

Kartal House ('Yılanlı' House)

İnci Türkoğlu

District of Marmara, Asmalı Neighbourhood, Köyiçi Locality	Construction period/date: Late 19 th century
GPS: 40°37'02.2"N 27°42'22.0"E	Current status: Abandoned
	Ownership status: Private ownership
Registration date and number: Bursa KVKBK 18.08.1990 - 1295	

History

The house is thought to have been built on 17 August 1888, based on the foundation stone photographed in the 1980s (Papachristou 2019, 36). Above the date there are the following Greek letters: B. ΑΦ. (= V. ΑΦ.).

Architecture

The house, covering a rectangular area in east-west directionality, has a plan organization with a closed, outer *sofa*. It is situated on a slightly sloping terrain, descending from east to west. The two-storey house has a low-ceilinged

ground floor, rather than a mezzanine floor. Currently the building is detached on all façades; however, the blind southern façade and the alteration indicators on its windows may suggest that there was originally an adjoining structure on this side. The east and west façades face the street and there is access to the building from both (Figs. 1-2). The ground floor walls on the south and west are built of rubble masonry with timber bands. The wall course differentiates at the lower level of the south wall, from the central axis



Fig. 1: South and west façades

to the window in the east, indicating repairs (Fig. 1). The western and northern walls have a timber frame with rubble infill. Bricks are seen in both walls as well as the eastern one. The stone walls are plastered with earth-based plaster and limewashed. The southern wall of the upper floor is built of timber frame with mudbrick infill and clad with overlapping timber boards (*yali baskısı*). The eastern, northern, and western walls of the upper floor are clad with wood laths (*bağdadi*). The building has a four-sided hipped roof.

There are two small windows and a large window towards the east of the south façade on the ground floor level (Fig. 1). The double-winged door towards the north of the east wall provides access to the ground floor (Fig. 2). There is a rectangular top window above the door. Another window of the same size is located towards the south of the façade at the same level. There are five more windows on the upper level. On the northern façade there is one window on the ground floor and

three windows on the upper floor. The double-winged door in the middle of the west façade is the main entrance of the building (Fig. 1). There is a top window above this door. There is a three-partite window to the north of the door, while the window to its south has been lost. The middle and south part of the façade's upper floor has fallen, except the three windows in the north (Figs. 1, 4). All three openings are rectangular sash windows with timber jambs and a blind, depressed arch on top. The entire eastern, northern, and western façades project outwards and are supported at regular intervals by brackets covered in wood laths. There are a small number of windows on the ground floor compared to the larger number illuminating the upper floor. The building mass resembles a cube.

Access to the ground floor is provided from the east and west façades. The western entrance leads to an L-shaped corridor in the southeast direction. The corridor is flanked by a room on each side. The small room in the southwest

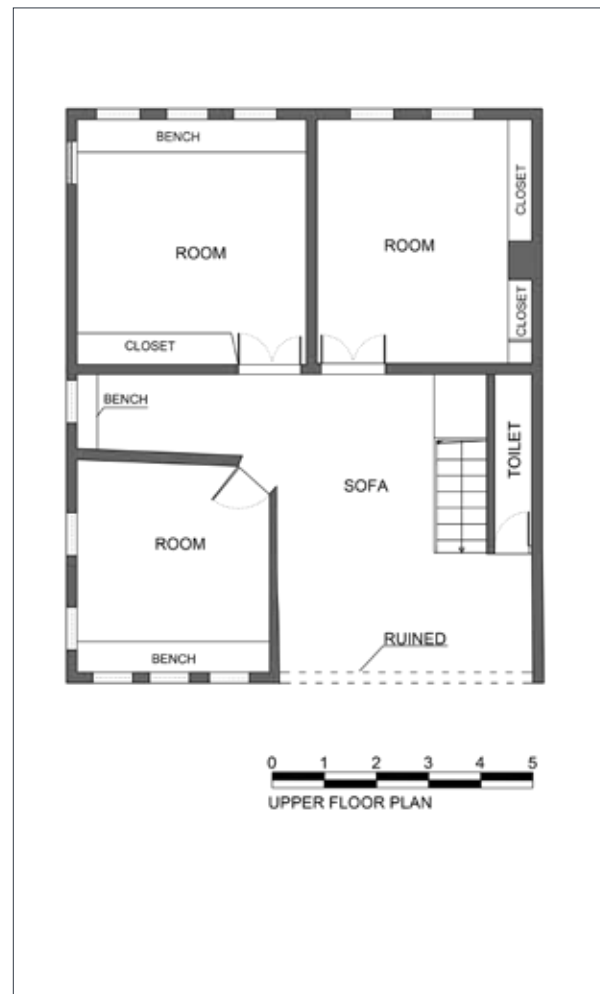
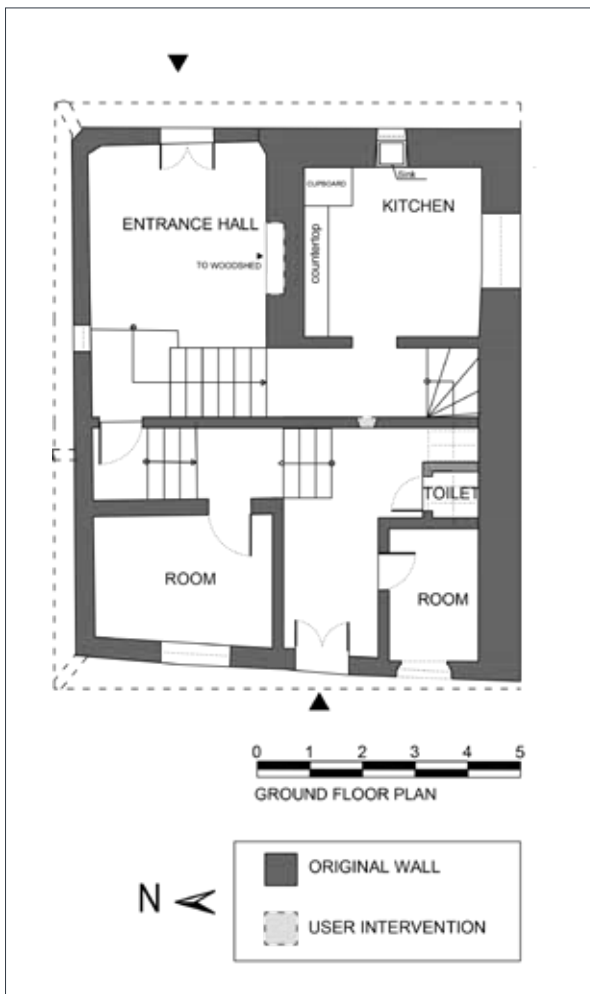




Fig. 2: East façade

is elevated by two steps and its only window has collapsed. There is a toilet attached to this small room, indicating that the latter may have served as a store or shop. A window is placed to the west of the south wall to illuminate the corridor. The large room in the northwest has two floors. Below is a dark and low-ceilinged room without a window, which was used as a depot. The upper room is reached by a staircase with two flights in the north of the corridor. These stairs provide access both through the corridor entered from the west façade and through the door to the north of the corridor's eastern wall, connecting the room with the eastern part of the house. There is a square opening with a three-partite window arrangement in the western wall of the room.

The eastern entrance of the house opens into the vestibule with an L-shaped corridor in the north-west direction. The ground floor is divided in two by a wall, and the only door connecting these two parts is across the eastern entrance. There is a flight of eight steps in the west of the corridor, starting from the south of the interconnecting door. This leads to a room in the southeast that was rearranged

as a kitchen. The kitchen, elevated from the floor on posts, is illuminated by a window on its north wall opening into the vestibule, and two other windows in the east and south walls facing outside. The rectangular sash window in the eastern wall has a sink in front of it. The opening on the south wall is square shaped, and three-partite arrangement. The section that is closed by wooden planks to the north of the eastern wall was most likely a cupboard or a fireplace. There is a counter in front of the window opening to the corridor in the northern wall, which is about 1 m in height.

The stairs starting from the kitchen door extend southward and turn west to provide access to the upper floor (Fig. 3). Here, there are two rooms to the east of the L-shaped *sofa* and one room to the northwest. The western wall and the superstructure of the western wing of the *sofa* have fallen (Fig. 4). The north-south hall that connects these rooms is considered part of the *sofa* and called *vliakos* in Greek (βλιακός; ηλιακός, derived from the word 'sun'). These rooms are illuminated with plenty of windows, providing a very commodious space. Their wooden doors are double-winged



Fig.3: Top of the stairs, facing east



Fig.4: Current condition of the west wall

(Figs. 6-7). The rooms and *sofa* have timber floors and ceilings. The *sofa*, which can be defined as the main/large room, in Greek is called ‘μεγάλος νοντάς’ (Papachristou 2019a, 37).

Among the two adjoining doors on the *sofa*'s eastern wall, the southern door leads into the southeastern room (Fig. 7) and the northern door leads into the northeastern room. Both have a square-like, rectangular plan. The northern and southern walls in the southeastern room are blind, while there are two windows topped by depressed arches in the eastern wall. Wooden closets cover the entire south wall. In the northeastern room, the southern wall is blind, whereas the eastern wall has three windows looking outside and the northern wall has a single window towards the east. A closet (*yüklük*) covers the entire length of the western wall from the door. This type of closet, where rugs, linens, quilts, pillows, pillowcases, embroideries, and curtains were kept, is called *gioukos* by Greeks (γιούκος in Greek) (Papachristou 2019a, 37). The southeastern corner of the northwestern room faces the *sofa* and is bevelled where the door leads into the room (Fig. 5). The rectangular room has three windows in the west wall and two windows in the north wall. The east and south walls of this room are blind. The walls of both this room and the *sofa* are divided into three horizontal sections by timber bands, decorations are arranged as panels within these sections.

The decorations are concentrated in the *sofa*, the northwestern room on the upper floor, and

on the brackets (*eliböğründe*) of the exterior projections. The walls of the *sofa* and room were later washed with blue powder paint. It can be observed from the parts that are not painted over or where plaster has fallen off that entire wall surfaces were covered with large-scale depictions.

A very large-scale, double-headed eagle figure (spreading its wings on both sides) was painted on each of the northern and southern walls of the *sofa*'s western wing and the western wall of the *sofa*'s northern wing (Figs. 4-6). Although the natural landscapes around the double-headed eagle figures were altered by the plaster, it can be observed that the backgrounds were mainly yellow, brown, and green. There are large and detailed trees on both sides of the eagle figure as well as smaller trees with brown trunks and green leaves behind them. Each of the double-headed eagle figures has a crown on its head. The feathers behind the heads carry a larger, royal crown between them. The eagles are depicted with their mouths open, tongues out and eyes wide. The feathers of the yellow figures are embroidered to the finest detail. Each of the eagles holds a *globus* representing hegemony over the world in its right paw and a torch or sword in its left one. Paintings have dimensional depth due to the use of perspective technique involving light and shadow applications as well as depictions of nature. Historic sources reveal that the villagers also used this symbol on their ships. Ertüzün writes the following lines on



Fig.5: General view of the northern and western wings of the sofa (inner hall) and northwest room



Fig.6: General view of the west wall in the north wing

the subject: "Asmalı Village's Greek inhabitants were given the privilege to hoist a flag featuring a hand-embroidered, two-headed eagle on a gold-washed background on official days and holidays due to their successes in seafaring and in the Ottoman navy. The license (*berat*) of this privilege was entrusted to a dealer in Galata, who sold this decree (*firman*) to an antique shop" (Ertüzün 1999, 250). The double-headed eagle symbol is also related to the oral tradition of Asmalı (Afthoni). According to a detailed account, the Ottoman fleet under the command of Kapudan Mezzomorto Hüseyin Pasha was caught in a powerful storm near Marmara Island after departing from Istanbul. A sailor from Afthoni, who knew the area well, suggested that the Kapudan Pasha take the fleet to the safe waters along the western shores of Aloni (Paşalimanı) Island. The fleet escaped danger and Aloni Island was given the name Paşalimanı (literary meaning the "pasha's port"). Kapudan Pasha asked the sailor what reward he wanted in return for his support and the sailor requested that ships and boats from Afthoni be allowed to carry a pennant featuring a double-headed eagle, which was the symbol of the Palaiologans, the last Byzantine imperial dynasty. After a while, the inhabitants of Afthoni were given the right to use this flag by the Ottoman authorities (Papachristou 2019a, 154). It is likely that the double-headed eagle figure was later incorporated into wall paintings due to its symbolism.

There is a pomegranate tree, with branches full of large fruit, depicted on the central axis of

the door leading into the northwestern room (Fig. 5). The branches of the trees surrounding the eagles extend to this panel and frame the pomegranate tree on both sides. The background of the pomegranate tree has the same colour with that of the eagle motifs.

On the northern wall of the sofa's northern wing is a floral composition featuring trees and flowers (Fig. 8). These decorations are organized in a semicircle around the window's blind arch, such that they frame the panel later covered with blue wash. There are large red flowers with green leaves diverging from a single green branch on both sides of the blind arch. The branches of the tree framing the eagle on the western wall of the northern wing extend from the upper part to the northern wall. Tree branches have leaves in different shades of green to provide a light-shadow effect that resembles free brushstrokes. A thin S-shaped branch extends from the end of the tree branches and continues to the sofa's eastern wall. There are numerous elongated leaves on each fold of the branch, between which hang triple red pomegranates, with bunches of red grapes above.

The same ornamentation continues in the ceiling up to a tri-partite timber frame for icons (*iconostasion*) and ends by turning down (Figs. 8-9). This ornamentation forms a three-sided frame for the panel to the south of the wooden *iconostasion* on the eastern wall. It is not possible to see the lower parts of this decoration, which have been painted over.



Fig.7: Doors opening to the rooms to the east of the sofa and the iconostasion on top

There is a tri-partite wooden frame (*iconostasion*) above the doors on the eastern wall of the *sofa* (Fig. 7). According to tradition, an icon of the Virgin Mary or Jesus is placed in the middle, while the side frames house icons of the saints. It can be observed that the wooden mouldings separating the doors from the *iconostasion* were also ornamented. Since they were painted over, only traces of this decoration remain; however, it is also composed of S-shaped branches with leaves and floral motifs of different sizes at their ends. The wooden frame is articulated by a row of small, alternating semi-circular arches in the upper part. A cross is carved on each semi-circular arch coinciding with the middle of one of the three panels.

Figures of camel and deer in nature are depicted in the upper part of the *sofa's* eastern wall towards the north (Fig. 9). These paintings may refer to the antique name of the island, derived from a deer species named *prokos*. The camel and deer are depicted in profile, facing each other on a green ground and under a grey sky. There are trees with green leaves and brown trunks in the background. The camel is light brown and has one hump. The deer is dark brown with dark spots and has four antlers on each side. The

eyes, eyebrows, mouth, and nostrils of these animals give the impression that they are alive. The ornamentation does not appear two dimensional because of the use of the perspective technique.

Below and to the south of this panel is a painted scene depicting the struggle between a very large lion and a gopher serpent (Fig. 9). Although the composition is discernible, the head of the serpent, among other parts, have been plastered over. The lion is light brown, close to yellow, and portrayed with its tongue open and eyes out. His mane stands on end and its front limbs are in the air. The serpent, depicted to the finest detail with its scales, has entwined the lion twice. Although the head remains under the plaster, it is discerned that it faces the lion.

There is a depiction of a sunny day in nature on the southern section of the *sofa's* east wall (Fig. 10). Animals such as deer and lamb are portrayed running on a pale ground in different shades of brown and underneath a blue sky. Trees with green leaves and brown trunks are also visible.

The eastern section of the *sofa's* southern wall has a panel with three peacock figures (Fig. 11). While the peacocks on the sides are depicted in profile, the one in the middle faces front. The birds on both sides raise their wings towards the one in the middle, which raises his head and opens its tail. The feathers, eyes, beaks, and feet of these birds are rendered to the finest detail. The sky behind the birds standing on a green and brown ground is light coloured and without clouds. The panel is framed by green, S-shaped leaves and pomegranates in three directions.

The south and east walls of the main room in the northwest are decorated with floral motifs. There is a still life on the southern wall that features three vases, elevated on thick pillars, piled with pears, apples, oranges, grapes, and flowers (Fig. 12). These yellow and red fruits are placed among green leaves and red flowers. Red carnations, extending from the vase, frame the fruits. There are also green trees with brown trunks in the background. The panel is surrounded by S-shaped green leaves and red pomegranates in three directions.



Fig.8: General view of sofa's north wall



Fig.9: The eastern wall of sofa's north wing

On the eastern wall of the room is another still life with a sliced watermelon in the middle, surrounded by other fruits and a floral motif (Fig. 13). The lemons, oranges, and red grapes are surrounded by red, white, and blue roses.

Other decorations are found on the brackets (*eliböğründe*) on the exterior (Fig. 14). The bracket on the northeastern corner has a lion figure on both sides and the one in the northwest has a lion figure on its east side only. While the lion's face is depicted from the front, its body is depicted in profile. The eyes, eyebrows, nose, and mouth of the animal are very prominent, its tail is upright, and its front limbs are raised. The lion is rendered in shades of dark brown. The other brackets are decorated with painted white wave motifs.

Current Condition

The plan organization and spatial features of the abandoned building are discernible. However, it has been neglected to such an extent that it can only withstand the effects of earthquakes or rainwater for one or two more years at most. Especially the large-scale collapses in the roof and openings pose a significant threat to the wall paintings surrounding the *sofa*. The cracks in the walls and the fissures in timber posts are significant. Partial collapses in the walls of the ground floor provide uncontrolled access to the building, making it susceptible to vandalism. Although there are traces of repair on the southern wall, the western wall is about to collapse entirely. This western wall also poses great danger for the surroundings and passers-by.



Fig.10: Landscape depiction in the south part of sofa's east wall

There are cracks and surface deterioration on the floorboards. Walls have deep cracks and vegetation. There is no information panel around the building. It is dangerous to enter the building due to the risk of collapse.

Despite all material deterioration and structural problems, every component of the house is discernible. The original decorations, some of which are still underneath plaster, are uniquely significant.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Although there are many examples of religious architecture reflecting the cultural diversity of the Southern Marmara islands, this house is one of the most important examples of such richness in civic architecture. It is necessary to take emergency measures for the temporary protection of the building, the decorations of which

are sophisticated to a degree rarely found, perhaps not found, in Anatolia. In order to prevent further structural deterioration such as the collapse of its walls and roof, the house should be structurally supported with additional posts.

The building needs to be restored in accordance with its original plan organization and

construction techniques, then opened to the public. Information boards describing the iconography of the ornamentation should be prepared and the building should urgently be integrated into our culture. If the presentation is done properly, the building can be an important component of the region's cultural diversity and its endangered cultural heritage.



Fig.11: Current condition of the south wall



Fig.12: South wall of the northwest room

Kartal House ('Yılanlı' House): Conservation Report of Wall Paintings

Gizem Erten

It is necessary to investigate the building's structural issues in relation to the wall paintings before delving into the current state and deterioration level of the decorations themselves. The observed factors that lead to structural problems are the loss of certain wall sections, temperature and humidity changes, freeze-thaw cycles, water leakage, harmful sun rays, soluble salts from various sources, winds, user modifications, as well as the regularity of checks and maintenance. These involve numerous physical, chemical, biological, and environmental factors that accelerate the deterioration of the building and the wall paintings. The total collapse of the western wall of the *sofa* indicates that the worsening of the decorations started long ago (Fig. 4). Deteriorations in wall paintings are directly related to the composition of their materials, construction techniques, and environmental conditions.

The layers of a wall painting are a main carrier (wall), support (one or more layers of plaster and wash) and the paint coats. Therefore, in order to preserve the wall painting in the long term, the existing condition of the main carrier and support layers should be taken into consideration. The observations noted in Yılanlı House mark that the wall paintings have been preserved to a great extent despite the damage to the timber flooring and the western wall. Physical inspections in the *sofa* and northwestern room revealed that the support layer has survived without separating from the main carrier, though there are some local problems. There is a wide crack on the double-headed eagle on the *sofa's* south wall that extends to the main carrier (Fig. 15). There is also some old repair plaster to the east of this depiction, which has separated from the original support layer due to negative conditions arising from physical, chemical and environmental factors.



Fig.13: East wall of the northwest room

Cracks and capillary cracks are observed on the paintings on the southern wall. The wide detachments at the intersection of the eastern and western walls do not only threaten the wall paintings but also the building's structural system (Fig. 11). Water penetration is a prominent problem because the roof and the western wall have partly collapsed. If water is not prevented from entering the building, it is likely that microorganisms, algae, and lichens will proliferate, and that the movement of salts in the soil and building materials will cause further physical, chemical, and biological issues. These problems may be compounded by other environmental factors, thereby accelerating the deterioration of the structural system as well as the ornamentation. Large cracks are observed over the doorways in the *sofa*'s eastern wall (Fig. 7). There are capillary cracks and old repair plaster above the window on the northern wall of the *sofa*'s north wing (Fig. 8). On the northern wall of the *sofa*'s western wing and the western wall of the northern wing, in the areas with the double-headed eagles, the supporting plaster has largely been preserved, but capillary cracks are found on the surfaces of the wall paintings (Figs. 5-6).

The northwestern room has problems caused by the collapsed western wall and windows. Loss of plaster is noted in the western section of the painting on the southern wall (Figs. 12, 17). There are also capillary cracks and traces of nails on the paint's surface. The main carrier and support layers of the painting on the eastern wall, however, is generally well preserved (Fig. 12).

Other decorative elements in the building are found on the brackets on the external façade (Fig. 14). These decorations on timber surfaces are completely exposed to the elements.

The paint layers are heavily affected by the deterioration of many building materials, especially in the carrier and support layers. Since the western walls of both the *sofa* and the northwestern room on the upper floor have completely collapsed, the wall paintings in these spaces are exposed to physical, chemical, and biological damage. For this reason, factors such as humidity fluctuations, water leakage, rising damp, and



Fig.14: Depictions on the brackets (*eliböğründe*)



Fig.15: Large crack on the south wall



Fig.16: Deterioration of the paint layer on the east wall



Fig.17: Loss of paint on the south wall of the northwest room

condensation cause various deteriorations not only in the building materials but also in the paint layers. Damages in the paint layers of the *sofa* include chalking, disintegration, cracks, flaking, and spalling due to the uncontrolled temperature, humidity, and water penetration. Another factor accelerating the deterioration of paint layers on all wall surfaces is water leakage due to the collapse of the roof. This factor plays an active role in the deterioration of both building materials and paint layers, making the latter vulnerable to degradation. The wall paintings on the eastern wall to the south of the doorways are only partially covered with blue paint, while those to their north are completely obscured by it. The original wall painting is visible in the part where this blue wash is lost (Figs. 10, 16).

When the wall decorations in the northwestern room are evaluated in terms of their deterioration, the depiction on the eastern wall

is better preserved than all the others in this house (Fig. 13). This wall was painted over in peach colour in later periods, but the area where the composition is found was not covered. There is occasionally paint running on the surface. The wall painting on the southern wall has become susceptible to external factors such as temperature, changes in humidity, wind, condensation, rain, sun, and water leakage due to the collapsed western wall (Figs. 12, 17). Therefore, damages such as loss of material, water leakage, and soot were identified on the paint surface. Loss of material was also observed in the painted ornamentation on the exterior brackets due to their exposure to the elements.

The current conservation and deterioration status of the wall paintings have been determined only by visual observations based on the deterioration of the building, the painting's location, its construction technique, and environmental conditions.