

## **Konuralp: A Town Between Antiquity and Today (Türkiye)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Anatolian geography comprises several historic buildings as components of our cultural heritage and also many urban/rural patterns which were constituted by these monuments. Konuralp is one of the most important settlement with its 2000 years history which is located on the 8 km. north of Düzce province on the western Black Sea region in Türkiye. Its history goes back to before Christ. The city's first name "Hypios" was changed as "Kieros" and later the name turned into "Prusias" in the period of 1st. Prusias (3rd. Century B.C.) who was the king of Bithynia. After the Roman Emperor governance on this region about 74 A.D., the city was called as "Prusias ad Hypium" which signifies "Prusias on Hypium river". The city was under the Byzantium ascendancy until the conquest of Turkish commander "Osman Gazi" in 1323 who gave the control to the commander "Konur Alp Bey". In Ottoman period, "Üskübü" became the new name of the town but after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the town name was changed lastly as "Konuralp" but the inhabitants still call the town as Üskübü and also as "Kasaba" which means "town".

With its 6.000 residents, today the town cultural heritage is comprised of traditional architecture and the Greek/Roman ruins. Its Antique Theatre is located in the center of the town and has an important place with its upper cavea and scena walls which was dated to early Ancient Roman period. Besides, the ramparts from Roman and Byzantine times, a gate which was a part of the ramparts known as "Atlı Kapi", the ruins of Byzantine and Ottoman Aqueduct are observable monumental buildings in the town. The vernacular houses in traditional architecture still exist in the danger of extinction because of urbanization policies but there are many examples of those traditional buildings which were constructed in wooden frame systems with brick or wooden filling wall systems.

**KEYWORDS:** Konuralp, Prusias ad Hypium, Ancient City, Traditional Housing, Vernacular Architecture

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Konuralp is a subdistrict of Düzce province which is on the West Black Sea region. The distance between the city and Konuralp is 8 km. and its location is on the north of the center of the province, on the northeast side of Düzce plain situated on the south hillside on a low hill which was surrounded by forests on the north. The city center is in the middle of the highway between İstanbul and the capital Ankara. Today despite being a subdistrict, Konuralp's history goes back to earlier than the province according to the historic documents.

Konuralp's history between its establishment and Roman period is unknown but Memnon<sup>1</sup> indicated that the ancient city was a settlement which was dependent to Pontus Heracleia. But being the location of the city far from the coast shows that it wasn't established clearly by the colonists who had come to coast of Black Sea (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005). The first name of the city was referred as Kieros / Cierus by Memnon during Heracleian period.

In Memnon's notes, after Bithynian King I. Prusias had taken the control of Kieros from Heracleians, he gave his name and changed the city name as Prusias (Web -2). Bithynia was located in the northwest corner of Asia Minor and was bordered on the south by the province of Asia, on the north by the Black Sea, on the east by Galatia and Pontus and on the west by the Propontis (modern Sea of Marmara) (Web-3). After the conquest of the city, Prusias started to improve and built up the city, constructed extensive architectural monuments and settled down new tribes (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005). Because of there was another Prusias / Prusa (modern Bursa) in Bithynia state, the city's name was started to called as Prusias ad Hypium. This name was comes from the river Hypius<sup>2</sup> which was passing through the city (Umar, 2004). According to Piliny, the mountains on the north of the Düzce plain also called Hypius (Cramer – D,D, 1832).

In 75 B.C., when Bithynia's last king Nicomedes III, willed his kingdom to the Roman people, it became part of the Roman Empire (Web-2). Due to the inscriptions found in Prusias ad Hypium, the Roman city was autonomous in their internal affairs after the Vespasianus period when they produce their own money but dependent to Roman Empire in their foreign policy. The location of the city was on north way which was one of the main roads from the center of the empire to the eastern part of the country. At the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Prusias ad Hypium was become to belong to the new state called Honarias. After 451 A.D. the city lost its richness until the end of the its late Roman – Byzantine period (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005).



Figure 1: Heracleia and surrounding area in Hellenistic times (Web-1)

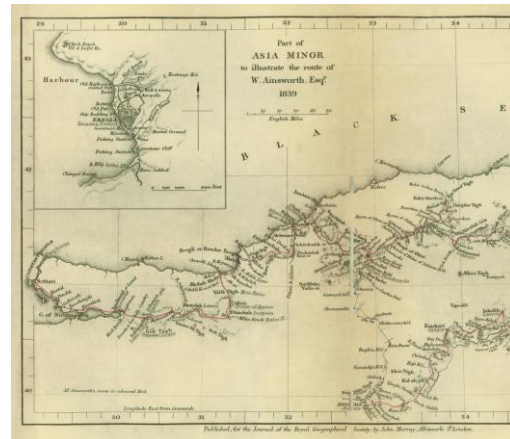


Figure 2: Bithynia (Ainsworth, 1839)

The Ottoman Government was established in 1299 by Osman Ghazi and southeast part of the Marmara Sea was the settled area. Konuralp Bey was an emir of Osman Ghazi and he was active on the east side of the Sakarya River and he conquered the territory of Prusias of Hypium included Akyazı and Mudurnu regions. Another emir Akça Koca Bey took the north of Prusias ad Hypium region on the coast.

1 Memnon may have lived in the first century A.D. He wrote a local history of the city of Pontus Heracleia (the town of Zonguldak province which is called Ereğli now) an important Greek colony on the south coast of the Black Sea. The surviving portion of the history covers the period from the tyrant Clearchus (364-353 B.C.) down to the capture of the city by the Romans (70 B.C.) (Web -1)

2 The modern river "Melen". In the beginning of 19.th century on the notes of Ainsworth (1838), the river name was "Milan".

After the conquest of Ottoman Empire, the region new name changed as “Konrapa” (Uzunçarşılı,, 1994). The city center was partly abandoned and started to called Üskübü/Üskübi<sup>3</sup> from the Ottoman dominance (Rollas, 1967). There was no settlement in modern Düzce in the beginning of the Ottoman period. The Düzce Pazarı which was a market place was administrated by the Konrapa district of Bolu Province in 1530. The convenience of the location, small villages and a considerable number of nomadic people living around Düzce were the reasons to establish a market in Düzce. In 1727, Düzce Pazarı was seen as a district (Egawa – Şahin, 2009). Düzce became a municipality in 1871 (Özlu, 2009).

When the Republic of Turkey was established, Üskübü became a subdistrict of Düzce town of Bolu Province. The formal name of the subdistrict is “Konuralp” now but the inhabitants are still call Üskübü or Kasaba (town) to their settlement.

## 2 THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF THE TOWN

From the ancient Greek – Roman era to the modern time, there have been many architectural monuments and architectural fragments preserved in Konuralp. Different cultural layers seen in the district makes the settlement extraordinary and uncommon compared to other archaeological or vernacular sites.

### 2.1 Ancient Greek and Roman Period

We do not know how the plan of the city because there is no enough survey made about it. Probably there was a grid system adapted to hillside which was formed around main streets (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005). The available remains and finds show that the ancient Prusias had a Hellenistic *Polis* character. So like all Polis, it has a territorium which is a center surrounded by ramparts and the region outside the ramparts. The plain on the south was included this territorium. The first establishment area had been on a low hill of Mount Hypius, and then it expanded to the plain which is on the south. But the remnants of the buildings were under the modern settlement at the present time. Theatre, aqueduct, some parts of ramparts, a rampart gate and a Roman Bridge are the main remains which can be easily recognise between the Konuralp vernacular architecture. By the help of inscriptions, Gynasium, agora and temple existence was proved as the other Hellenistic cities (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005).



Figure 3: Ancient Theatre a-The Survey and Restitution drawings of Theatre by B. Fernando in 1970 (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005) b- General view (Okur Coşkunçay, 2013)

<sup>3</sup> Üskübü / Üskübi name come from “Eski Bağ / Bahçe” which means “Old Gardens”.



**Ancient Theatre** is the most important monument that shows the richness and development of the city. It is the most preserved and single monumental building from the ancient times. The cavea stands on the hillside in the center of the city. Its cavea is oriented to the south and this orientation protects the spectators from stream of air and makes a wonderful view. Like the other theatre buildings it consists 3 parts; cavea (rows of seats), scena (stage) and orchestra (area between cavea and scena). The materials of the cavea blocks are limestone (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005). The dimensions of the theatre is 100 m. x 74 m. (Rollas, 1967). The cavea has 3 parts and the half of the upper cavea is protected well. The scena has rectangular shape and the east part of scena walls were exposed in 1941 by the İstanbul Archeology Museum work. The entrance on the scena wall is not a common property for Hellenistic period theatre architecture. With its architectural properties, scena's architecture style dates to period between Hellenistic and Roman period. The construction date of the cavea is at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D and the scena is 190 A.D. (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005).

**The ramparts** of the city were formed according to the topography. A description on a coin dated to Emperor Gallienus (353 A.D. – 368 A.D.) shows the main gate of the city but it is impossible to place it now (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005). The ramparts construction period goes back to Byzantine time and re-used stones, inscription blocks were used to construct them (Umar, 2004). On the south of the city, 200 m. ramparts can be easily recognised.

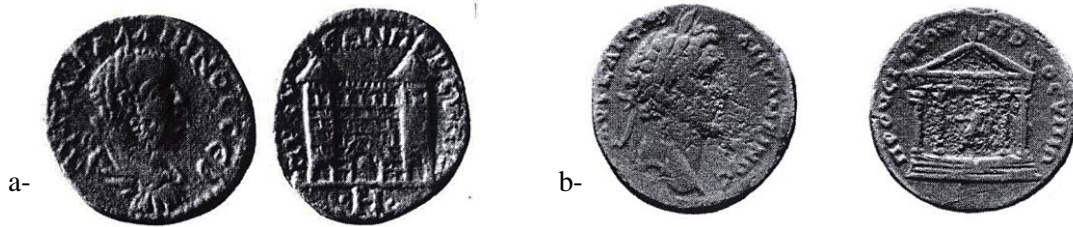


Figure 4: Prusias coins a-City Gate b- Temple (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005)



Figure 5: a-b-Byzantine Ramparts c-Atlı Kapı (Okur Coşkunçay, 2013)

A rampart gate called “**Atlı Kapı**” (Horse Gate) which is in the center of the modern Konuralp. The material of this gate big lintel is limestone. The lintel has ancient Greek inscription and a horse relief on it. It was originally a tomb stel which was made by a Prusian to his mother (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005). The inscription was also related with the tomb. There is also another small gate on the southern ramparts which can be a military gate was formed by re-used inscripted stones (Rollas, 1967).

The evidence of **aqueducts** proves that water was transported to the city from a distant place. On the north part of the center and 5 km away from the city on a village there are aquaduct pillars. The aquaduct in the city only has some stone pillars. Also it is not known if they have any arches or not. But the ones in the village also have some arches between the stone pillars.

On the western part of the Prusias, there is 3 arched Roman Bridge on the Hypius – Melen River. The dimension of the bridge is 10 m. and it was built without mortar (Rollas, 1967). The date of the bridge is at the same time with the theatre at 1<sup>st</sup> century (Umar, 2004).



Figure 6: Aquaducts a-In the north part of the city, b-In the village (Okur Coşkunçay, 2013)

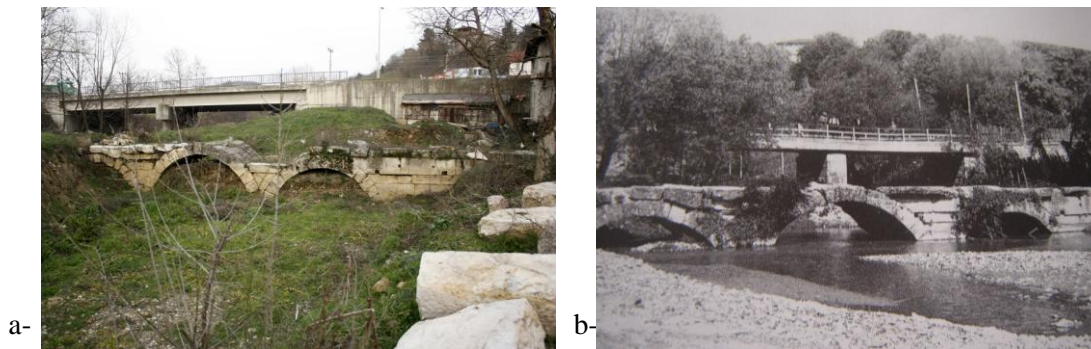


Figure 7: Roman Bridge a-Today (Okur Coşkunçay, 2013) b-In the past (German Institute of Archeology Archive)

A **colonnaded street** leading to the antique city from the ruins of the Roman Bridge was discovered in 1973 spring during the construction of an irrigation canal in the southern part of Düzcce - Akçakoca highway. The architrave, the fragments of columns, vaulted blocks and arches were thrown to the sides of the canal. Most of the street was destroyed. Some of these items have been taken to the museum depot in Konuralp (Koşay et. al., 1974) (Mellink, 1974).

Anadolu (1971), mentioned that he had found the remnants of a **Roman Temple** which had been newly uncovered in 1969. During the excavations of new road in 1968, the fragments were left aside. During the excavations, pieces of unfluted column, an intact architrave and frieze block, pieces of cornice and corners of pediments were discovered. The column couldn't be a part of the temple because of its small dimensions, but there are some fluted columns and Corinthian capitals in the garden of the museum could be the parts of the temple. The frieze block which belongs to the temple has 3 fasciae. They are separated by a bad-and-reel pattern. Also there is an egg-and-dart pattern. The frieze is decorated by a double rinceau pattern, with a Medusa head in the center. The empty spaces in the double rinceau pattern are filled in with rosettes. There is another Medusa head on the lefthand side of the block. These details show the date of the temple as 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. Also lefthand corner pieces of pediments were found and they belonged to the front side of the temple (Anadolu 1971) (Mellink, 1968). A description on a coin dated to Emperor Gallienus (353 A.D. – 368 A.D.) shows a temple façade which was standing on 4 steps. Also it has Corinthian columns, architrave and a pediment with acroters. The architectural details on the coin are much more different than the remnants of the temple. It means there were at least 2 temples in Prusias ad Hypium (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005).



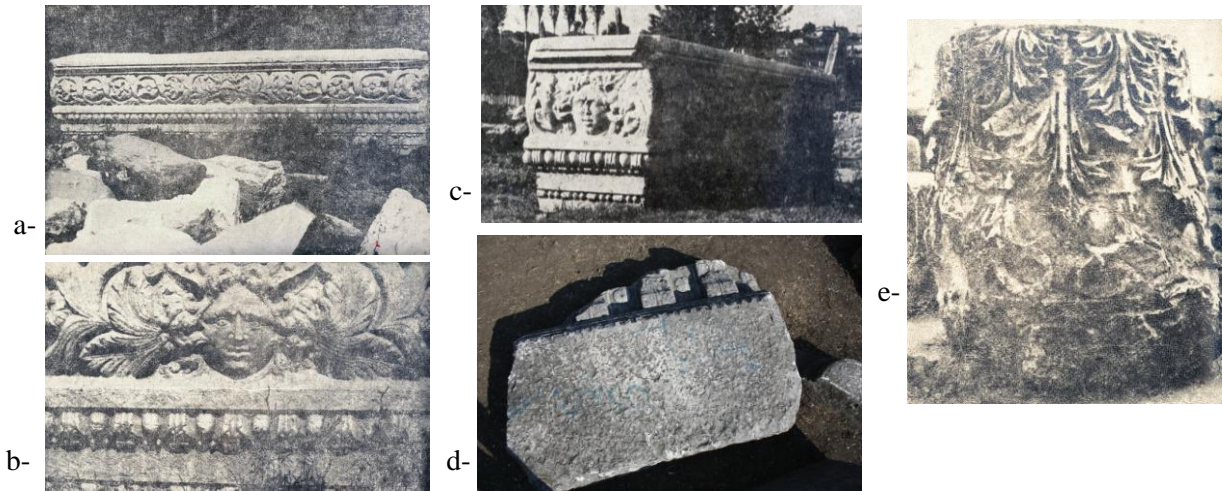


Figure 8: a- b- c-Roman Temple Architrave and Frieze (Anabolu, 1970), d-Roman Temple Pediment corner block (Okur Coşkunçay, 2013) e-Roman Temple capital (Anabolu, 1970)

An inscription in the city indicated to a **stadium** in Prusias ad Hypium .Also a **gymnasium**, an **agora** and a **bath** was identified through inscriptions that were found in the city. All these urban buildings locations couldn't be realised because of the weak surveys and remnants in the city (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005).

Out of the ramparts, some **mosaics** were discovered. One of them is close to the Akçakoca way and describes a mythological subject (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005). In Konuralp Museum, there is also another floor mosaics which was restored.

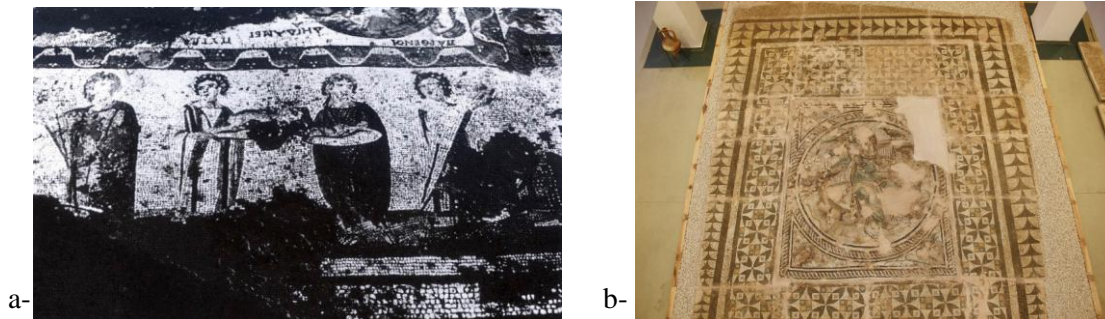


Figure 9: a-Floor Mosaics (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005) b-Restored Orpheus Floor Mosaics in Museum (Okur Coşkunçay, 2013)

## 2.2 Ottoman Empire Period

After the conquest of the city by Konur Alp Bey, the new Islamic culture started to develop. The aqueducts from Byzantines were restored and used also in Ottoman era. According to Rollas (1967), the aqueducts were belonged to Ottomans.

There are 4 mosques in Konuralp and except Konuralp Mosque, Çiftepınarlar Mosque (1909), Tekke Mosque (1920) and Terzialiler Mosque were constructed in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century before the republic was declared at the end of the Ottoman Empire. They were all masonry, rectangular planned and small mosques. The Konuralp Mosque is the biggest one that was reconstructed in 1980's. It had been constructed on the basement of an older church in the beginning of the Ottoman era. Some floor mosaics belong to the church were found and have been taken to the museum depot. The mosque was repaired in 19<sup>th</sup> century by Dilaver Agha (Rollas, 1967).

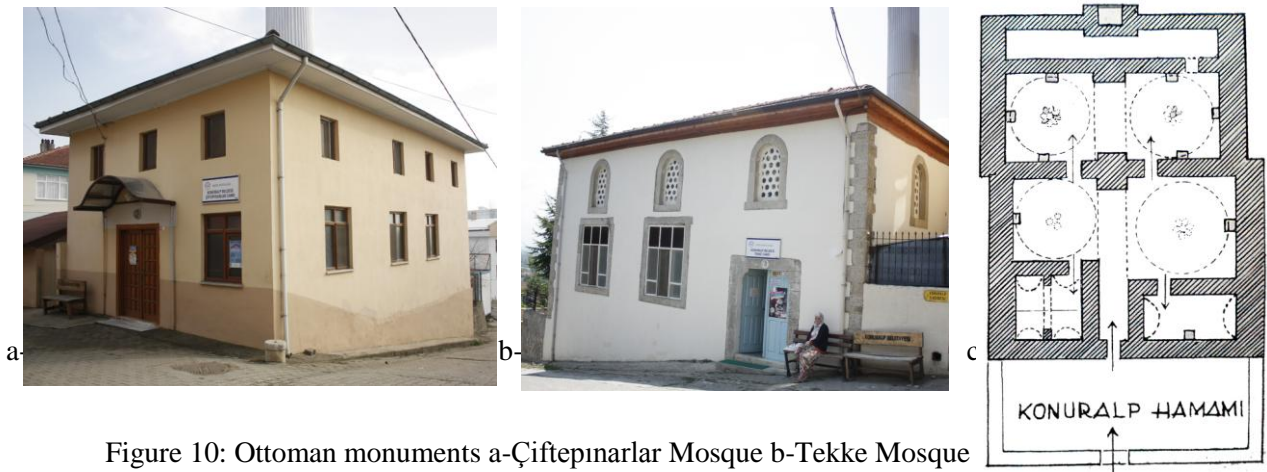


Figure 10: Ottoman monuments a-Çiftepinarlar Mosque b-Tekke Mosque (Okur Coşkunçay, 2013) c- Ottoman Bath (Rollas, 1967).

An Ottoman Bath was related to Konur Alp Bey by some people but there is no evidence. It had been exposed to many changes over the time but its south wall was made of ancient marble block. It was the oldest building in Konuralp (Rollas, 1967) but now, a building was constructed above the bath and it cannot be seen from outside unfortunately.

During 19<sup>th</sup> century, some travellers passed through the city and found some archaeological fragments. In Ottoman Archive, there are some official letters about the archaeological findings. Some documents are related with a marble sculpture and how to transport it to İstanbul Archaeology Museum in 1893-1894 (PMOA, MF.MKT, 161, 87) (PMOA, MF.MKT, 173, 38) (PMOA, MF.MKT, 178, 129). Another document in 1903 is about to prevent people who find and want to use figured and inscripted stones in construction (PMOA, MF.MKT, 736, 52). The other document in 1909 is to secure the figured stone which were discovered by some villagers until delivering to the government (PMOA, MF.MKT, 1138, 21).

### 2.3 Modern Period

Konuralp Museum was opened in 18<sup>th</sup> November 1994 and has 3 exhibition halls, 1 laboratory, 2 depots, 1 conference hall, administrative and service rooms. The Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman findings were exhibited. There are approximately 1800 archaeological, 400 ethnographic and 3800 coins, totally 6000 pieces are existed. In the garden of the museum the remnants of the fragments, stels of tombs, sarcophagus, columns and capitals from Roman period are displayed.



Figure 11: Konuralp Museum and findings (Okur Coşkunçay, 2013)

Many important Roman statues were exposed in Konuralp in 20<sup>th</sup> center. The most impressive one of those statues is “Tyche”. With its fine-grained white marble material has been placed in the Istanbul



Archaeology Museum (I.A.M). The goddess wears sandals, a long chiton with half-long sleeves and a high diadem and mural crown decorated with acanthus leaves. The left hand and arm support a cornucopia full of fruits and grains, on the lower end of which sits a small child holding other fruits. The extended right forearm and hand which once held a steering oar are the only parts missing. This is the work of an artist of the Roman imperial epoch, influenced by fourth-century models (Robinson – Blegen, 1933). The statue date is 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. but its style is 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Umar, 2004). According to some sources, its date is 2nd century A.D. (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005).

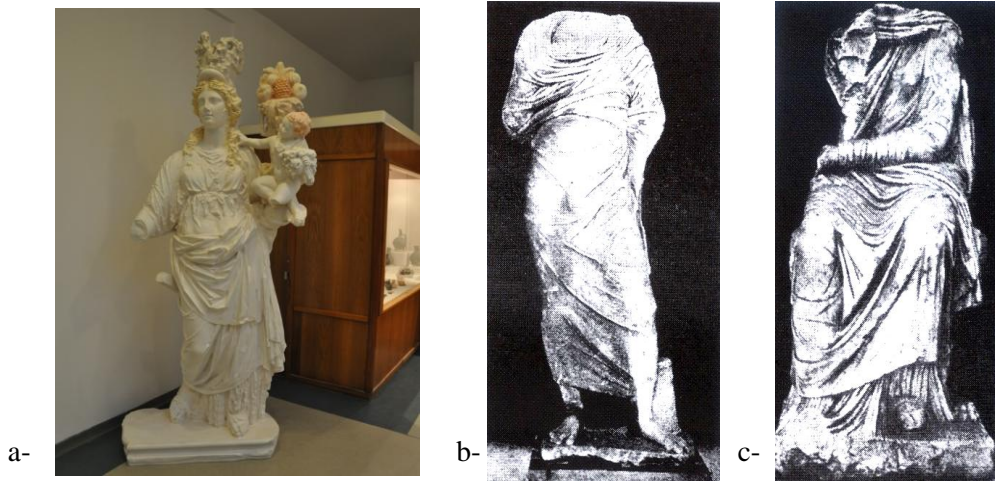


Figure 12: a- A copy of Tyche Statue in Konuralp Museum (Okur Coşkunçay, 2013) b-A statue from Konuralp in I.A.M. c-Kybele Statue from the city in İ.A.M. (Zeyrek – Çelik, 2005)

Traditional and vernacular housing examples are other considerable components of Konuralp. Most of them constructed after the beginning and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their construction technique is shaped according to the regions environmental condition and tradition. Around the region, forests are significant to supply construction and decoration material. Therefore, wooden frame system is common construction technique both in Black Sea region and Konuralp. The filling material changes building to building such as brick, adobe brick and timber. The traditional houses are not more than 3 floored.

The vernacular houses in traditional architecture still exist in the danger of extinction because of urbanization policies but there are many examples of those traditional buildings which were constructed in wooden frame systems with brick or wooden filling wall systems.



Figure 13: Traditional houses with wooden frame – brick filling system construction (Okur Coşkunçay, 2013)





Figure 14: Traditional houses with wooden frame – timber filling system construction  
(Okur Coşkunçay, 2013)

### 3 CONCLUSION

Konuralp was established before its province through its geographical location such as being on a low hill, oriented to the south, earthquake resistant ground structure. The first inhabitants didn't choose the province center to settle down because of its marshy ground.

Konuralp is a small town but it possesses both archaeological and architectural elements. The multiplicity and variety of its cultural heritage differs the settlement from the other archaeological or traditional sites. The remnants from ancient Roman period, the archaeological findings show the importance of the ancient city culture. Its traditional and humanistic civil architecture is another cultural heritage and expresses the vernacular properties of the town and the region.

Both ancient buildings which stands and vernacular houses are in the danger of extinction because of wrong urbanization policies. Neither ancient, nor traditional architecture is superior from each other; coexisting of all cultural and architectural heritages makes the settlement unique. "The Reconstruction Plan for Conservation" should immediately be prepared to sustain its rich heritage to the future.

The Reconstruction Plan for Conservation prepares for sites which has protected areas that were defined by "Regional Conservation Committees". The aim of this plan is to protect the cultural and natural assets in accordance with sustainability criteria. The plan should be prepare according to regional researches. The archeological, historical, natural, architectural, demographical, cultural, socio-economical, ownership and structuring information should be collected in the survey. The Reconstruction Plan for Conservation is vital because it can take the control of rapid urbanization, population growth, industrialization and technical progress without destroying the natural and cultural heritage conservation and it integrate the heritage with the contemporary life.

Finally, last year the archeological excavation of the ancient theatre was started by the archeologists who are academicians in Düzce University. Also in last 2 years architecture students from Gebze Institute of Technology made 1 week survey on traditional houses in the region for their restoration and conservation studio classes. Those works and studies help inhabitants to understand the importance and value of their region. It is very necessary to relate and inform the citizens to conserve the historical monuments and develop the town.

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