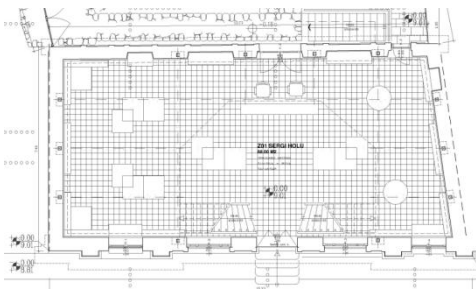
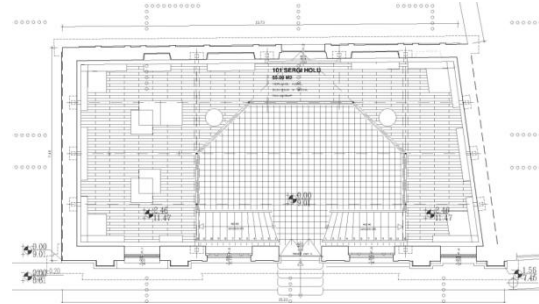


Figure 12: Ground Floor Plan

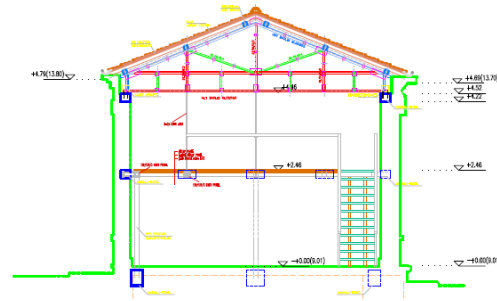


The plan of the Mezzanine [Ak N., Soylu S., 2014]

The museum building is originally constructed in brick and stone with moulding, emulated classical Greek architecture with two triangular pediments and which has ornaments on the apex at south facade. The only one original ornament left is exhibited in the museum and four copies of it are reconstructed and placed on the four corners of the roof pediments (Fig.15). During restoration a second two- winged glass door is added by architects just on the opposite side of the main entrance and also a door at the right corner opens to the backyard garden and leads to the utilities and restrooms. Arched windows (with limestone jambs) on the southern facade fills the interior with daylight. The missing floor tiles were produced by copying the original ones. (Ak N., Soylu S., 2014).



Figure 13: Front Facade



Section [Ak N., Soylu S., 2014]

The architects designed also the showcases and stands in which the items in the collection are exhibited. The artificial lighting elements, however, designed and produced by another master architect Ali Tunç Güneri. (Ak and Soylu, 2014)





Figure 14: Photos from the Interior of the Museum[Photos from the collection of Sadrettin Soylu]



Figure 15: Ornaments [Photos from the collection of Sadrettin Soylu]

The building has a positive impact on the quality of the location and the environment. This Grade II registered building is an experience in herself, regardless of its actual role as a museum.

### 5.3 The Collection of the Museum

Many of the items in the collection of the museum were donated by the members of the local immigrant families. Museum collection tells the story of the Population Exchange and also the story of the donaters in the town who experienced it.

Exhibited objects – and the stories behind them – both bring back memories and create new experiences for the visitors and help them to deepen their understanding of the history . They tell the story of the past, where the people have come from and provide new insights for the future.

- Wedding Dresses
- Musical Instruments / Music Sheets
- Household Belongings and Kitchen Utensils
- Photographs and Documents

Below some photographs of the items of the collection;



Wedding Dress



Tablecloth



Silk Wedding Dress



Immigrant Suitcases



Medals and Leather pocketbooks



5.1 Music Notebooks



Mandoline From Yanya



Gulcemaal Ship

Figure 16 :Exhibited Objects[22]

Along with old photos, documents from the Exchange period, property liquidation request forms, maps of the Ottoman Empire period, A Quran, stamps that were used at the beginning of the 20. century, a half banknote (drahmi), old books, an embroidery prospectus are also exhibited (E.C.C.P.E.M., 2011).

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

In this study the history of Çatalca and foundation of Population Exchange Museum is evaluated in the context of population exchange. Ottoman architectural heritage of the exchanged population is mostly survived in Kaleiçi neighborhood. This registered historical urban site, has unique traditional residential texture including the historical Museum Building. Museum collection tells the story of the Population Exchange and also the story of the donaters in the district who experienced it.

Museums connect people in a variety of ways – people who share a common interest and passion, which is a social value in itself. This museum has a rich cultural and social meaning, foundation of the Population Exchange Museum has positive contribution to Çatalca by playing an important cultural role as it reflects the history and identity of the society, also the cultural and folkloric elements of their life.

The cultural tourism is developed by the foundation of the Museum and it also serves to protect the architectural, historical and cultural values of Çatalca, by contributing to social change and public awareness. It has the potential to build a long-standing relationship with the physical environment and social identity.

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