



Received:
11.05.2026

Yakın Mimarlık Dergisi

ISSN
2547-8729

Accepted:
09.09.2026

Re-evaluating abandoned rural religious heritage for sustainable cultural landscape tourism: Zoodochos Pege Church, Bursa

Terk edilmiş kırsal dini mirasın sürdürülebilir kültürel peyzaj turizmi bağlamında yeniden değerlendirilmesi: Zoodochos Pege Kilisesi, Bursa

Lale KARATAŞ BİLLOR¹ 

ABSTRACT

Religious structures located in rural areas around the world, are currently facing a process of disappearance due to various increasing reasons. The disappearance of these structures means the erasure of the cultural heritage of that nation and the networks; it has established with its environment. This study aims to investigate the potential for re-evaluation of abandoned religious structures in rural areas, within the context of the cultural landscape and sustainable tourism, in their respective geographical locations. The Zoodochos Pege Church, in Karacabey district of Bursa province, Türkiye, was chosen as a case study. The research utilized a combination of literature review, field observations and photography, cultural heritage analysis, cultural landscape analysis, and SWOT analysis. The findings revealed numerous physical threats to the structure's potential for re-adaptation. The results demonstrate, the area where the structure is located has significant potential for cultural and nature tourism and can be integrated into regional cultural route systems.

Keywords: Rural heritage, Adaptive reuse, Cultural landscape, Sustainable tourism, Zoodochos Pege Church.

¹ Bursa Teknik Üniversitesi Mimarlık ve Tasarım Fakültesi, Mimarlık Bölümü, Bursa. lale.karatas@btu.edu.tr ORCID: 0000-0001-8582-4612

ÖZET

Dünyada kırsal alanlarda yer alan dini yapılar çeşitli artan sebeplerle günümüzde yok olma süreciyle karşı karşıyadır. Bu yapıların yok olması demek o millete ait kültürel izin ve çevresiyle kurduğu ağların da silinmesi demektir. Bu çalışma, kırsaldaki terk edilmiş dini yapıların yeniden değerlendirilme potansiyelini, bulunduğu coğrafyadaki kültürel peyzaj ve sürdürülebilir turizm bağlamı üzerinden araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Vaka çalışması olarak Türkiye'nin Bursa ilinin Karacabey ilçesinde bulunan Zoodochos Pege Kilisesi ele alınmıştır. Araştırmada; literatür taraması, saha gözlemleri ve fotoğraflama, kültürel miras analizi, kültürel peyzaj analizi ve SWOT analizi birlikte kullanılmıştır. Bulgularda, yapının tekrar uyarlanabilmesi sürecinde, çok sayıda fiziksel tehdit tespit edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, yapının bulunduğu alanın kültür-doğa turizmi için önemli bir potansiyel olduğunu, bölgesel kültürel rota sistemlerine entegre edilebilme kapasitesini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kırsal miras, Yeniden kullanım, Kültürel peyzaj, Sürdürülebilir turizm, Zoodochos Pege Kilisesi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious structures located in rural areas around the world are increasingly at risk of physical and spiritual destruction due to numerous factors such as neglect, abandonment, migration of communities, declining religious groups, and weakening religious ties (Taylor & Lennon, 2011). In Turkey, this process intensified after the 1923 Lausanne Population Exchange. With the increased migration of people of different religions, religious structures, especially those in rural areas, were left to their fate (Kalaycı & Özçatalbaş ,2022; Soykök Ede et al.,2025; Della Spina, 2021; Zhang et al., 2025; Pehlivan, 2018; Gerçek, 2010; İslamoğlu & Karadayı Yenice, 2022; Dehghan Pour Farashah et al., 2023; Mahmoud et al., 2022). The Hrant Dink Foundation (2016) reports that a significant portion of Türkiye's Greek architectural heritage is currently in a dilapidated state or at risk of destruction (Yılmaz, 2016).

This situation points to a significant gap in conservation efforts, particularly, across Turkey. However, this large gap represents a great opportunity to impact the economy and cultural revival if these structures can be revitalized for cultural tourism and rural development. Numerous studies have been conducted on rural religious structures, in Türkiye. However, there is still a need for context-specific studies, focusing on community networks and perceptions, regional tourism networks, cultural-nature tourism integration, and regional economic revitalization. To contribute to the literature in this field, this study focuses on the Zoodochos Pege Church in Karakoca Neighborhood, Karacabey District, Bursa. This study aims to identify, the cultural heritage values of the church, assess its physical condition and conservation needs, analyze its relationship with the surrounding rural and ecological landscape, and propose strategies for its integration into sustainable tourism networks.

The study combines; a literature review, field observation, value-based cultural heritage assessment, cultural landscape analysis, and SWOT analysis using an integrated framework method. The results contribute to discussions on the preservation, adaptive reuse, and sustainable cultural tourism of abandoned rural religious heritage in Türkiye.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Adaptive Reuse of Abandoned Religious Heritage

Historic buildings that have lost their original functions and uses can be transformed into cultural centers, museums, accommodation facilities, and visitor spaces. Through these transformations, which are adaptive reuse interventions, the buildings regain value in social life. With this transformation applied to the buildings, countries ensure architectural preservation and the socio-economic revitalization of rural settlements (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019).

An examination of international studies in the literature reveals that the adaptive reuse of religious heritage provides social, cultural, and economic benefits. Studies on the transformation of historic churches, particularly in rural areas, indicate that social ties in the area are strengthened after the transformation. Furthermore; studies report that among the contributions of transformed structures to the environment are encouraging the participation of young people, in building social connections and increasing the perception of local identity in the area (Franco, 2024; Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019). Therefore, various criteria have been presented to measure how effective such transformations are. Compatibility of the new function with the architectural and symbolic character of the building, as well as public acceptance and community participation, are mentioned among these criteria (Rammelmeier, 2025; Lo Faro & Miceli, 2019).

Looking at studies conducted in Türkiye, it is seen that the studies are mostly on individual building examples. These studies demonstrate the preservation potential of adaptive reuse. However, in the adaptation studies of these structures, it is necessary to investigate all elements in the environmental context holistically. This includes the religious heritage of these structures; A broader approach integrating cultural landscapes, ecological resources, rural memory, and regional tourism networks is still needed (Arslan Kalay & Yıldız, 2017; Yüceer et al., 2018; Kaplan, 2021).

2.2. Heritage Values and Values-Based Assessment

Preserving only the physical characteristics of cultural heritage structures is insufficient, according to contemporary conservation theories, for transmitting the holistic features of the building to future generations. This is because historical structures, in addition to their architectural features, contain many social, spiritual, symbolic, and other values.

The preservation of religious heritage, in particular, requires the protection of symbolic meanings, spatial relationships, and the spirit of the place (Franco, 2024). Value-based assessment identifies these multiple meanings and incorporates them, into conservation and management decisions. This approach is particularly important for abandoned religious buildings that, despite losing their original function, can maintain their connection to local identity. Churches; in particular, require a very different assessment than traditional building-scale evaluations. This is because church structures may possess documentary, monumental, architectural, and landscape values that could otherwise be overlooked (Lo Faro & Miceli, 2019).

2.3. Cultural Landscape and Sustainable Rural Tourism

The cultural landscape approach considers heritage structures, as part of larger environments shaped by the interaction between human communities and nature. Cultural landscape analyses treat cultural heritage buildings as part of larger areas shaped by their context (Bogacz-Wojtanowska et.al, 2019). Elements considered within this context include settlement patterns, topography, natural resources, and cultural practices—elements that ensure sustainability. All these components connect historical buildings and their environmental context, creating cultural integrity. However, rural landscapes are increasingly threatened today (An & Alarcón, 2020). Threats include demographic decline, migration, economic transformation, natural disasters, and socio-cultural change (Taylor & Lennon, 2011).

The literature explains that sustainable rural tourism can only ensure cultural and architectural preservation if it respects heritage values, environmental capacity, and community needs. Additionally, in all these cases, local economies can be diversified, regional identity strengthened, and employment opportunities created. Many methods have been explored in the literature to achieve this. Rural continuity has been ensured by integrating natural attractions, traditional settlements, hiking trails, and local production into integrated cultural-nature tourism networks, thereby integrating historical religious structures. Studies in Türkiye demonstrate the tourism potential of religious heritage with examples such as Ambar Village Church (Kaplan, 2021), and Akdamar Church (Arslan Kalay & Yıldız, 2017). However, in Türkiye, these structures have generally been examined as individual structures, rather than as components of multi-layered cultural landscapes. Therefore; their relationships with ecological resources, collective memory, regional tourism networks. And rural development have not been sufficiently researched in our country.

3. METHOD

This study investigated the adaptive reuse potential of the Zoodochos Pege Church in the village of Karakoca, Karacabey, within the framework of value-based conservation analysis, cultural landscape analysis, and SWOT analysis. This approach enabled the examination of the structure within the authentic environmental contexts that encompass all its distinctive qualities.

3.1. Data Collection and Verification

The research data were obtained from literature reviews, field observations conducted between 2025 and 2026, and analyses. A literature review was conducted to determine the historical characteristics of the structure. Meanwhile; field research and analyses provided, the basis for evaluating the structure's physical condition, accessibility, location within the landscape, and environmental relationships.

3.2. Values-Based Heritage Assessment

At this stage, the historical, architectural, cultural, social, and landscape values of the church were examined. A table was prepared within this scope (Table 1). The cultural heritage value categories, presented in Table 1, were developed based on the classifications used in the value-based cultural heritage assessment approaches of UNESCO and ICOMOS (Australia ICOMOS, 2013; UNESCO et al., 2022). Additionally, Table 1 draws upon a literature review, archival documents, and field observations conducted, between 2025 and 2026. Through this table, the tangible and intangible attributes, reflecting these values were identified. This assessment process revealed which features require preservation, thereby establishing a foundation for evaluating potential new functions.

3.3. Cultural Landscape Analysis

At this stage; a cultural landscape analysis was conducted, resulting in the preparation of Table 2. The analysis categories used in Table 2, were determined in alignment with the key criteria emphasized in UNESCO's cultural landscape approach and the literature on sustainable tourism and heritage management (Taylor & Lennon, 2011; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2008). Additionally; data from the Bursa Environmental Plan were utilized, to assess existing pressures, regarding spatial development (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, 2025). The table was prepared by the author, based on field observations, literature data, and density assessments. This analysis examined, the relationships between the church, regional transportation networks, and regional tourism destinations. The structure's potential for inclusion in a culture-nature tourism corridor was evaluated based on criteria such as heritage value, accessibility, capacity, and connectivity.

3.4. SWOT Analysis and Recommendations

Finally; a SWOT analysis was conducted using the findings of the values-based assessment and cultural landscape analysis. Each strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat was linked to documented historical, physical, spatial, or environmental evidence. The recommendations were developed by cross-comparing these factors.

4. CASE STUDY: Zoodochos Pege Church

4.1. Location and Historical Background

The Zoodochos Pege Church is located in Karakoca Village of the Karacabey district in Bursa, Türkiye (Figure 1). The district of Karacabey, where the structure is located, is a region of historical significance. It is known that settlement in the area dates back, to the 12th century BCE and is associated with the Mysians, who migrated to the region, where a city called Miletropolis once existed. It is also suggested that the first settlers in Karacabey and its surroundings were the Hittites, believed to have arrived from Central Asia approximately 4,000 years ago. Throughout history, the region successively came under the influence of the Mysians, Phrygians, Lydians, Persians, Alexander the Great, the Kingdom of Pergamon, and the Romans. During these periods, the settlement was known as Mihaliç. And after coming under Ottoman rule, it developed through the settlement of Turkish families. Following the First World War, Mihaliç was occupied by Greek forces on 6 July 1920, and was liberated on 14 September 1922 when the Turkish army entered the city. During the Constitutional Period, in 1910, the name of Mihaliç was changed to Karacabey in memory of Dayı Karaca Bey who played an important role in the conquest of Istanbul upon the proposal of Edirne deputy Şeref Bey (Karacabey Municipality, 2015), (Figure 1).

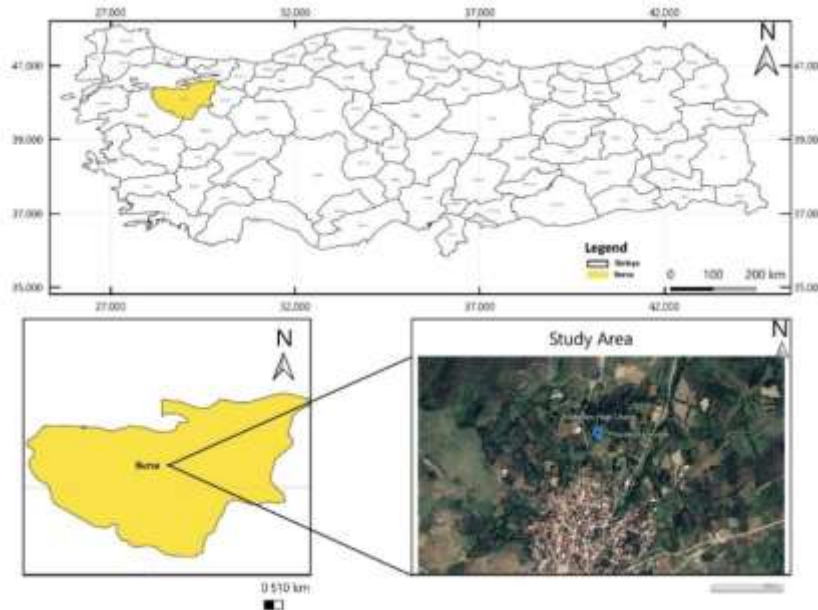


Figure 1. Location of the Zoodochos Pege Church (Prepared by the author based on Google Earth data)

When examining the historical development of Karakoca Neighborhood in Karacabey District, records in the cadastral registers of Sultan Süleyman dated 1521 indicate the settlement under the name “Karakuvaç Village.” Karakoca, formerly a Greek village, was reportedly founded when a Greek woman exiled from Kayseri and a man settled in the area; the settlement was initially called “Karı-Koca,” which gradually evolved into “Karakoca.” Following the end of the Turkish War of Independence the Greeks who left the village were replaced in 1926 by population exchange immigrants arriving from the Langaza region of Greece. Karakoca Village later, gained neighbourhood status, while maintaining its rural settlement character (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, 2025). Before the Lausanne Population Exchange, the village was inhabited by a Greek population. After the exchange, Turkish immigrants from the regions of Langaza, Drama, and Serres in Thessaloniki were settled in the village (Şaşmaz, 2019). The village contains a church built in 1487, which is currently in a ruined condition. Its name is “Zoodochos Pege.” However; according to the statement of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Türkiye, the church is believed to have been constructed in 1847. The church is located in an area locally, known as the “grove” (“koru”), and it is known that a Greek cemetery once existed immediately, beside it. The name “Zoodochos Pege” means “Life-Giving Spring” in the Eastern Orthodox tradition (Aydın, 2014).

4.2. Architectural Characteristics and Current Condition

The church is a single-nave structure with a rectangular plan, extending along an east-west axis. This simple layout reflects a typology, commonly found in rural Byzantine and early Ottoman-era churches. The main entrance is located on the western façade. It is designed as a round-arched opening framed by profiled stonework (Figure 2b). Unlike; the surrounding rough rubble masonry, the doorway is constructed. It is used more carefully hewn stone blocks. I is indicated an intention, to create an architectural focal point. A semicircular apse is situated on the eastern façade (Figure 2a). There are four circular niches associated with this apse—two on the northern side and two on the southern side. Traces of plaster layers and remnants of reddish-toned frescoes are still visible, within these niches today. The north and south walls, each feature three window openings that taper outwards. These were constructed, using a composite technique combining stone jambs and courses of brick. While the north wall has survived in relatively, better condition (Figure 2d). The south wall has largely collapsed, with only the lower sections remaining intact (Figure 2c). The structure's load-bearing walls are generally, built of rough rubble masonry, with wooden tie-beams inserted into the wall structure, at regular intervals. Finely hewn stone blocks and brick bands were also utilized in certain sections. The church's roofing has completely disappeared. The surviving remains do not clearly indicate the structure's original height or roof form.

When viewed from the east, the interior apse, niches, and details of the east wall are clearly discernible (Figure 2e). On the west façade, the entrance, the rough masonry texture of the north and south walls, and the structure's general state of ruin are notable (Figure 2f). Traces of plaster and paint layers on the interior wall surfaces suggest that the structure was once adorned with frescoes (Figure 2).

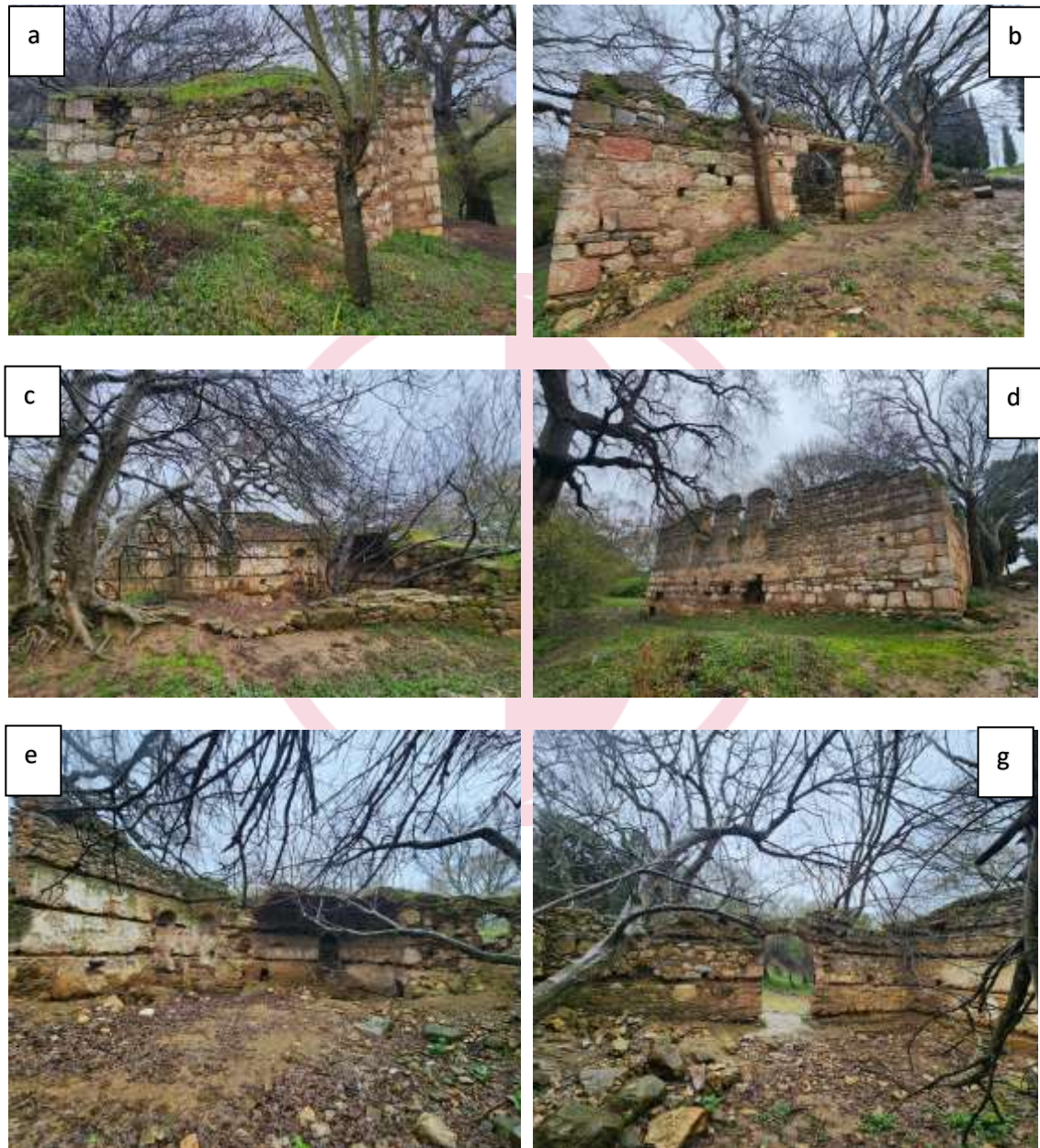


Figure 2. Current condition photographs of the Zoodochos Pege Church: (a) eastern façade, (b) western façade, (c) southern façade, (d) northern façade, (e) interior view facing east, and (f) interior view facing west (Author, 2026).

5. FINDINGS

5.1. Values-Based Heritage Assessment

As a part of the research, value-orientated cultural heritage analyses had been conducted. The results of those analyses are summarized, in Table 1. According to Table 1; one of the structure's most significant historical past values is its historical importance. The church reflects, the rural settlement sample and religious existence of the Greek Orthodox network that inhabited the area throughout the 19th century. The structure's region withinside the rural settlement suggests, that it served not simply as an area of worship withinside the past. It changed into a constructing in which social interplay happened and day by day existence unfolded. In this context; the church stands as a enormous historic document, contributes to an information of the spatial corporation of rural existence. The structure changed into abandoned, following the 1923 Lausanne Population Exchange. This situation has transformed, the shape right into a significant site of historic testimony.

It changed into related to population movements, cultural rupture, forced migration, and the lack of collective memory. Although, it not serves an lively non secular function, the structure stays a physical bearer and image of the memory- concerning the area's multi-layered historic past. An exam of the church's architectural functions reveals. It displays the architecture, material utilization, and construction strategies function of rural Greek Orthodox churches. Featuring a single-nave plan, the shape extends alongside an east-west axis—a format often encountered in rural church architecture. The constructing employs a combined masonry device, using a mixture of stone and brick. These substances provide insights into the development technology and local fabric utilization of the era. Additionally; wooden tie-beams embedded withinside the partitions are visible. These beams demonstrate, the life of local creation practices evolved on the time to beautify seismic resilience. Although the shape has in large part misplaced its roofing, the masonry format, the position of openings, the layout of the apse. And strains of the structural system offer significant evidence concerning its unique state. Currently, the building reveals severe physical deterioration because of extended neglect (Table 1).

When the structure is interpreted from the perspective of cultural landscape, several observations can be made. It occupies a significant location, maintaining a relationship with the Karacabey Floodplain Forests, the Susurluk River, and the surrounding rich rural landscape. This situation indicates, the existence of an expansive culture-nature system encompassing the structure, suggesting that the region holds substantial potential for integrated culture-nature tourism. An examination of its geographical context reveals the continued, presence of agricultural production areas, natural water systems, and traces of traditional rural life.

These indicators demonstrate, that the structure is not an isolated entity but a living element of the cultural landscape, best understood in conjunction, with its rural surroundings. Furthermore; Table 1 highlights, the structure's significant social and symbolic value. In archival records, the church appears as a spatial representation of pre-exchange rural life, social organization, and religious identity. Its state of abandonment, in particular has led to the structure being associated with concepts of cultural rupture and the loss of collective memory (Karacabey Municipality, 2015). Consequently; any future processes regarding the conservation and adaptive reuse of the structure must address these aspects: proposals for conservation and adaptation should encompass not only physical interventions, but also issues related to memory, identity, and cultural representation (Table 1).

Table 1. Findings of the Values-Based Cultural Heritage Analysis

HERITAGE VALUE	DESCRIPTION	ATTRIBUTES	DATA SOURCE
HISTORICAL VALUE	The structure represents nineteenth-century Greek Orthodox rural life and the traces of the population exchange process.	Population exchange history, historical continuity, rural settlement memory	(Şaşmaz, 2019)
ARCHITECTURAL VALUE	The building reflects, the planning principles and material characteristics of rural-scale, Greek Orthodox church architecture.	Stone-brick masonry system, opening arrangement, traces of the structural system	Field observations, photographic documentation
CULTURAL VALUE	The structure constitutes , an important cultural representation of the region's multicultural past.	Religious identity, multicultural rural past	(Karacabey Municipality, 2015)
LANDSCAPE VALUE	The structure maintains, a strong relationship with the natural environment and rural landscape.	Floodplain Forests, Susurluk River, plain landscape	Spatial assessment
SOCIAL/SYMBOLIC VALUE	The structure, carries symbolic significance in terms of collective memory and rural identity.	Local memory, identity of abandoned rural heritage	(Karacabey Municipality, 2015; field observations)

TABLE 1 NOTE: the heritage value categories presented in table 1 were developed based on the classifications, used in the values-based cultural heritage assessment approaches of UNESCO and ICOMOS (Australia ICOMOS, 2013; UNESCO et al., 2022). The table was prepared by the author based on literature review, archival documents, and field observations conducted between 2025 and 2026

5.2. Cultural Landscape Assessment

The cultural landscape analysis is summarized in Table 2. According to the analysis, the structure's easy accessibility to major centers like Bursa and Istanbul offers numerous

opportunities. Its proximity to ecologically valuable areas, such as the Karacabey Floodplain Forests, allows for its potential utilization within the scope of ecotourism and rural tourism.

It is also anticipated that the structure could be incorporated into cultural route systems planned for the South Marmara region. Regarding state-led projects in the area, the following developments are observed: Within the scope of the "250,000 Social Housing Project" conducted under the auspices of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, the 1/100,000 Scale Bursa Environmental Layout Plan was revised for an area of approximately 71.9 hectares in the Karakoca Neighborhood of Karacabey district. Consequently, the area in question has been designated as an urban development zone. This decision raises the possibility that the church and its surrounding rural cultural landscape may be subjected to pressures from urban expansion and spatial transformation.

Therefore, it is essential to develop sustainable planning strategies that will preserve the integrity of the cultural landscape in the future (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, 2025) (Table 2).

There are several adverse factors specific to the structure itself. These include a lack of adequate signage and promotional activities. Consequently, the church has not been integrated, into existing tourism networks. Other risks include: physical deterioration, a lack of maintenance, and environmental impacts. The loss of the roof structure has left the building exposed to atmospheric elements. This adverse condition has accelerated: vegetation growth, stone loss, and moisture-related deterioration. The decline in the rural population. The insufficiency of economic resources also makes long-term conservation efforts difficult (Table 2).

Table 2. Findings of the Cultural Landscape Analysis

ANALYSIS TITLE	FINDINGS	EVALUATION
Accessibility and spatial relations	The structure is relatively, accessible from major centres: such as Bursa and Istanbul.	This provides an advantage in terms of potential visitor access and, integration into regional tourism networks.
Relationship with the natural landscape	The church is associated with the Karacabey Floodplain Forests, the Susurluk River, and the surrounding rural natural landscape.	The site possesses, significant potential for integrated culture–nature tourism and ecotourism.
Rural settlement and historical environment	The structure is located- within a multilayered rural settlement texture.	It holds importance in terms of historical continuity, rural identity, and cultural memory.
Tourism and cultural route potential	The structure currently has limited, connections with existing tourism networks.	It could be integrated into regional cultural route systems and sustainable rural tourism projects.
Environmental and physical risks	Lack of maintenance, loss of the upper- covering, and environmental impacts have been observed in the structure.	Conservation interventions and, sustainable management strategies - are required.

Spatial development pressures	The region is identified, as a potential development area within environmental planning decisions.	Future urban development pressures may pose risks to the integrity of the cultural landscape.
-------------------------------	--	---

TABLE 2 NOTE: The analysis categories used in Table 2 were determined in accordance with the principal evaluation criteria emphasized in UNESCO's cultural landscape approach and in the literature on sustainable tourism and rural heritage management (Taylor & Lennon, 2011; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2008). In addition, Bursa Environmental Plan data were utilised in evaluating current spatial development pressures affecting the region (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change, 2025). The table was prepared by the author based on field observations, literature data, and environmental assessments.

5.3. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis table was prepared based on findings derived from a value-based cultural heritage assessment and a cultural landscape analysis. The SWOT analysis of the structure, yielded the following results: positive aspects include its historical and architectural value, its reflection of a multicultural rural past, its strong relationship with the natural landscape, its potential for integrated culture-nature tourism, its proximity to major cities like Bursa and Istanbul, visitor accessibility, cultural route projects, rural development policies, and funding opportunities for cultural heritage (Table 3).

Conversely; advanced physical deterioration, the loss of the roof structure, inadequate conservation interventions, a lack of visitor infrastructure, the absence of regular maintenance, and limited promotional activities were identified, as key weaknesses. Meanwhile, environmental impacts, prolonged neglect, insufficient economic resources, and the pressure of uncontrolled tourism were identified as the primary threats (Table 3).

Table 3. Findings of the SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
The structure possesses high historical and architectural heritage value.	The upper covering, has largely disappeared, and the structure is in an advanced state of physical deterioration.
The building represents the multicultural rural past of the region.	Conservation and restoration interventions are insufficient.
The structure maintains, a strong relationship with the karacabey floodplain forests and the natural landscape.	Visitor infrastructure, signage, and accessibility arrangements are lacking.
The site has significant potential -for integrated culture–nature tourism.	The structure lacks, regular maintenance and management processes.
Its relative proximity to major centres, such as bursa and istanbul provides accessibility advantages.	The structure remains: insufficiently visible within tourism and cultural heritage networks.
The building carries symbolic value, in terms of rural memory and historical continuity.	Structural risks have increased, due to ongoing physical deterioration.
OPPORTUNITIES	Threats

Increasing national and international interest in sustainable cultural tourism.	Accelerating physical deterioration due to prolonged neglect.
Potential cultural route projects, could be developed in the south marmara region.	Material losses caused by atmospheric effects, moisture, and climatic conditions.
Cultural heritage conservation funds and, support programmes.	Insufficient economic resources for conservation interventions.
Rural development and cultural heritage-oriented planning policies.	The risk of uncontrolled tourism activities, damaging the integrity of the cultural landscape.
Opportunities for integration, with ecotourism and nature tourism.	Potential future urban development and, construction pressures.
The region's potential to develop, as an integrated culture–nature destination.	Risk of damage to- the original architectural character and historical identity of the structure.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examines the potential for re-evaluating, abandoned rural religious heritage within the framework of cultural landscape and sustainable tourism, focusing on the Zoodochos Pege Church in the Karacabey district of Bursa, Turkey. The study employed value-based heritage assessment, cultural landscape analysis, and SWOT analysis.

While studies on rural religious history in Turkey has predominantly centered on architectural conservation, restitution, and useful transformation at the size of individual structures, this examine gives a holistic approach. By integrating value-primarily based totally history assessment, cultural landscape analysis, and SWOT analysis. It situates the church inside a broader rural history system that encompasses natural panorama, cultural memory, ancient continuity, and local tourism dynamics. The examine well-known shows, the re-assessment of the Zoodochos Pege Church should make contributions to strengthening rural identity, growing the visibility of cultural memory, and assisting nearby development. The findings indicate, the church structure is a multi-layered history asset embodying ancient continuity, rural memory, cultural identity, and a multicultural past. It is clear that the structure holds significant capability for incorporated culture-nature tourism, while taken into consideration, along its surrounding rural landscape. Its relative proximity, to major city facilities like Bursa and Istanbul, its capability for inclusion in local cultural routes, and its cultural-ancient importance provide big opportunities, for sustainable rural tourism. Conversely; advanced physical deterioration of the structure became identified. In addition; inadequacies in maintenance and visitor infrastructure, confined financial resources, and the pressures potentially. As a result of out-of-control tourism, represent the number one danger, threatening the long-time period preservation of the structure.

Future adaptive reuse strategies for the structure must integrate: conservation, sustainable management, local community participation, and visitor planning. Future research could contribute to the development of this approach by conducting comparative studies of various rural heritage sites and, more comprehensively addressing local participation and long-term management processes.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) solely for language refinement, improving sentence clarity, and editorial assistance. ChatGPT was not used at any stage for data collection, preparation, generation, interpretation, or analysis. All content and data analyses were independently prepared and conducted by the author. The author reviewed and edited all AI-assisted outputs and takes full responsibility for the content of this publication.

REFERENCES

- An, W., & Alarcón, S. (2020). How Can Rural Tourism Be Sustainable? A Systematic Review. *Sustainability*, 12(18), 7758. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12187758>
- Arslan Kalay, H., & Yıldız, S. (2017). Akdamar Anıt Müzesi'nin (Kilisesi) Tarihsel Süreçleri ve Kültürel Miras Turizmi Açısından Önemi. *Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 6(1), 121-136. <https://izlik.org/JA99WE96MH>
- Australia ICOMOS. (2013). *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS charter for places of cultural significance*. Australia ICOMOS. <https://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes/>
- Aydın, H. (2014). *Karakoca Köyü*. Aydın Ailesi. <https://aydinailesiorg.blogspot.com/2014/08/karakoca-koyu.html>
- Bogacz-Wojtanowska, E., Góral, A., & Bugdol, M. (2019). The Role of Trust in Sustainable Heritage Management Networks. Case Study of Selected Cultural Routes in Poland. *Sustainability*, 11(10), 2844. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11102844>
- Dehghan Pour Farashah, M.; Aslani, E.; Yadollahi, S. & Ghaderi, Z. (2023). Postoccupancy evaluation of historic buildings after their adaptive reuse into boutique hotels: An experience from Yazd, Iran. *International Journal of Building Pathology and Adaptation* 2023, 41, 849–874. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBPA-04-2021-0044>
- Della Spina, L. (2021). Cultural Heritage: A Hybrid Framework for Ranking Adaptive Reuse Strategies. *Buildings*, 11(3), 132. <https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings11030132>
- Franco, G. (2024). Adaptive Reuse of Religious and Sacred Heritage: Preserving Material Traces and Spirit of Place. *Heritage*, 7(9), 4725-4754. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage7090224>
- Gerçek, M. (2010). İşlevini Yitirmiş Kervansarayların, Günümüz Otel Yapılarına Dönüştürülmesindeki Mekansal Sorunlar / Caravansary has lost its function of days of our building hotels back spatial problems. Master's Thesis, Haliç Üniversitesi, İstanbul, Türkiye.

- İslamoğlu, E. & Karadayı Yenice, T. (2022). Cultural Perception Performance Assessment of Adaptively Reused Heritage Buildings: Kilis Eski Hamam Case Study. *ICONARP* , 10, 203-220.
- Kalaycı, M., & Özçatalbaş, O. (2022). Kültürel Mirasın Kırsal Turizm Bakımından Önemi. *Uluslararası Kırsal Turizm Ve Kalkınma Dergisi (IRTAD)* E-ISSN: 2602-4462, 5(1). Retrieved from <https://www.turizmvekalkinma.org/index.php/irtadjournal/article/view/505>
- Kaplan, N. (2021). Risk altındaki tarihi bir bina için uyarlanabilir yeniden kullanım önerisi: Ambar Köyü Kilisesi Örneği. *Mimarlık ve Yaşam*, 6(2), 459-483. <https://doi.org/10.26835/my.880058>
- Karacabey Municipality (2015). Karacabey Belediyesi stratejik plan 2015-2019. <http://www.sp.gov.tr/upload/xSPStratejikPlan/files/ZOaAK+KaracabeyBelediyesiStratejikPlan2015-2019.pdf>
- Lo Faro, A., & Miceli, A. (2019). Sustainable Strategies for the Adaptive Reuse of Religious Heritage: A Social Opportunity. *Buildings*, 9(10), 211. <https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings9100211>
- Mahmoud, N.A.; Dewidar, K. & Othman, A.A.E. (2022). A comprehensive review of risks associated with adaptive reuse and their potential impact on heritage buildings in the Egyptian context. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR)* ,9.
- Pehlivan, G. F. (2018). Edirne Rüstempaşa Kervansarayı'nın Yeni İşlevinin Değerlendirilmesi. *Journal of Architectural Sciences and Applications*, 3(2), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.30785/mbud.370896>
- Plevoets, B., & Van Cleempoel, K. (2019). Adaptive Reuse of the Built Heritage: Concepts and Cases of an Emerging Discipline (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315161440>
- Rammelmeier, M. (2025). Revitalising Rural Areas: Churches as Cultural Hubs for Youth Engagement and Spatial Transformation. *Rural Theology*, 23(2), 126–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14704994.2025.2529688>
- Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change (2025). *1/100.000 ölçekli Bursa çevre düzeni planı değişikliği: Bursa ili, Karacabey ilçesi, Karakoca Mahallesi, 5351 parsel ile ilişkin açıklama raporu*. https://webdosya.csb.gov.tr/db/bursa/duyurular/cdp_degisikligi_karacabey-20250130094618.pdf

- Soykök Ede, B., Taş, M., & Taş, N. (2025). Sustainable Management of Rural Architectural Heritage Through Rural Tourism: Iznik (Turkey) Case Study. *Sustainability*, 17(8), 3520. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17083520>
- Şaşmaz, E. (2019). Karacabey - Karakoca Köyü – Zoodochos Pege Kilisesi - Bursa. *Tarihi Mekanlar Kişisel Ansiklopedi*. <https://www.turkiyenintarihieserleri.com/?oku=1546>
- Taylor, K., & Lennon, J. (2011). Cultural landscapes: a bridge between culture and nature? *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 17(6), 537–554. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2011.618246>
- UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2008). *Operational guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Intergovernmental Committee for The Protection of The World Cultural and Natural Heritage. January 2008. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>
- UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, & IUCN. (2022). *Guidance and toolkit for impact assessments in a world heritage context*. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. ISBN : 978-92-3-100535-0 . <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidance-toolkit-impact-assessments/>
- Yılmaz, A. (Ed.). (2016). *Kayseri with its Armenian and Greek cultural heritage*. Hrant Dink Foundation. Translation: Aleksandros Kamburis, Altuğ Yılmaz, Haris Theodorelis-Rigas, Merve Pehlivan, Mine Esmer, Suzan Bölme, Zeynel Can Gündoğdu. 1st edition - February 2016. 264 Pages.
- Yüceer, H., Efeoğlu, M., & Zoroğlu, F. (2018). Kozan Kıbrıslar Köyü Cami: Kırsal Alanda Kiliseden Camiye Dönüştürülmüş Bir Yapının Mimari Analizi. *Artıbilim: Adana Bilim ve Teknoloji Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 1(1), 80-95. <https://izlik.org/JA77XU77SA>
- Zhang, J., Jiang, N., Du, Y., & Chung, T. (2025). Unlocking multiple potentials: a data-driven framework for adaptive reuse of industrial heritage in Changzhou, China. *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13467581.2025.2587250>