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AN AUXILIARY SUGGESTION TO REALIZATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN AĞIN DISTRICT: RURAL TOURISM

Özlem ÇAKAR ÇELİK¹

Öz

Ağın, turizmin ve rekreasyonel faaliyetlerin gelişmediği bir yerleşmedir. Oysa turizme ve rekreasyonel faaliyetlere neden olabilecek doğal ve beşeri çekiciliklere sahiptir. Aynı zamanda yakın çevresinde bulunan benzer coğrafi şartlara sahip Arapgir, Kemaliye ve Keban gibi yerleşmeler rekreasyonel faaliyetler ve turizm açısından hareketlidir. Keban Baraj Gölü'nün inşası Ağın için bir dönüm noktasıdır. Bu tarihe kadar nüfus artış eğilimi pozitif yöndeysen baraj inşasıyla birlikte sürekli bir azalma eğilimine girmiştir. Verimli kırsal arazilerinin, mera alanlarının önemli bir kısmını baraj inşasıyla birlikte kaybetmiştir. Keban Baraj Gölü ile birlikte yarımada özelliği kazanmıştır. Ancak su kaynakların oluşturduğu çekicilik, zengin kültürel ve tarihsel birikim turizm faaliyetlerinin gelişimine zemin hazırlayamamıştır. Bu çalışmada literatür ışığında Ağın'ın doğal ve beşeri özellikleri irdelenmiş, bu özellikler arazi gözlemleriyle detaylandırılmıştır. Araştırmanın vardığı sonuç kırsal turizmin Ağın için önemli bir fırsat olduğudur. Kırsal turizm ile birlikte çalışma sahasında nüfus kaybının gerilemesi, uzun vadede nüfus artışının gerçekleşmesi ve yeni istihdam alanlarının oluşması beklenebilir. Ancak kırsal turizmin gelişmesi yerel halkın, kamu ve özel sektörün paydaşlığında gerçekleşecek planlamalarla mümkün olacaktır. Bu kapsamda yerel halkın gönüllüğünü sağlamak, kırsal turizmin yöreye kazandıracağı avantajları ortaya koymak atılacak adımların ilki olmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kırsal Turizm, Rekreasyon, Kırsal Kalkınma, Ağın İlçesi.

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An Auxiliary Suggestion to Realization of Rural Development in Ağın District: Rural Tourism

Abstract

Ağın is a settlement where tourism and recreational activities are not developed. However, it has natural and human attractions that can lead to tourism and recreational activities. At the same time, other settlements in its vicinity such as Arapgir, Kemaliye and Keban, which have similar geographical conditions, are active in terms of recreational activities and tourism. The construction of Keban Dam Lake is a turning point for Ağın. While the population growth trend was positive until that time, it entered a continuous decreasing trend with the construction of the dam. The area lost a significant part of its fertile rural lands and pasture areas with the construction of the dam. With the construction of Keban Dam Lake, the area gained the feature of a peninsula. However, the attraction created by water resources, rich cultural and historical background could not do the groundwork for development of tourism activities. In this study, the natural and human properties of Ağın were examined in the light of the literature, and these features were detailed with field observations. The study concluded that rural tourism is an important opportunity for Ağın. It is expected that thanks to rural tourism, population loss would decline in the study area while population growth would be achieved in the long run and new employment areas would be opened among the expected benefits.

Keywords: Rural Tourism, Recreation, Rural Development, Ağın.

INTRODUCTION

Rural development is multidimensional developmental practice. Rural tourism is one of the activities that has took place in this developmental practice, which can be identified as a process that includes alternative approaches to the countryside. Rural tourism, inherently, appeared as a type of tourism with different experiences from classic types of tourism, aiming to consolidate tourism without changing and damaging the maintainability of the countryside. This type of tourism, which refers to the bringing into tourism of natural resources, cultural inheritance, agricultural lands, rural housing, traditions, products that have become “brand” reflecting the local-regional identity, is not just farm tourism (agro tourism). On the contrary, it presents a structure that requiring holistic planning which has a diversity covering all touristic activities in rural lands (Garau, 2015; Baykal, 2019; as cited in Ataberk, 2020, p.230).

The complexity, weariness and most often the monotony of urban life have been influential in the emergence of rural tourism. These days, many types of tourism that enframe the classical concept of tourism are no longer a different experience for people. Characteristics that recall tourism types such as coastal

tourism and mountain tourism are now understood as “artificial services” and rural tourism can confront these types of tourism as a strong alternative. It also shows that the content of the word “holiday” has changed. Entertainment activities in destinations consisting of similar services have become unattractive for many people. Exploring nature, recognizing local cultures, integrating with rural people have been included in tourism activities in terms of entertainment, relief and enjoyment. (Demircioğlu, 1993, p.8). This changing trend has been influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic since 2020. During the pandemic period, the world economy was upside down and people were psychologically affected. While the demand for mass tourism types decreased during this period when modern tourism establishments were undergoing closed circuits, the request for nature-based tourism types increased (Alaeddinoğlu ve Rol, 2020, p.240). Within this direction, it is fair to say that 21st century will be the fastest time when rural tourism will develop fastest, dating back to the 19th century (Demirtaş, 2020, p.202).

Ağın, continues its existence as a settlement based on agriculture, has not met tourism and has been constantly migrating for more than half a century. When looking at the population growth of the district over the years, it is possible to see this remarkable situation immediately. The population of the district has continuously decreased since 1965. Specially with the construction of Keban Dam, it started to emigrate and has come to this day. In fact, the migration process that occurs with the construction of dam lakes is a well-known phenomenon (Sönmez, 2012, p.221). Ağın, which is among the most elderly districts of Turkey today, has not been able to cover a lot of ground in terms of urban development, but also has substantial disadvantages that will limit its urban development. As İpar and Tırlı (2014, p.49) stated, the handling of emigrating regions with a sustainable tourism approach will make important contributions to rural development. Within this scope, it is fair to say that rural tourism will involve crucial opportunities for Ağın. As Emekli et al. stated (2007, p.8), rural development projects that will prompt agricultural and non-agricultural employment opportunities in settlements where rural functions are decreased in value will contribute positively to the shrinking rural economy. At this juncture, first of all, the rural tourism potential of Ağın and the axle to be enhanced in accordance with this potential should be designated.

Location, Boundaries and Geographical Features of Ağın

Physical Geography Features

Ağın district, located northwest of Elazığ in the Upper Euprates Section of the Eastern Anatolia Region, is bordered by the provinces of Malatya, Erzincan

and Tunceli. Çemişgezek is located to the east, Arapgir to the west and north, Keban to the south and Kemaliye District to the northeast. Geographically, the district bordered by The Eastern Taurus to the north and west and Keban Dam Lake in the south and southeast has gained the appearance of a peninsula thanks to the dam lake (Figure 1).

precipitation in the work site is seen in the summer season. Climate, lithology and anthropogenic effects are the factors that specify the general characteristics of flora in the study area where semi-arid climatic conditions prevail. Within this framework, step formation such as keven, bovine tail, camel thorn, artemisia, corn poppy, thyme is common. On the valley floor and stream edges are tree species such as willow, poplar, sycamore, and blackberry-type natural plants and fruit trees. In the northern parts of the work site, forests consisting of the remains of oak and juniper species are found (Karakaş, 1996, p.32).

Human Geography Features

Although it has a long-standing past, the settlement with the least population among the districts of Elazığ province is Ağın. When the development of the district population is analyzed over the years, it is instantly seen that there was a slow increase until 1965. However, since 1965, it has been on a continuous decreasing trend (except for the city population of 1975) and in 2020 the total population of the district has decreased to 2,556. The small-scale rise of the city's population in 1975 was due to the establishment of a leather industry factory in

the district center with the money paid during the dam expropriation (Karakaş, 1996, p.46). This factory is inactive today. In the following periods, the district continued to lose population. Both the rural and urban populations in the district had to migrate due to the narrowing of the district area.

Figure 3. Ağın District Population by Years (TUİK 1935-2020)

Though the district is a rural town, the city population (62%) is more than the rural population (38%) (Figure 3). As it is known, villages are of great importance in terms of rural tourism. However, villages have lost significant population in the field of study. The village population has gone from 4,203 in 1935 to 976 in 2020. This negative process in terms of population jeopardizes the continuation of the villages of Ağın as a sustainable asset.

Alongside the lack of population in the district, age structure is also an important problem. The age structure of the population shows significant contradictions compared to the average in Turkey. In Turkey, while 0-14 age group shows 24%, 15-64 age group 65% and over-65s 9%, the high rate of 36% of the elderly population in Ağın district shows an impediment to rural planning and tourism investments. Hence, this population structure shows the requirement for sustainable planning in the district. From the point of gender in the district, the female (51%) population is slightly higher than the male (49%) population. From this aspect it is in contrast with the average in Turkey (TÜİK 2020). When the distribution of the population according to the economic activity branches is examined, while the proportion of employees in the agricultural sector is 65%, the proportion of employees in the industrial sector is 5% and the proportion of those working in the service sector is 30% (DPT, 2004).

Although the exact date of its establishment is unknown, Ağın has been a village for a long time during historical periods. Meanwhile in the 15th century, Sivas Province was a village of Kemaliye Sub-district in Arapgir Liva, in 1859 it received the status of sub-district with Kemaliye becoming a district. On these dates, there are 52 villages in Ağın. In 1323 yearbook, it was a sub-district with 19 villages and was connected to Arapgir in 1938. It was taken from Arapgir in 1945 and connected to Keban district, and in 1954 it became a district of Elazığ (Kırızıoğlu, 1963; Tulgacı, 1985; as cited in Karakaş, 1996, p.109). Today, there are 16 villages and 4 neighborhoods connected to Ağın.

Ağın is a town as it is in many district centers in the Eastern Anatolia region. The first feature of Ağın that should be evaluated in terms of economic geography is the land asset. The agricultural land asset of the district is 17%. This rate corresponds to 0.8% of the agricultural land assets of the province. The stated rates demonstrate that Ağın has agricultural land cuts. The excess of unusable land in the district land assets (61%) is noteworthy (Ağın Prefecture, 2020). This expresses the backwardness of Ağın's rural economy.

Ağın is a settlement where the transportation function is not developed owing to its geographical location. In addition to its geographical location, transportation problem has been overcome with the construction of Keban Dam today but until 2015 it was a settlement where transportation opportunities were limited. This is because the dam construction and the Ağın's connection to the environment have changed. Before the dam, while the connection from the south to Elazığ was in the form of a highway, after the dam it was provided by ferry and until 2015 transportation between Elazığ and Ağın continued by ferry. Road connection with the drawbridge made on the specified date has also been added. Nowadays, the road connection with Elazığ takes place by Arapgir road.

It is not wrong to say that the rural functions of Ağın have lost value based on the limitations described above. As Emekli et al. indicated (2007, p.8), evoking non-agricultural employment opportunities for economically devalued rural settlements is important for rural development. Tourism is perhaps the first potential that can be evaluated apart from non-agricultural activities. Rural tourism can develop and integrate in places where classical types of tourism develop, as well as with the right planning in settlements with such restrictions and make important economic contributions to settlement.

METHOD

Field and document analysis methods were used in this study, which aims to reveal the rural tourism potential of the Ağın district. In the first stage of study, document analysis from qualitative research methods was used. In this context, literature studies were carried out on both rural development and rural tourism concepts. Also, the literature on the field of study has been examined in depth. The second step of the study was the land studies. Land studies were carried out at different times of the year, and tables and graphs were created by obtaining statistical (population, agriculture, livestock and land assets) data from TÜİK regarding the field of work with official institutions such as Ağın Municipality and Ağın Prefecture. Along the same line, maps were drawn on the subject with the help of Arcgis program on the work site and evaluations and recommendations were made regarding the rural tourism potential of the site.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Rural Tourism Potential of Ağın District

The presence of natural and cultural attractions in rural areas is both a significant justification and a potential to be used, although its diversity alone is not enough for the development of tourism and recreational activities in these areas (Özdemir, 2012, p.20). Although the natural and cultural attractiveness of the work area is diverse and rich enough to allow the development of tourism and recreation activities, it alone has not been enough. Because, as mentioned above, Ağın is a settlement with substantial limitations. However, these limitations can be eliminated with proper types of economic activity and the right planning. In other words, Ağın's natural and cultural attractions are a potential that expects to be the subject of tourism. At this point, rural tourism is an important alternative for Ağın.

Their natural and cultural appeal, the level of education of the population, the presence of village associations and cooperatives are the strengths that will enable the development of rural tourism in Ağın (Figure 4). However, the geographical location of the district, the infrastructure and upperstructure facilities are not capable of enabling the development of mass tourism. In terms of rural tourism, it is open to improvement. Even the fact that it is not urbanly developed can be considered as an advantage. Because its rural and cultural geographical outlook has not changed much under the pressure of urbanization.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural attractivenesses • Cultural attractivenesses • Education Level of the Population • Presence of Village Associations • Presence of Cooperatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographical Location • Age Structure of the Population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cessation of Emigration • Reverse migration • Employment Increase • Side Income • Elimination of Economic Imbalances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive Commercializaton • Distortions in Geographical Appearance

Figure 4. Swot Analysis for Rural Tourism in Ağın

Ağın's Natural Attractions That Can Be the Subject of Rural Tourism

Among the factors preparing the emergence of rural tourism, physical geography features have an important place. When the physical geography characteristics of the work area were evaluated, it was confirmed that geomorphological and hydrographic attractiveness came into prominence in terms of rural tourism. Hence, these attractivenesses were evaluated by Özgüç (2017, p.63) as characteristics that determine the existence or absence of rural tourism.

Geomorphological Attractions

The dominant geomorphological unit of the field of study in terms of topographical features is Ağın Peninsula, which was formed by the construction of Keban Dam Lake. The peninsula, which has a coastal length of 70 km, has convenient features for recreation and sports activities. Photo safari, trekking and boat tours are the main recreation activities that can improve on the peninsula. Today, boat tours have not yet started in the area of interest of photo safari and trekking lovers. However, the small marina located in the district's Badem Island (not an island geographically) can be used for these activities. Interesting canyons on the peninsula and Hastek Castle (Photo 3) will be frequent destinations of these tours.

Another important factor among the geomorphological attractions is the Şenkaya Pit, which the local people call "Kup" in the south of Şenpınar (Vahşen) Neighborhood in the east of Ağın, 300-350 m in diameter, 30-35m. deep (İskender, 1994, p.73-74) in the form of a circle (Photo 1).

Photo 1. Şenkaya (Kup) Hole

Hydrographic Attractions

The areas that hydrographically subject to tourism in the work area are Keban Dam Lake and Sülük Lake. As it is known, hydrographic attractions are among the factors that provide a basis for the formation of tourism activities. Among the hydrographic attractions, dam lakes are very important in fulfilment of recreational needs, especially in places without a sea coast (Özgüç, 2017, p.133). In the literature, two primary uses are recommended for destinations around dam lakes in the form of recreational activities on the backwater surface and connected to the water shore (Orhan, 2015, p.392). In this context, it is crucial to establish beaches, parks and various service facilities around the dam lake.

While the presence of Keban Dam Lake has been an important source of attraction for Keban, Pertek and Çemişgezek Districts, it has not paved the way for the development of tourism and recreational activities for Ağın. Among the reasons for this is that Ağın is located further by distance, is not located on the trackside and the dam lake is not sufficiently featured in tourism plans. There are seven trout production farms on the dam lake in the study area. It is predictable that this economic benefit provided by the dam lake will lead to the spread of service facilities as in Keban and Sivrice districts with the formation of tourist mobility.

Sülük Lake, which is located within the boundaries of Balkaya village in the work area, can be a source of recreational activities and health tourism (Photo 2). With the resolution of the transportation problem, the lake area will become a

significant area for picnics, relaxation, hiking, etc. Moreover, leeches that gave the lake its name have been used by locals as an alternative treatment tool since ancient times. Not only this aspect of the lake can be evaluated in terms of health tourism, but also it can be brought into the forefront as part of the local culture.

Photo 2. Sülük Lake and a Small Lake Nearby

The Man-Made Attractions of Ağın that May be the Subject of Rural Tourism

Ağın is a district where traditional rural pattern is conserved in terms of settlement geography. This feature is an important advantage in terms of rural tourism. In addition, rock graves, Hastek castle, mounds, historical plane trees, mansions and local houses are proof that the district has historical and cultural attractions that go back a long time. In the field of work, it is possible to evaluate anthropic attractions in three ways: Agricultural production and gastronomy, historical and cultural attractions and architectural attractions.

While Ağın's anthropic attractions that may be subject to tourism have been presented in this study, field planning should be evaluated with the immediate environment of Ağın. Because it would be deficit or even wrong to evaluate the historical and cultural characteristics of Ağın separately from Arapgir and Kemaliye districts.

Gastronomy and Agricultural Production

The local flavors of a destination can become an important attractive factor. This is a popular reason that affects the destination choice. The differentiating tourist profile and experiences have made tourist activities visible, including tasting of local dishes or foods made with endemic species and observing the stages of production. Even the literature emphasizes that gastronomy stimulates tourism movements in the destination and that a strong gastronomy identity contributes positively to tourism. In addition, a weak gastronomic identity is considered a disadvantage (Sünnetçioğlu et al. 2017, p.346). The state of gastronomic identity reflecting the physical and human geography characteristics of the destination (Harrington, 2005; as cited in Diker ve Deniz, 2017, p.192) is another factor to consider from the point of tourism.

Ağın District is a destination capable of producing food based on a rich local food culture and endemic species that may be subject to gastronomy tourism that has begun to be forgotten. When the connection between gastronomy and rural tourism is considered, this is a substantial advantage. However, the district has not yet been able to take advantage of its potential. In this respect, the first phase of the planning to be carried out must be the presentation of the specific food culture of Ağın, the foundation and organization of the places where these dishes will be produced. Also, endemic species and products based on the dominant vegetable production of the district should be ensured to be the subject of gastronomy and rural tourism.

Food culture and variety of food are important for rural tourism. Moreover, geographically indicated food has a special place in terms of rural tourism. Ağın's leblebi (roasted chickpea), which is the product of the field of study that has received a geographical indication certificate in 2017, is one of the important products to be evaluated within the scope of rural tourism. This leblebi is produced with "feathered chickpeas", an endemic species native to Ağın. All of the chickpeas planted in the district are used in the production of leblebi and 262 tons of chickpeas were produced in 2020.

Ağın's leblebi is obtained in traditional and modern ways. The traditional way of production is specific to the local. This method includes boiling chickpeas with oak ash water and roasting them in sheet metal with sand extracted from Bademli village. Traditional Ağın leblebi, which is produced from chickpeas put to these processes, has different taste and flavor than chickpeas produced in modern ways. It is also possible to talk about the family-centered production in the production of leblebi, where more female populations are employed.

Traditional leblebi production is a crucial source of income for the people in the district. The fact that Ağın chickpea, which is mainly manufactured in the villages of Balkayası, Saraycık and Yedibağ in the district center, Şenpınar Neighborhood, is produced all year round is an important advantage for the local people. In 2021, it was confirmed that 295 tons of leblebi were produced in the district. The leblebi's market is limited to domestic consumption, but it is not sufficient to fully meet domestic demands. In field studies, it was determined that 56 people were employed in the production of leblebi. This number includes traditional family-centered production. What is emphasized here is that Ağın's leblebi, a geographically indicated product, is also not sufficiently the subject of rural development of the feathered chickpeas unique to the geographically traced region. In fact, Ağın leblebi is a gastronomic attraction that can be used from the point of rural tourism with its production phase.

One of the ways the Ağın leblebi is used as an attraction in terms of rural tourism is that it is considered as a gastronomy festival. Twelve leblebi festivals were organized in the district between 1989 and 2019 (Ağın Prefecture, Archive Records). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, no new festivals have been organized since 2019.

Almond production in Ağın district can be considered as an attractive actor in terms of rural tourism. Today, Ağın is the district that has the highest number of almond trees in Elazığ province and also produces the most almonds. This form of production can be evaluated with activities such as direct participation in almond harvesting within the scope of rural tourism and organizing an almond festival.

Participation in almond harvesting can be carried out in two different ways. The first is to ensure that the tourist participates directly in the harvest activities of the farmer, and the second is to allow them to participate in these activities by renting trees to the tourist during the harvest season. As a matter of fact, it is possible to see activities in the way of tree rental in Turkey. In addition, the sale of almonds in the district center and villages should be carried out more organizedly. Today, while there is one almond crushing plant in the district, there is no outlet with the almond label of Ağın. The aforementioned almond crushing plant meets the needs of Ağın and its immediate environment. There are many commercial houses in the district where almonds are offered for sale. However, these are not commercial houses for almond and almond products directly. It is possible to find almonds for sale from supermarkets, women's cooperative sales store, houses, as well as to buy almonds from an irrelevant trading house such as glassware. In spite of the almond potential of the district, the fact that this product

is only used as a snack is a significant deficiency. Determining the production methods (e.g. almond paste) in which almonds can be the subject, and providing trainings to local people at this point will be crucial for rural tourism.

Another aspect of almond trees that can be the subject of tourism is the beautiful landscape formed during the blooming period. The landscapes that call photography enthusiasts' attention still attract landscape photographers to Ağın today. Almond blossom has a feature that can be the subject of festival tourism with this respect. Such festivals are organizations that promote rural tourism. As a matter of fact, almond festivals organized in Datça are a good example of this. Karadağ and Dalgın (2021, p.948) considered the Datça Almond Blossom festival as an integrative organization for the development of rural tourism in Datça. In their study, Özgürel et al. (2018, p.18) concluded that the almond blossom festival contributed to Datça's recognition, brought local economy to life and helped to get rid of the seasonality problem of tourism. It wouldn't be wrong to say that similar effect will be on the carpet for Ağın.

Even if it does not have the amount of production to create commercial value in the field of study, the landscape created by the vineyard areas with the Murat River is also a product that will be evaluated in terms of rural tourism with its features such as molasses making and being offered for sale. The district has an unconfirmed registration application for Ağın white grapes.

Historical and Cultural Attractions

Ağın and its environment have a very old settlement history. Although the number of studies related to the history of Ağın is small, its historical value has been revealed with the excavations of the Archaeological Settlements Under Keban Dam Lake between 1968 and 1974. History of the work area with a continuous cultural treasure that dates back to the palaeolithic of prehistoric is examined in two periods: The pre-Turkish period of domination, from prehistoric periods to the introduction of Turkish tribes to the region; Seljuk, Principalities, Ottoman and Republican periods with the arrival of Turks in the region (Ağın'a Yolculuk, 2005, p.12).

As seen from Table 2, there are a total of 30 works in Ağın registered as 12 archaeological sites, 9 civil architectures, 5 religious structures and 4 natural assets. In other words, Ağın has a significant historical and cultural potential with its mounds, rock tombs, ruins, mansions, mosques and historical plane trees. The localization of these structures especially in several areas is linked to the date of settlement. The necropolis, which is located on an area of approximately 1,5 km spreading to the east and west of Bademli Village in the west of the district and

dated to the Roman period is important among the registered structures and corresponds to an old trade route course. Area was studied by Ümit Serdaroğlu between 1968 and 1971. There are 14 rock tombs in three different places within the necropolis area (Danışmaz and Demir, 2019). The registered buildings in Beyelması Village also indicate that this area is an old settlement. The reason for the density seen in Hacı Yusuf Neighborhood in the center of the district is that this area is the second neighborhood established after the Tataragaşı Neighborhood, as Karakaş (1996, p.110) stated.

Table 1

Ağın's list of registered structures (The archive records of the Ağın's prefecture (2021))

Registered Structure	Register Type	Register Date	Location
Bügelek Mound	Archaeologic Site	2002	Altınayva Village
Kesmece Rock Graves		2009	Bademli Village
Kombaşı Rock Graves		2009	Bademli Village
Ören Rock Graves		2009	Bademli Village
Altınayva Rock Graves		2009	Altınayva Village
Ağustar Mound		2010	Öğrendik Village
Örenler Historical Settlement		2013	Demirçarık Village
Seki Rock Graves		2013	Bademli Village
Örenler Rock Graves		2015	Demirçarık Village
Historical Structure Ruins		2015	Beyelması Village
Necropolis Area		2015	Bademli Village
Hastek Castle's Rock Settlements and Necropolis		2015	Yenipayam Village
House	Civil Architecture	1992	Pul Village
House		1992	Beyelması Village
Ekrem İspir Mansion		2008	Hacı Yusuf NBHD
Hacı İbrahim Mansion		2015	Hacı Yusuf NBHD
Orhanlar Mansion		2015	Pul Village
Soylular Mansion		2015	Hacı Yusuf NBHD
Historic Fountain		2015	Pul Village
Tatar Ağa's Mansion		2016	Hacı Yusuf NBHD
Fountain		2016	Modanlı Village
Koçan Mosque	Religious Structure	2006	Hacı Yusuf NBHD
Grand Mosque		2006	Hacı Yusuf NBHD
Uzungil Mosque		2006	Hacı Yusuf NBHD
Church Relic		2010	Beyelması Village
Pul Village Mosque	Natural Asset	2015	Pul Village
Plane Tree		1992	Pul Village
Plane Tree		2006	Şehit M. Yavuz Street
Plane Tree		2006	Beyelması Village
Plane Tree		2006	Beyelması Village

This historical wealth is important for the development of rural tourism in the district. However, these areas have not yet been sufficiently evaluated in terms of tourism. The most important problem at this point is that the advertisement is not enough.

Photo 3. Hastek Castle, located within the borders of Yenipayam Village about 7 km southwest of Bademli Village, is another historical attraction that can be considered within the context of rural tourism. Most of the castle submerged under Keban Dam. In the castle, Latin inscriptions written on the bedrock, one-room rock tombs, cisterns, tunnels and rock settlements draw attention. Hastek Castle can only be visited by boat over the lake. It is an important frequent destination for boat tours to be organized.

Architectural Features as a Tourism Attraction Element

Housing is important among the architectural attractions that can be evaluated in terms of rural tourism in Ağın. Residential features are remarkable elements that reflect the cultural geographical appearance of Ağın. Particularly the mansions located in the district center, traditional house types and traditional house types, street textures and stone flooring in their villages are significant for rural tourism. Traditional houses in Ağın are compatible with geographical environmental conditions. The climate, lithological structure and type of economic activity of the region are important factors in shaping housing. The houses are usually two floors, mixed with stone and adobe and exhibit a courtyard feature. In the past, the first floors were used with add-ons linked to barn and livestock activity. The upper floors of the houses comprise of saloons that are considered iwan.

Aydoğmuş (1992, p.70) divided the houses in and around Ağın into four categories: Folk type, high-profile, covered and new type houses. The first three of these categories described by the researcher are capable of creating significant attractions for rural tourism. However, they need to be restored without destroying the original features.

There are four mansions in the district center in the category of high-profile houses. These mansions are also registered structures (Table 1). However, among these buildings, only Ekrem İspir Mansion has been restored (Photo 4).

Photo 4. Ekrem İspir Mansion registered building located in Hacı Yusuf Neighborhood. The mansion has the characteristics of 19th century Ottoman architecture. The general architectural features of the mansion are rectangular in shape and consist of a blend of stone and adobe. The mansion has two floors, the ceiling and window parts of which are made of wood. The main entrance door is in the east direction and double wooden door.

As a result of meetings with the local authorities of the district and land observations, the villages where rural tourism can develop have been determined as Beyelması, Bahadırlar, Balkayası and Bademli. As mentioned above in these villages, the major obstacle to the development and sustainability of rural tourism is the characteristics exhibited by the population. Although the situation of the population in terms of quantity may seem to be an obstacle in the first place, it is sufficient in terms of pilot scheme. The expected utilities of pilot schemes with medium and long-term planning are that they gradually return the population migrating out of the district and preserve the existing population.

Today, these villages are almost empty in winter. In these villages, where livestock activity has reached the degree of extinction, agricultural production has also begun to lose its importance. Because agricultural production is mainly

aimed at fulfilling the needs of the villagers. If the correct plans are not made, it is not unlikely that the existing population in the specified villages will abandon. However, these villages can be evaluated in terms of rural tourism with their houses (Photo 5-a, 5-b, 6-a, 6-b), street textures and historical attractions that reflect the Ağın culture. There is a lack of promotion regarding all of the specified villages.

Photo 5-a)

Photo 5-b)

Photo 5-a) Kadi house in Beyelması Village. The most important feature of the high-level houses in Ağın is that the owners have a high level of education and have served at various levels in state institutions such as kadi, mufti and mudarris. These houses have different characteristics from traditional houses in terms of aesthetics. For instance, door handles.

Photo 5-b) The door belonging to Tabur İmamgil House in Beyelması Village. The door handles allow the homeowner to understand whether the guest is male or female. If the person coming is a woman, uses the thin handle, and the male uses the thick handle.

Photo 6-a)

Photo 6-b)

Photo 6-a) and b). Covered house type - Bademli Village. Cover-ups are sections that look like passages, where people escape the summer heat, relax and chat. The number of examples constituting this house type has decreased considerably, and today there are 4 of them. Existing covered houses also require restoration. Covered houses have survived as an important symbol of social life belonging to Ağın culture.

Potential Effects on Ağın if Rural Tourism Develops

Rural tourism is an important means for rural development. When the literature is examined, it is seen that many benefits such as economic benefit, the elimination of the seasonality problem, increased awareness of protection for natural and cultural assets, the development of new tourism areas outside the coasts, the development of integrated tourism types, the deceleration of migration, ceasing and taking a reverse direction are mentioned. (Table 2).

The development of house boarding is important for rural tourism to settle in the local economy. With the house boarding, side income will be provided to the local people who are financially limited. House boarding, which is in essence a suitable accommodation for rural tourism, is a necessity for Ağın in terms of keeping the architectural structure of Ağın intact and in terms of inadequate accommodation. Today, only a city hotel with a capacity of 40 beds and a teacher's lodge with a capacity of 32 beds are facilities that can fulfil this function. It is stated that the model of house boarding in Turkey started due to inadequate accommodation facilities in Amasra and spread to Turkey in time. That is to say, the lack of accommodation facilities did not prevent the development of tourism. House boarding does not only develop in places where tourism is developing or close to large centers. Artvin, for example, is outside the major tourist centers. However, in all districts of Artvin, house boarding has been implemented (Akyol, 2012 p.80). Home boarding is also important for the sustainability of traditional housing. Doğanay and Orhan (2014, p.294) suggested that traditional Şavşat houses should be protected in the villages of Şavşat and used for house boarding. The model of house boarding is an activity that can be applicable in Ağın and its villages. However, architectural structures (mansions, houses) in the district center and villages must be restored for the development of house boarding.

With the development of rural tourism in Ağın, women's employment is likely to increase. Today, it will be possible to increase the number of women cooperatives, the number of employees and expand the product range produced in the cooperatives.

Another of the expected economic benefits if rural tourism develops in Ağın is that important gastronomic products gain brand value, these products expand their market areas and become prominent among the elements that make

up the image of the district. Leblebi and almonds are the leading gastronomic products mentioned. As mentioned earlier, Ağın leblebi is a geographically indicated product. Geographically indicated products are crucial in terms of tourism. In this respect, if rural tourism develops, the sale of almond and leblebi production will bring more income for the local people than it does today. Today, it is not in question that the sale of leblebi and almonds is presented as a touristic product. Therefore, it is one of the benefits expected to gain brand value and provide more employment with rural tourism.

Ağın is a settlement that only livens up with the summer population. The reason for this mobility is that former Ağın residents who have emigrated from the district want to spend their holidays here. Rural tourism will allow the region to gain attention in autumn, winter and spring. It will be possible to increase the interest in the district due to reasons such as participation of tourists in activities based on agriculture and livestock, the desire to be in touch with nature regardless of the season, meeting new people, new cultures.

One of the most basic conditions for the development of rural tourism is to ensure the participation of local people as shareholders in the projects to be carried out. Thus, ensuring the participation of the public is important for the sustainability of tourism. (Gunn, 1988, as cited in Aleaddinoğlu, 2007 p.5). At this point, the volunteering of the people is required first. After this is achieved, it is important for the public to receive training for rural tourism activities. The local people, who are aware of the contributions of rural tourism to the district economy and rural development, will thus be more willing and conscious to protect their existing natural and cultural riches.

With rural tourism, Ağın will have appeared as a center that has developed outside of the classical tourism centers. Ağın will be introduced to tourism and tourists.

Today, recreation activities have not developed in the region as well. With the right planning, it will not only attract attention in terms of recreational activities and will also allow the development of tourism types based on nature and culture. Considering the district as a whole, it is suitable for hiking, boat tours, aquaculture, history and cultural routes. In this context, it is important to determine the appropriate routes and make the necessary arrangements first.

When rural tourism begins to have a real presence in the district, ceasing of internal migration and returning the population that has gone in time are among the possible benefits. Of course, it is important to make plans suitable for the carrying capacity of the districts and villages. Today, there is a shortage of rental

housing in the district. The solution to this problem should be realized in accordance with the natural and cultural geographical appearance of Ağın. The construction of structures that are not suitable for local architecture will strike a significant blow to architectural attractiveness.

Table 2

Benefits of Rural Tourism and Its Possible Effects to Ağın

Economic Benefit	Rural tourism does not hinder the economic activities of the people, it becomes a side income (Akova, 2008; Soykan, 1999). Also, in Ağın, it does not hinder the economic activities of the people, it can make almond and leblebi production stronger and create brand value.
Yearlong Tourism	Rural tourism resolves the problem of seasonality. (Soykan, 2003). Agriculture, livestock, recreation activities, etc. can lead to four seasons of activity in Ağın
Protection Awareness	It does not harm the environment, resources are used without harming (Akova, 2008; Tuncer ve Bakırcı, 2021; Soykan, 1999).
New Tourism Areas	The geographical environment outside the coast meets tourism (Soykan, 2003). Ağın, where classical types of tourism do not find opportunity to develop, meets tourism and tourists.
Integrated Types of Tourism	Alternative tourism types can develop in Ağın.
Prevents Population Loss by Migration	Prevents internal migration (Soykan, 1999). Rural tourism can be an opportunity for Ağın, a settlement that has migrated for years, and in the long term it can lead to the return of the migrating population.

RESULT

Ağın does not have the potential to develop mass tourism. However, it has advantages that will allow rural tourism to develop. In the study, the backwardness of Ağın's economy, the restrictions arising from the physical and human geography characteristics that cause backwardness in terms of recreational activities and tourism according to Keban, Arapgir, Kemaliye in its immediate environment, were determined. Within this framework, the geographical location of the work area away from important transportation routes, the presence of agricultural land that has narrowed due to the construction of dams, the lack of population and age structure have been determined as the main constraints of Ağın. In contrast, factors such as rich historical and cultural background, uncorrupted geographical appearance, architectural structure, geographically indicated Ağın leblebi, almond production, high level of education of the population, presence of village associations, etc. have been

identified as important situations that will enable the development of rural tourism.

The effects of urbanization pressure and epidemics such as the Covid-19 pandemic on humans, changing trends and associated tourist profiles are clear that the population will increase the demand for small settlements that are uninhabited and authentic. For this reason, rural tourism is an important tool for the settlement of a town like Ağın, which is underpopulated, has a shrinking economy, but also preserves its originality. However, the right planning is needed for the development of rural development and consequently the development of rural tourism. Any planning without the fellowship of the local people will not be sustainable.

The recommended form of accommodation for the development of rural tourism in the district is house boarding. This form of accommodation will prevent Ağın's geographical appearance from changing, as well as provide side income to the local people and directly involve the public in tourism. H The volunteering of the people is the most important factor that will determine the development of tourism in Ağın. For this reason, enthusiasm should be created in the local population. Also, the public should be given trainings on rural tourism.

One of the reasons why tourism and recreational activities have not developed in Ağın is the lack of promotion. Gastronomy and cultural festivals organized intermittently in the district since 1989 are important for the promotion of the Ağın, gaining brand value and developing rural tourism. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure the continuity of these festivals.

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Photo References

Foto.1, 2. Enver Hancı arşivi

Foto. 3 Aygün Çam arşivi

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Purpose and Significance of the Study: Displaying similar conditions as its surrounding, the noted backwardness of Ağın in terms of tourism and recreational activities constitutes the main problem of the study. The study has three main purposes. The first is to reveal the constraints that hinder the sustainable development of Ağın District. In this context, the disadvantages of Ağın due to its physical and human geography features were identified and inquired. The second purpose of the study is to reveal the rural tourism potential that would help rural development in Ağın. The third purpose is to present planning suggestions for this existing potential and to assess the possible effects of this type of tourism in Ağın. It is considered that the study will contribute to the rural settlement and tourism literature.

Study Method: In this study, which aims to reveal the rural tourism potential of Ağın district, field and document analysis methods were used. In the first stage of the study, document analysis which is one of the qualitative research methods was used. In this context, literature studies were conducted on the concepts of both rural development and rural tourism. In addition, the literature related to the study area was examined in depth. The second step of the study was field studies. Field studies were conducted in different periods of the year, statistical data (population, agriculture, livestock, and land size) were obtained from official institutions such as Ağın Municipality, Ağın District Governorship and TUIK about the study area and tables and graphs were created. Similarly, with the help of the Arcgis program relevant maps of the study area were drawn, assessments and suggestions were presented for the rural tourism potential of the area.

Findings: Despite having a deep-rooted history, Ağın has the least population among the districts of Elazığ. When the development of the population of the district is investigated by years, it is immediately noted that there was a slow increase until 1965. However, the population started to have a decreasing trend since 1965 (excluding the urban population in 1975) and the total population of the district decreased to 2,556 in 2020. The reason for the small increase in the urban population in 1975 was the establishment of a leather factory in the district center with the money paid during the expropriation for the dam (Karakaş, 1996 s.46). This factory is not active in our day. In the following periods the district

continued to lose population. Both urban and rural population in the district had to emigrate with narrowing of district area. Its natural and cultural attractions, the education level of the population, the existence of village associations and cooperatives are the strengths that would enable the development of rural tourism in Ağın (Figure 6). However, the geographical location, infrastructure and superstructure facilities of the district are not qualified to ensure the development of mass tourism. In terms of rural tourism, the district is open to development. The lack of urban development can be considered as an advantage. Because its rural and cultural geographical appearance has not changed much under the pressure of urbanization.

Physical geography features have an important place among the factors that prepare the emergence of rural tourism. When the physical geography features of the study area are evaluated, it was determined that geomorphological and hydrographic attractions come to the fore in terms of rural tourism. As a matter of fact, these attractions were discussed by Özgüç (2017, s.63) as the features that determine the presence or absence of rural tourism. In the study area, Ağın peninsula and Şenkaya Hollow were determined as important geomorphological attractions, while Keban Dam Lake and Sülük Lake were determined as hydrographic attractions.

Ağın is a district where the traditional rural texture is preserved in terms of settlement geography. This property is an important advantage in terms of rural tourism. In addition, rock tombs, Hastek castle, mounds, historical plane trees, mansions and local houses are proof that the district hosts historical and cultural attractions dating back to ancient times. In the study area, it is possible to discuss human attractions in three dimensions as agricultural production and gastronomy, historical and cultural attractions, and architectural attractions.

When rural tourism will start to make a real presence in the district, among possible benefits it could be argued that the internal migration will stop, and the population will return over time. Of course, it is important to make suitable plans for the handling capacity of the districts and villages. Today, there is a shortage of rental housing in the district. This problem should be solved in line with the natural and cultural geographical view of Ağın.

Result: Ağın does not have the potential to develop mass tourism. However, there are advantages that will allow the development of rural tourism. In the study, the constraints arising from the physical and human geography properties that cause economic backwardness in Ağın and backwardness in terms of recreational activities and tourism compared to Keban, Arapgir, and Kemaliye districts in its immediate surroundings were determined. In this context, the geographical

location of the study area far from important transportation routes, contracting agricultural due to the construction of the dam, the scarcity of its population and its age structure were determined as the main constraints of Ağın. On the other hand, factors such as rich historical and cultural accumulation with its surroundings, unspoiled geographical appearance, architectural structure, geographically marked Ağın roasted chickpeas, almond production, the high level of education of the population, the presence of village associations were identified as important conditions that will contribute to development of rural tourism.

The effects of urbanization pressure and epidemics such as the Covid-19 pandemic on people, changing trends and related tourist profiles will increase the demand for small settlements where the population is secluded and authentic. Thus, rural tourism is an important vehicle for a town like Ağın, which has a low population, a contracting economy which also preserved its originality. However, correct planning is required to achieve rural development and, in turn, the development of rural tourism.