

Agios Timotheos Monastery

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District of Marmara, Topağaç Neighbourhood, Ahtimot Locality	Construction period/date: 17 th century
	Current status: Abandoned
GPS: 40°37'08.1"N 27°37'59.1"E	Ownership status: State Treasury
Registration date and number: Balıkesir KVKBK 17.10.2019 - 1623	

History

The Agios Timotheos Monastery is situated on Mt. Karali, behind Topağaç (Klazaki) Neighbourhood and its fertile valley, 600 m above sea level. The complex comprised a building of twelve cells and rooms, a church, and another structure that is partly underground. The ruins of the monastery suggest that the complex dates at least from the 17th century. Gedeon (1895, 116-117) supposes that the underground structure was the cell of Agios Timotheos. Today, this section is not visible. There is another structure approximately 100 m above the monastery that was built in stone with two apse-like rooms. The typology and materials suggest that this structure is as old

as the monastery. One of its rooms has pipes connecting to the natural spring located further up the mountain. This is the famous holy spring (*hagiasma*) of the monastery that is part of a local myth. The myth concerns the daughter of the king who became ill and was sent to Marmara Island by her father. The girl wandered around the mountains until she found this spring. When she drank its water, she recovered from the illness and returned to the palace. The structure of the holy spring must have been transformed into a watermill in the beginning of the 20th century, since there are signs of various components attached to the walls. The watermill was operated by a Galip



Fig. 2: The apse with a pit formed by illicit digging

Agha according to the oral sources (Folders B73 and B76).

The historical figure of Agios Timotheos is obscure, as Gedeon first pointed out. Agios Timotheos appears in the collective memory of the Christians of Marmara Island as the first bishop of Proconnesus who later retired as a monk at the location where the monastery was later founded. However, Gedeon rejects that there was a bishop called Timotheos of Proconnesus (1895, 119-123) and shows that the liturgical book describing his life (reprinted in Istanbul in 1844) contains serious historical mistakes. Thus, it could be presumed that Timotheos was a monk, obviously popular and much beloved among the inhabitants of the island, whose memory evolved to result in the narrative that he was the first bishop of Proconnesus.

The feast of Agios Timotheos takes place on August 1. From the 18th century onwards, the feast became the most important one in the Marmara Islands. People from Marmara, Ekinlik, Paşalimanı, and Avşa used to gather at the monastery starting the day before to celebrate and commemorate their saint (Pl. VIII.36). The monastery belonged to all six villages of Marmara Island until the first half of the 19th century. Since then, only the congregation of Marmara was responsible for appointing and paying the abbot, as Nestoridis notes (1939, 5). The location of the monastery is of a great beauty. The poet Miltiadis Papas of Ekinlik Island spent time in the monastery in 1873 and 1879. On his visits he wrote two poems describing his days and feelings in the monastery on the door of his room. This door has not survived, but the two poems were copied by Gedeon (1895, 117-118).

The feast of Agios Timotheos has been continued by the islanders that settled in Istanbul after 1922 (Papachristou 2019b). Since 1927, descendants of Christians from the Marmara Islands gather at the Monastery of Agios Georgios Karipis in Burgazada on August 1 to celebrate the name day of Agios Timotheos, the so-called Bishop of Proconnesus and patron saint of Marmara Island (Fig. 1).

Agios Timotheos Monastery was looted after 1922, then damaged in the earthquake of 1935, and later subjected to damage by illicit diggers.

Architecture

The remains of Agios Timotheos Church are in the north-south direction on a slope in a mountainous oak forest. The surviving sections of the building are the easily-discernible

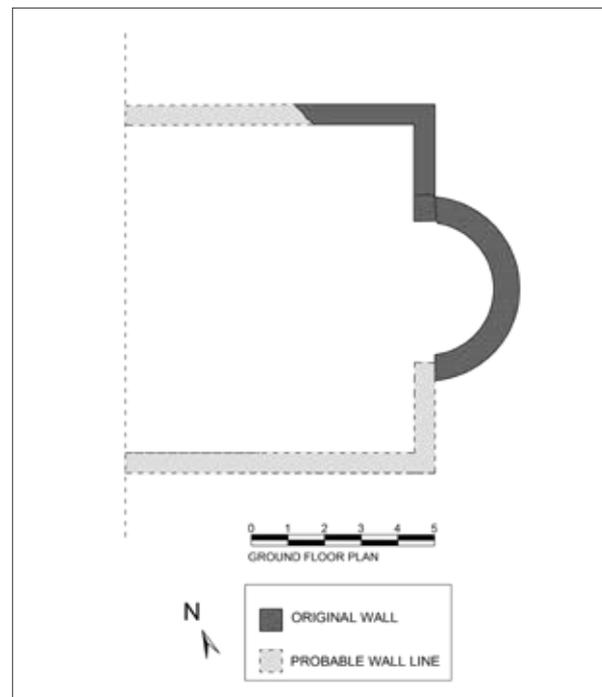


Fig. 1: Detail from St. Timothy's icon at Agios Georgios Karipis Monastery in Burgazada, depicting Topağaç and the Agios Timotheos Monastery (the icon was painted by K. Dimarchopoulos and was offered to Agios Georgios Karipis monastery by Theofanis Theofanidis in 1927)

semi-circular apse wall, the southern wall rising above the natural ground level at places, and the western wall that is roughly traceable from piles of rubble. It does not have any extant architectural or structural elements except these. The church's plan type cannot be identified from the existing ruins. The existence of *pastophorion* cells to the north and south of the apse wall is questionable, since these areas are currently covered by earth. However, the building's northern wall, which is 4.20 m north of the main axis, can be observed at the bema level. In addition, there are the remains of another wall 11 m to the west of the apse wall.

The semi-circular apse wall is constructed in rubble masonry. It is 3.10 m wide and 1.50 m deep (Fig. 2). In the centre of the apse where the ground drops to a lower level due to illicit excavations, the 2.70 m-high part of the wall can be seen. The apse wall has encasement on the interior; the wall is 1.55 m above the ground level and protrudes 25 cm from the interior surface. Due to earth infill, similar observations could not be made for the exterior.

The wall at the upper level, which is approximately 75 cm in thickness, is made of irregular series of bricks. These series are generally composed of two rows of bricks that are square-shaped with a thickness of 4-5 cm and a width of 32 cm. The pointing between these bricks is about 4 cm thick. It was noted that a lime-based binding mortar was used in the walls and that there are the traces of brick-powder plaster on the inner surfaces.

Current Condition

Damaged architectural fragments are scattered in the immediate vicinity of the building. 4-5 m to the southwest of the apse, there is a marble panel on the ground that is 9 cm thick (Fig. 3). The rectangular plaque measuring 78x120 cm was broken into three pieces. The surface of this plaque is roughly worked; the simple raised circle in the middle has a diameter of 30 cm, a width of 5 cm and a smooth interior. This marble plaque is thought to be a parapet fragment.

Around the church there were two hexagonal bricks, one of which was intact (Fig. 4). Although it was understood that these were



Fig. 3: Fragment of marble parapet panel



Fig. 4: Hexagonal brick

used as flooring, their period of installation and position within the building could not be identified. These bricks have a thickness of 4.5 cm and an edge length of 22.5 cm.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Although not easily accessible, the building is under the threat of plunder since it is exposed to human and natural destruction. While it is one of the most challenging religious buildings to access on Marmara Island, this site appears to have the highest density of illicit digging.

It is thought that the building's plan organization can be revealed if excavations are carried out under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. A reliable assessment about the construction period can also be made based on architectural and decorative pieces that may be unearthed. The building elements that are scattered on the ground should be transferred to a safe area under the supervision of the Museum and unauthorized digs should be prevented.