

## **BODRUM: A SMALL HISTORIC VILLAGE OF THE SOUTH-WESTERN ANATOLIA, ITS HUMAN AND PATRIMONAL VALUES AND ITS PROBLEMS OF PRESERVATION**

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### **Abstract**

*Bodrum located on the Aegean cost of Anatolia, is an attractive village with natural and historic characteristics. Due to its long history, it possesses important monuments like a part of an Hellenistic amphitheater, a 15<sup>th</sup> century castle where used the stones of the Mausoleum which is one of the seven wonders of the world. Besides them, one can notice some other special values such as the traditional civic architecture, old towers, wind-mills and shady narrow streets of efficient perspectives. The landscape of Bodrum and its surroundings with its shores, forested inner parts, olive groves, orange and tangerine gardens is also very attractive.*

*The center of the village and its surroundings were quiet, calm and peaceful until 1970s. After this date, tourism began to change its traditional characteristics as well as its beautiful untouched landscape. Towards the second half of 1980s, its traditional agricultural and maritime economy turned to an economy based on construction, tourism and commerce. A lot of new houses and big hotels are constructed over the green hills and on the shores of Bodrum and they damaged the traditional impressive views. Finally nowadays, especially in summer Bodrum is a loud, rich, crowded, dynamic combination of a village and town.*

*This paper aims to analyze in detail the change of the traditional characteristics of Bodrum.*

**Keywords:** *historic town, traditional characteristics, urban layout, urban landscape, tourism, physical changes*

### **Full text**

Bodrum (Halikarnassos) is located on the Aegean cost of Anatolia (Figure 1). It is an important settlement with its natural and historic characteristics. After mid 4<sup>th</sup> century Halikarnassos is known as the capital of the Caria region.<sup>1</sup> Due to its long history, even today Bodrum possesses some important monuments like a part of the Hellenistic amphitheater which capacity was 10.000 people, the castle of the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century constructed by St Jean Knights (Figure 2) where were used the stones of the Mausoleum of 4<sup>th</sup> century BC considered as one of the seven wonders of the world, and collapsed by an earthquake in 13<sup>th</sup> century. Besides them, some other important values such as the traditional civic architecture, 200-300 years old towers, wind-mills and also shady narrow streets and dead ends which create efficient perspectives can be added to the characteristic urban texture of the village (Figure 3).

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<sup>1</sup> Strabon, 2012; Galanti Bodrumlu, 1945.

The landscape of Bodrum and its surroundings with its shores, forested inner parts, olive groves, bitter orange, orange and tangerine gardens and small settlements nearby the sea and on the hills is very attractive. Due to all these physical and natural values, Bodrum has a special international and national place in the tourism of Turkey.

The social structure of Bodrum is also considerable. There, the Turks and the Greeks lived together until the proclamation of the Turkish Republic (1923). A small Jew community was also a part of the population. After the Republic, due a population exchange the Greeks of Bodrum went to Greece and the Muslims (especially from Crete) came to settle in their neighborhood.<sup>1</sup> The traces of this long life of togetherness of two people can be observed even today on the physical and social characteristics of the settlement.

### **Changes occurred between the years of 1970-1990**

The center of Bodrum and its surroundings were quiet, calm and peaceful until the end of 1960s. A lot of tangerine, lemon and bitter orange were obtained from citrus gardens, besides this, a lot amount of fig and tobacco were exported from the area. After the settlement of Cretan exchanges in Bodrum, sponge fishing became the most important source of income of the peninsula.<sup>2</sup> But the production of artificial sponge and afterwards, a contagious disease of sponge put an end to this special activity of the area.

Towards the second half of 1960s, the traditional occupations combined with the sea and the nature began to change under the pressure of tourism.<sup>3</sup> But despite of these slow changes, Bodrum was still preserving its classical atmosphere at that time. During these years, pensions and small hostels began to be seen. A lot of wealthy merchants invested in hotel construction. For this purpose, especially in Cretan district of the village a lot of old houses are unfortunately destroyed.

In the beginning of 1980s, two important factors influenced Bodrum: money and new comers.<sup>4</sup> So, towards the second half of 1980s the traditional agricultural and maritime economy of Bodrum turned to an economy based on construction, tourism and commerce. Under the pressure of unearned income citrus gardens, tobacco fields, olive and fig groves are considered as free parcels of land and gained great value; traditional productions and crafts like traditional agricultural activities, milling, raising and selling olives are finished as they are no more preferred by the new generation.

During this period, the charm of Bodrum attracted a lot of Turkish and foreign entrepreneurs to set up a business, to settle down perpetually or to have a summerhouse there. At this time, it host a great number of people who escape from the density of the big cities (foremost from Istanbul and Ankara) and also an English, French and German population who came to settle down in Bodrum. So, a very big amount of new houses are constructed over the green hills of the village and its surroundings, and they irreversibly damaged the

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<sup>1</sup> Öztin Kaptanoğlu, 2006; 2014. The Greeks of Bodrum composed 1/3 of the population in 1950s. After twenty years in 1970s, they are no more than 10 %. Young Cretans tried to go to the nearby big city Izmir in order to find there new jobs.

<sup>2</sup> The most brilliant years of this activity was during the years 1945-65.

<sup>3</sup> The first tourist flow to Bodrum was in 1965.

<sup>4</sup> Mansur Coşar, 1999 ; 1972.

traditional impressive views and landscapes of the area (Figure 4). Finally in 1990s, Bodrum became a loud, rich, crowded, dynamic combination of a village and town.<sup>1</sup>

### **Changes occurred between the years of 1990-2000**

Towards the second half of 1990s, the boom of cooperatives and housing complex began to end.<sup>2</sup> So, an important part of these constructions are left empty or unfinished which create a very negative paysage effect. In the meantime, the increase of big hotel constructions on untouched natural beaches and green hills began to change irreversibly the attractive landscape of the area.

The density of summer population increases each year. The convenience of the Bodrum-Milas Airport opened up by the end of 1980s and, in addition to domestic lines European flights (with Istanbul or Izmir connection) plays an important role for this summer circulation.

Today the amount of local inhabitants living in the center of the village decreases. Due to owner changes -like multi ownership, desire of change of life and desire to live in a modern house - and to the pressure of income and tourism, the characteristic historic houses of Bodrum are losing their traditional way of use. A lot of old houses located in the center are sold or rent in order to be used in general for touristic purposes like bar, café, restaurant or touristic shops, which mean big changes in the interior and also in the traditional façades.

The control mechanism for this kind of radical physical changes is unfortunately inefficient. After the registration of Bodrum historic areas as “urban site” in 1974, a guideline for new constructions is prepared and applied in 1976. After ten years, a preservation plan is approved in 1986 and revised in 2001-2002. But the high density given to the gardens by this plan damages the traditional relationship of the building and garden. The cooperatives developed after 1985s as mentioned above, new public improvements, opening up of new wide roads caused important changes in Bodrum and in its surroundings.

The first shopping center of Bodrum named “Oasis” is constructed in 1994-99. After a short period, due to the increase of constructions and building renewals, new shops of construction materials where it is possible to find all kind of building and decoration materials increased in Bodrum and around.

While local construction firms are generally unable to sell their buildings, the architects coming from outside with their big special projects create a new trend in and around Bodrum. These large-scale projects (even for some “mega”) which obtain further development rights cause irreversible damages and create new appearances unfamiliar to the traditional characteristic views. Big hotels can be observed on untouched beautiful shores (Figure 5, 6). As unearned income is unfortunately of primary importance, trees are easily cut down or sometimes the areas are devastated by fires in order to create valuable land for this kind of constructions. Besides the huge hotels complex, luxurious residence projects and mega yacht marina and shopping center as “Yalikavak Palmarina” opened in 2012 are very expensive investments of the area.

Yalikavak Palmarina is the first mega yacht project of Turkey. The dimensions, architecture and landscape of this giant plant with a capacity of more than 400 yacht mooring and sheltering places and 50 shops of very luxurious brands are exaggerated for Bodrum. In

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<sup>1</sup> Mansur Coşar, 1999, p. 23

<sup>2</sup> According to an important entrepreneur of Bodrum, the maintenance of these summerhouse being too expensive, people began to prefer to travel and stay in hotels.

Yalıkavak which is one of the most beautiful beach resorts of Bodrum, this mega yacht port and the shopping center are far from serving to the modest tourists who come to spend their summer holidays there.

Luckily today for saving the traditional crafts, architecture, urban layout, natural heritage like shores, green hills and so on, different NGOs, the Chamber of Architects and Urban Planners, the local press as well the inhabitants of Bodrum and other nearby settlements are more and more sensible. They are firmly fighting for the preservation of the traditional material and immaterial values of the peninsula. Among them “Mavi Yol Girişimi Platformu” (Blue Road Enterprise Platform) is combating since 2005 for preventing illegal forest and shore allocations.<sup>1</sup>

As a conclusion, it is possible to summarize the main nowadays problems of Bodrum like: uncontrolled excessive tourism in summers; lack of necessary control and especially necessity of a well prepared detailed effective urban preservation plan.

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### FIGURES



Figure 1. Bodrum on the map of Anatolia and its beautiful natural view

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<sup>1</sup> Dizdar, 2015.



Figure 2. The Castle of St.Peter



Figure 3. The characteristic urban texture of the village





Figure 4. Cooperatives constructed over the green hills



Figure 5. Big hotel complex changing the landscape



Figure 6. New hotel construction