

THE EVALUATION OF THE ANCIENT CITY OF KROM WITHIN THE SCOPE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

Muhammed TAŞ

Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University, Erzincan
Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Services, Vocational School of Tourism and Hotel Management,
Erzincan Mimar Sinan, 1125. Sk., 24050 Erzincan Merkez, Erzincan, Türkiye
muhammed.tas@erzincan.edu.tr

Abstract: Unearthing traces of different civilizations in different periods of humanity is an important factor that makes tourism remarkable. Revealing, preserving, and transferring traces of ancient civilizations to future generations form the basis of cultural heritage tourism. People participate in tourism activities with the motivation of not getting away from their roots and not breaking their ties with their past.

The ancient city of Krom, which dates back to ancient times, was declared as a 3rd degree archaeological site by the Trabzon Cultural and Natural Heritage Preservation Board in 2010. The Ancient City of Krom has hosted the Roman, Byzantine, and Pontus states along with the Ottoman state, and it has been on important transit routes, such as the historical Silk Road, since ancient times. It is located in an area rich in mineral resources, which made the region worth researching.

This study is aimed to determine the potential in terms of cultural heritage tourism of the Ancient City of Krom, which is located within the borders of Yaglidere village of Gümüşhane city centre. For this purpose, studies were conducted based on secondary data and the results were discussed within the scope of heritage attractions, as determined by Swarbrooke (1999). As a result of the examination, it can be evaluated within the scope of cultural heritage tourism in the Ancient City of Krom. It has been determined that there are 4 mosques, 34 churches, 33 chapels, 2 monasteries, 5 castles, 5 arch bridges, 50 historical fountains, and approximately 200 historical stone houses. In addition, the city has potential in terms of nature-based tourism because of the area it is located in. Considering the findings, suggestions were made for the development of the Ancient City of Krom in terms of cultural heritage tourism.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Cultural Heritage Tourism, Ancient City of Krom.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism occurs in various forms. In other words, it is possible to talk about different types of tourism depending on the changing motivation. One of them is cultural heritage tourism. UNWTO (2018) defines cultural heritage tourism as "the movement of people for mainly cultural motivations, such as study trips, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals and other cultural events, visits to sites and monuments".

There are historical and cultural heritage items that reflect the past of societies. The preservation of this heritage, which reflects material and spiritual values, is an important condition for the continuity of these societies. Sustainable cultural heritage tourism is a very important type of tourism, as it helps preserving, remembering, and transferring these tangible and intangible values to future generations.

With this study, it is aimed to raise awareness in order to bring the ancient city of Krom, which has sunk into oblivion, to light, to protect it and to transfer it to future generations. For this purpose, the potential of the ancient city of Krom has been evaluated in terms of cultural heritage tourism.

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

Heritage tourism uses heritage resources, and many heritage resources and products are part of public domain properties. The fact that resources are largely outside the tourism accounting system creates

externalities. Therefore, it presents great organizational challenges.¹ Besides all these challenges, cultural heritage is one of the most essential and ubiquitous tourism resources in the world, and heritage tourism is one of the most salient forms of tourism today.² According to Aşlıoğlu and Memlük,³ cultural heritage consists of movable or immovable, tangible and intangible assets that contain information and data related to the past or current culture of a region or country, and are of artistic, architectural, historical, archaeological, ethnographic and paleontological importance.

Cultural heritage matters to individuals, ethnic groups, nations, and the international community. Cultural heritage values are various: symbolic, historical, informational, aesthetic, and economic.⁴ Symbolically, the cultural property provides awareness and pride of cultural identity. Historically, cultural heritage represents past periods and sometimes civilizations. With informational aspects, cultural heritage is necessary for both public education and scientific research. Archaeologists, historians, and ethnographers use material culture to study ancient and traditional cultures. The greatest informational value for scholars is to examine cultural property in its original context. Aesthetically, the cultural heritage can provide an aesthetic, emotional experience for the viewer, leading to personal growth and development. Economically, cultural heritage, which can be local, national, or international, has an employment and income-generating effect.⁵

As a tourist activity, cultural tourism primarily attracts people who travel for pleasure and are subject to limited time and money budgets. Secondly, cultural tourism is about the use of heritage sites and their offerings and values to visitors. Thirdly, cultural tourists, like other tourists, want to consume a variety of (cultural) services and experiences. Fourthly, and finally, cultural tourism should take into account the preferences of tourists. Of course, cultural tourists are usually people who live outside the host community, but those who live here are certainly a significant segment of potential visitors.⁶

METHODOLOGY

The settlement situated in the Krom valley, for which there is no definite information about the date of its establishment, is called by many different names such as Kurum, Gorom, Korom, Gurom, Kromni in different sources.⁷ Still, it is relatively certain that its history goes back 4000 years. The ancient city of Krom can be found today within the borders of the Yaglidere region, at 39 km from the city centre of Gümüşhane, and this historical settlement is under protection as a 3rd-degree archaeological site. The ancient city of Krom, which was part of the Roman, Byzantine, Pontus, and Ottoman states, bears traces of many civilizations.⁸

The aim of this study is to determine the potential of the ancient city of Krom within the scope of cultural heritage attractions. It is an ancient settlement that, as part of different civilizations during its existence, is in consequence culturally rich. This study is important in terms of revealing the touristic potential of the ancient city of Krom, which has various cultural resources. In addition, when evaluated from a touristic point of view, it is an important study in terms of preservation and transfer to future generations.

Heritage attractions in the ancient city of Krom were analysed by using secondary data sources within the scope of "Cultural Tourism Resources" heritage attractions determined by Swarbrooke,⁹ as follows: museums and historical centres, castles, mansions, ancient artefacts, historical gardens, landscape gardens and historical villages. The investigations were made in this context.

¹ Ashworth 2000.

² Timothy 2014.

³ Aşlıoğlu, Memlük 2010.

⁴ İsmail, Masron, Ahmad 2014.

⁵ Costin 1993.

⁶ Hausmann 2007.

⁷ Erüz et al. 2010.

⁸ Binay 2022.

⁹ Swarbrooke 1999.

RESULTS

During the reign of Sultan Murat IV, Muslims held positions such as Journeyman and Mine Emini in the mines opened in Krom near Ardasa (Torul), while Christian inhabitants of the city were mostly engaged in worker jobs such as Ranger and Washer, and also paid more taxes. After that, the Orthodox Greeks, who represented the majority of the population, changed their religion (as Muslims) and started to obtain positions in the top ranks in the mines; moreover, most of them became rich by earning more and paying less taxes.¹⁰ As an interesting side information, they returned to their old religion when the tax difference was removed with the Tanzimat.¹¹

Among the 15 mining regions in Gümüşhane, the Kromni region or the ancient city of Krom has a great place and importance in terms of mining activities. It is recorded in the Ottoman and Greek archives that there were nearly 40 mines in Kromni and that 25,000 or more miners lived in this mining area from the middle of the 17th century to the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War. Copper, silver, large amounts of lead and small amounts of gold were mined from the very rich Kromni mines.¹²

Until the years of World War I, many ethnic groups lived in the ancient city of Krom. It is known that it is a settlement where Turkish and Greek populations live intensely. In addition to the local population of Greek origins, Turkish, Kurdish, Iranian, German, French, Hungarian and Albanian origin lived in the ancient city and villages of Krom. The fact that this valley, which is in Muslim lands today, was in Christian lands years ago has shown its effect on the historical structures in the region.¹³

KROM HERITAGE ATTRACTION

According to the results obtained through secondary data, in the Ancient City of Krom there are 5 castles, 4 mosques, 34 churches, 33 chapels, 2 monasteries, 5 arch bridges, 50 historical fountains and approximately 200 historical stone houses.¹⁴ In this section, the surviving and prominent ones of these historical structures will be examined.

The website of the Gümüşhane Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism includes information about two of the five castles in the Krom valley:¹⁵

- **Krom Castle.** It was built on the rock mass that dominates the environment at the summit of the Krom Valley. There is no driveway. Some of the walls of the building, in which rubble stone was used, are still standing. It is a castle built to serve as an outpost. Since the building has no inscription, its exact date is not known, but it is estimated that it was built in the Middle Ages.
- **Yaglidere Village Castle.** It can be seen from the vehicle road without going out to Yaglidere village, and it is a police station purposed castle placed on the bedrock in the valley. It is very difficult to determine the date of the building, which does not have an inscription and is not mentioned in any source. The building exhibits a different architectural style than the castle we found in the region. Most of the walls of the building, which was built with rubble stone, are still standing.

Mosques in the ancient city of Krom:¹⁶

- **Krom Antique City Yaglidere Village Disbudak Neighbourhood "Church Mosque".** Although the mosque, which was used as a church, has undergone some changes, it has survived to the present day. It is a building with three naves.
- It was built in the centre of Krom Valley Şamanlı District, on the upper part of the vehicle road, in a position dominating the region. The building has a cross plan with a single apse placed within the castle frame in the east-west direction.

¹⁰ Avşaroğlu 2013.

¹¹ Tellioglu 2011.

¹² Akpınar 2010.

¹³ Rumina, Kishwar 2010.

¹⁴ Erüz 2009.

¹⁵ Gümüşhane Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism 2023a.

¹⁶ Gümüşhane Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism 2023b.

Bridges in the ancient city of Krom:¹⁷

- **The ancient city of Krom, Yaglidere Village, Bazbent Bridge** provides the connection to Bezbent Village. It is a one-eyed, pointed arch bridge. The arch and archivolt part are yellow cut stone; the other parts are rubble stone. The bridge deck rises in the form of a "harpuşa". Guardrails were added during its repair.
- **Yaglidere Village Krom Valley Bridge.** The single and wide arch of the bridge was completed with neat, chipped stone, and the other parts were completed with rubble stones. The balustrades were later made during repairs.

The website of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism Gümüşhane Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorate contains information about 20 churches in the Krom valley. Binay stated in his study by examining the information and architectural features of 7 churches, which are important out of 34 churches, and their strategic locations along the Valley¹⁸ (Fig. 1). These 7 churches are Alikinos church, Zemberek church, Gavalak church, Mohara church, Ortayayla church, Şamanlı Church (Ayayorgi church), and Sarioğlu church. Let us briefly examine these churches.

- **Alikinos Church**, located in Düzce (Alikinos) neighbourhood of Yaglidere village, is one of the oldest churches in the region. It is difficult to obtain precise information about the construction date of this church, which has survived to the present day. It was built with the traditional construction technique, using natural stone and wood as masonry.¹⁹
- **Zemberek Church.** The most distinctive feature that distinguishes the Zemberek church from the other churches in the region is that the decorations on the entrance door are mostly intact, compared to other churches in the region.²⁰
- **Gavalak Church.** The church of Gavalak was built in 1843 with a three-nave domed basilica plan and two floors.²¹
- **Mohara Church.** Since the inscription of the Mohara Church could not be reached, it is estimated that the year of construction was before 1900. This church, which was built using natural stone and wood, continues to exist as a ruin today.²² No decoration from the building has survived to the present day. It is the only example with a cross plan among the churches in the Krom valley.
- **Ortayayla Church.** The construction year of the church is not known because it has suffered a lot of damage over time.²³ The church, located on the highest travertine rock of the valley, was built with the traditional construction technique using natural stone and wood and is in a dilapidated condition and is not used today.²⁴
- **Şamanlı Church (Ayayorgi Church).** Merkez Yaglidere Village was established in the centre of Şamanlı Neighbourhood in Krom Valley, on the upper part of the vehicle road, in a position overlooking the region. It has a cross plan with a single apse placed in a square frame in the east-west direction. The main walls of the building were built of rubble stone with a thickness of 0.85 m. Smooth-cut stone material was used in the corners of the facades, door, and window openings, piers, arches, and transition elements.²⁵
- **Sarioğlu Church.** The church is on a hill overlooking the region, in the Yaglidere Village, Krom Vadisi Sarioğlu Neighbourhood. It was built on a rectangular plan, with three naves. In the church, the door, window carriers, arches, and cornerstones are made of fine-quality cut stone, and the main walls are made of rubble stone.²⁶

¹⁷ Gümüşhane Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism 2023c.

¹⁸ Binay 2022.

¹⁹ Binay 2022.

²⁰ Erüz 2009.

²¹ Okuyucu Yılmaz 2015.

²² Binay, Özdemir Işık 2022.

²³ Erüz 2009.

²⁴ Binay 2022.

²⁵ Gümüşhane Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism 2023d.

²⁶ Gümüşhane Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism 2023e.

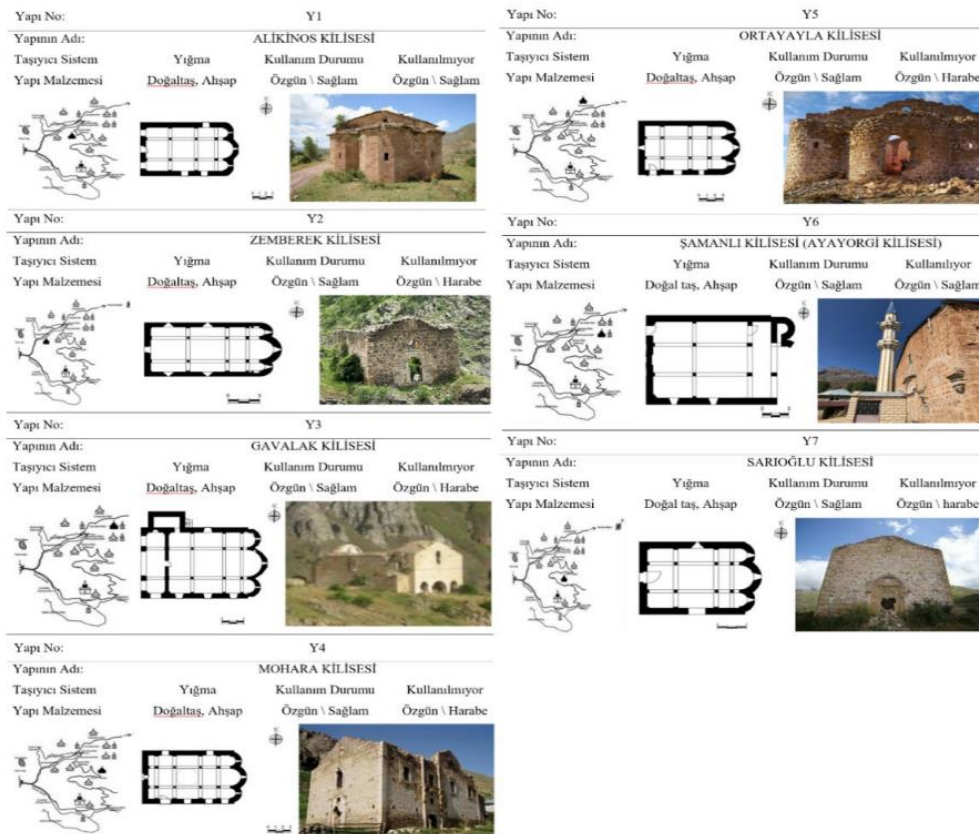


Fig. 1. The main churches in the study presented as two-dimensional drawings (Erüz 2009), photographs (Aleyna Binay 2019), compiled (Binay, Özdemir Işık 2022).

Monastery in the ancient city of Krom:

- **The monastery of Imera** was built in 1350 and it is written on the inscription on the entrance that it was renewed in 1859 by the High Priestess Roxane. The architectural plans of the churches in the valley are similar in terms of materials used and decoration techniques.²⁷

CONCLUSION

According to the results of the research, it was seen that the lack of a tourism-oriented planning for the Krom Valley and its surroundings negatively affected the awareness of the region in terms of tourism. In this direction, it should be researched what measures should be taken to raise the awareness of the tourists by conducting joint studies with academics, and local and tourism operators.²⁸ In particular, destinations that have the potential to protect their cultural heritage resources and present them correctly benefit more from cultural heritage tourism. This presents an important opportunity for destinations with culturally and historically rich heritage resources.²⁹

The ancient city of Krom is an important settlement that should be evaluated in terms of tourism because it contains the tangible and intangible historical and cultural heritage of many civilizations. When evaluated from a tourist point of view, it is possible to restore damaged buildings and revive the forgotten history and transfer it to future generations. Of course, tourism will also have negative effects. However, with the elimination of these negativities with a sustainable understanding, the ancient city of Krom will appear as a magnificent cultural heritage destination that can offer the opportunity to travel back in history.

²⁷ Binay, Özdemir Işık 2022.

²⁸ Binay, Özdemir Işık 2022.

²⁹ Güneş 2019.

Due to the fact that the region has historical and cultural riches as well as natural beauty, it is a tourism destination that can come to the fore not only for cultural tourism but also for nature-based tourism types. As a matter of fact, in the "Atlas Magazine Atlas of Walking Routes: 50 Dream Politics" research conducted by Çalık et al., the Kromni Valley was shown among the fifty hiking routes in Turkey.³⁰ This shows that the region is an attraction centre for extreme sports, camping, mountaineering, and photo safaris.

In light of all the results, the ancient city of Krom is seen as a suitable destination to be evaluated in terms of cultural tourism, heritage tourism, and nature-based tourism types. For this reason, it is recommended to evaluate the ancient city of Krom from a tourist point of view, to restore historical buildings, to revive the forgotten history, and to inform the local people in terms of tourism. In addition, an authentic experience can be obtained in historical ruins by creating walking paths in the ancient city of Krom. Binay has created two separate walking routes that include seven churches. These roads can be used as walking routes.³¹

³⁰ Çalık et al. 2013.

³¹ Binay 2022.

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