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KAYAKÖY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

PANAGIA PIRGIOTISSA CHURCH, PEARL OF
KAYAKÖY

GENERAL DIRECTORATE FOR
CULTURAL ASSETS AND MUSEUMS





Although the history of Kayaköy, which is located 8 kilometers south of Fethiye and known as Karmyllassos in the Ancient Period, dates back to 3rd century BCE according to philological data, no finds dating earlier than the 4th century BC in the existing ruins have been found yet.

Charles Fellows, one of the many travelers who visited the Teke Peninsula in the 18th and 19th centuries, defined the Gemile Island to the south of Kayaköy as Karmyllassos. However, when compared with the descriptions of the ancient writer Strabo, it is clearly understood that this definition is not correct.

In the city, which was called Levissi at that time, the building groups we see based on the slope are the structures built by the Greeks. The city turned into a ghost city after the wooden doors, windows and roof systems of the buildings in the city, which were evacuated as a result of the rights granted to minorities in the late Ottoman Empire, were destroyed by natural factors.



In the abandoned city, there are 350 to 400 residences, each of which is not larger than 50 m², do not block each other in terms of view and light, with two stories, the lower floors of which are cellars, with underground cisterns at the entrance where rainwater is collected from the roof. In addition to the residences, there are many chapels, 2 large churches, 1 school building and 1 customs house scattered between the houses.

Churches are at the forefront of the buildings that offer visuality to the visitors in the settlement. The Upper Church, originally called Taxiarches, was founded on a dominant hill near the middle of the settlement. Surrounded by high walls, the atrium is covered with a geometric patterned mosaic floor made of black and white pebbles. The church, which was generally built using crushed and smoothed stones and lime mortar, is covered with a thick pink plaster on the exterior. Door and window frames are covered with marble. There is a cistern filled with rubble under the three-arched narthex. The entrance to the single-nave building is provided by doors shifted to the west in the south direction and opening from the narthex.



The Lower Church, originally called Panagia Pirgotissa on the western border of the settlement, has survived to the present day with better preservation. The most important factor in its preservation is that the building was used as a mosque until the 1960s. The garden of the church, which is surrounded by high walls, is entered through the door in the east. There is a bell tower in the south-east corner of the garden and a small cemetery in the north-east. The Atrium is covered with mosaics made of pebbles, just like the Upper Church. Unfortunately, not all of them have reached today. The three-stepped row of seats adjacent to the garden wall from the south was built for the sitting of visitors during religious ceremonies.



Apart from the churches, two separate school buildings form the other group of common structures of the settlement. In Levissi, where girls and boys receive separate education, the Girls' School is located on the hill just above the Turabi Fountain, and the Boys' School is located on the top of the hill to the north-west of the Upper Church. According to an inscription found here, it is stated that the building was built by the Levisidi Brothers. The language of instruction was Greek in only primary schools. Students were sent to Rhodes, Athens and Istanbul for higher education.

Windmills constitute the other group of structures that can be identified in Levissi. Located on the ridge to the south of the settlement, about 100 meters west of the Western Chapel, the windmill is open to sea winds. The other windmill is located on the summit of Değirmentepe, south-west of the Rock Pit. Of the round-planned windmills with two floors inside, only the main walls have survived to the present day.

The empty space in the northern part of the Upper Church and its surroundings constitute the commercial area of the city. Although the buildings cannot be fully identified today, it is known that there were shops such as coffee shops, butchers, greengrocers, grocers, and fabric shops around the time they were used.