

# Tahsin Tutucu House

*İnci Türkoğlu*

District of Marmara, Ekinlik Neighbourhood	Construction period/date: <b>19<sup>th</sup> century</b>
	Current function: <b>Abandoned</b>
GPS: 40°32'50.2"N 27°29'22.3"E	Ownership status: <b>Private ownership</b>
Registration date and number: <b>Bursa KTVKKBK 18.8.1990 - 1297</b>	

## History

A history well-known by the inhabitants of the island states that this is one of the seven houses built by a Greek merchant for his seven sons (Fig. 1). According to the Oral Tradition Archives (folder B77), these houses known as the 'Sarayia,' meaning 'palaces,' were owned by wealthy captains of Koutali; however, there is no mention of these captains being brothers. Therefore, the name of 'Seven Brothers' was likely coined by the Turks of the island. Only four of these houses

have survived and are registered as cultural property. One of these houses has a deteriorated inscription that seems to have been made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, another one has an inscription dating 1827; therefore, this house can also be dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is in line with the story. The bands of landscape depiction and ceiling decorations in the southwestern room on the upper floor indicate 19<sup>th</sup> century as well. It is understood from the historical photographs that the Seven

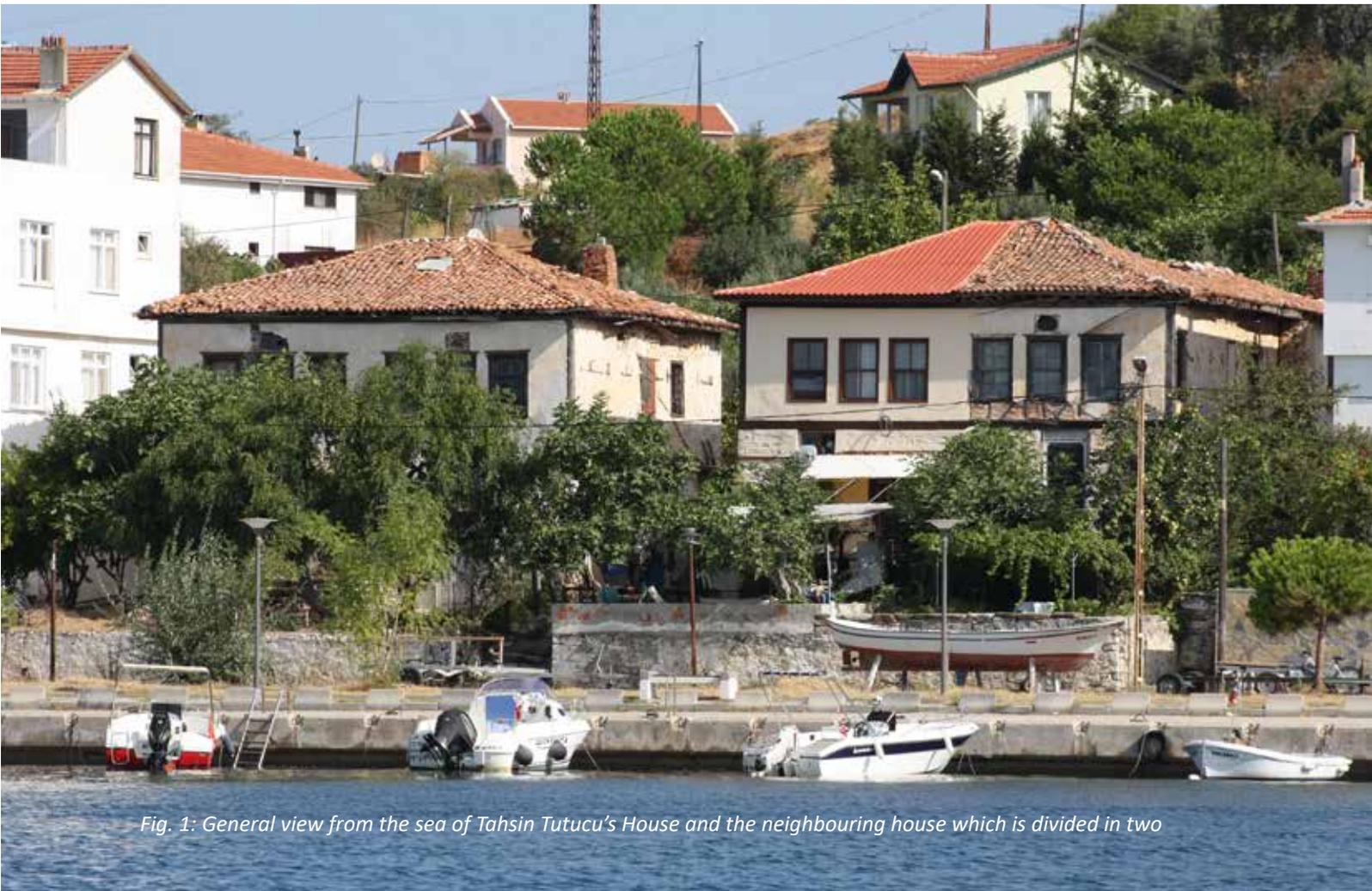


Fig. 1: General view from the sea of Tahsin Tutucu's House and the neighbouring house which is divided in two

Brothers Houses were originally three-storeys (Pl. XI-XII nos.44-45a-45b). The demolition of the third floors might be related to the 1912 Mürefte and/or 1935 Marmara earthquakes.

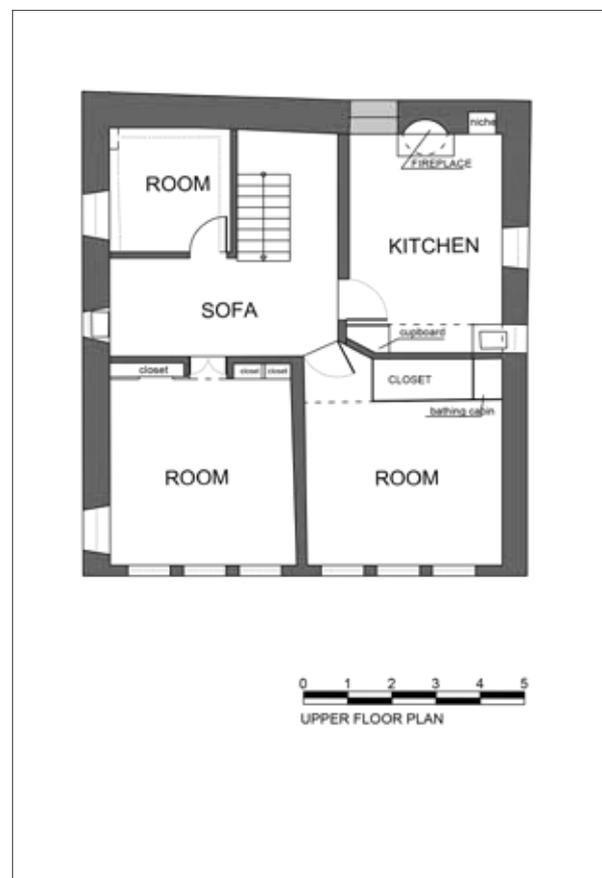
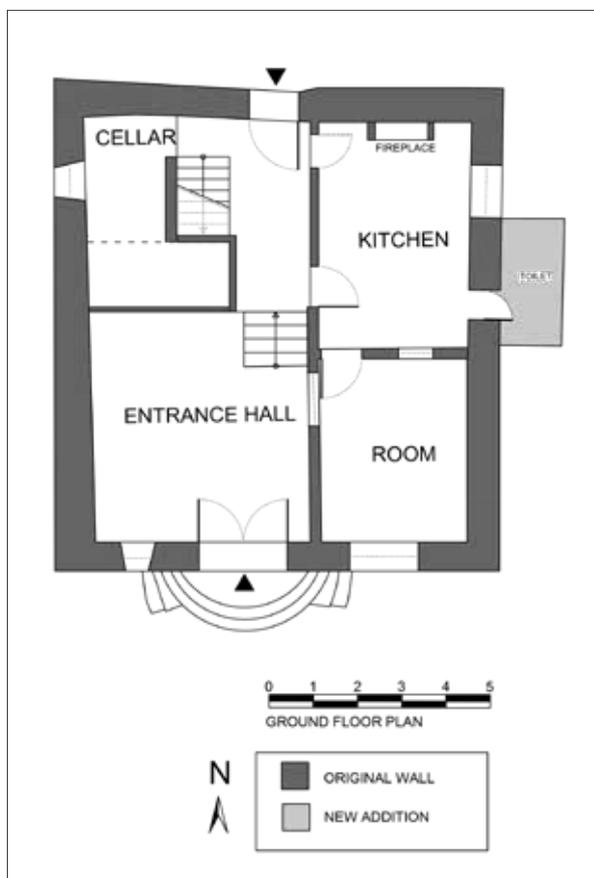
### Architecture

The residential building is located to the north of the southern half of a lot extending in the north-south direction. It is a two-storey masonry building with a tiled, hipped roof sloping in four directions. It has gardens to the north and south. The eastern and western sides of the lot have narrow passageways, which keeps the building independent from neighbouring lots and houses. The lot is on a slope descending towards the sea to the south.

The main façade is the southern one facing the sea (Figs. 1-2). The main entrance, offset westward from the axis, is reached from the southern garden. The double-winged door is accessed by a staircase that is slightly wider than a semicircle (Fig. 3). This staircase is composed of five steps that are attached to the façade wall from their eastern and western sides, while the bottom two steps merge into the top three to create three steps from the

southern side. On the eastern side of the main doorway there is a marble fragment from antiquity depicting a wreath resting on a base, which is recessed from the plaster. There is a small window, circular on the exterior and square on the interior, to the west of the doorway. At the eastern end of the staircase is a second door opening, which provides direct access to the basement under the eastern half of the ground floor. Above this door is a window to the room located in the eastern half of the ground floor. There is a total of six rectangular window openings, in two groups of three, on the upper floor level. Traces of a top window are seen above each of the middle windows of this group. The lower floor is constructed with stone and raised mortar, stone on the corners being fine-cut and those in between being rough-cut. The upper floor of the main façade is constructed in timber frame and plastered.

There is spolia from antiquity on the projecting foundation of the western façade. The ground floor of the western façade is blind, while the upper floor has three rectangular window openings: one in the southern half and two in the northern half. The rough-cut

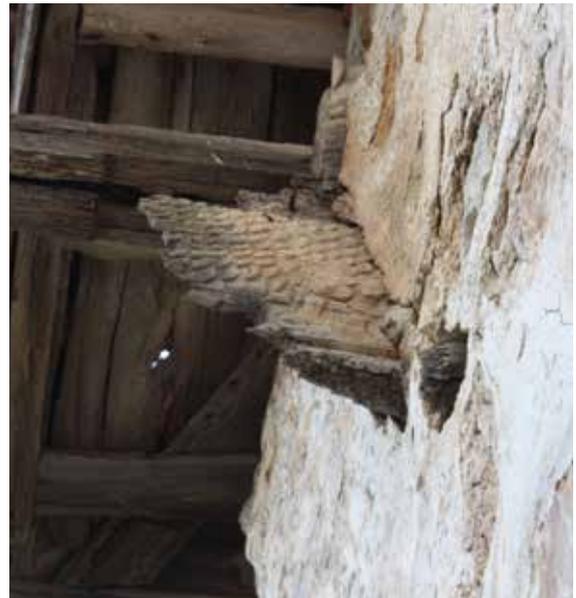




*Fig. 2: South and east façades*



*Fig. 3: Staircase*



*Fig. 4: Remains of a timber eagle figure at the northern end of the west façade*



*Fig. 5: The fireplace niche in the northeastern room on the upper floor*



*Fig. 6: The southern wall in the northeastern room on the upper floor*

stones and rubble seen on this façade are plastered in between. There are the remains of a carved wooden eagle on the northwest corner, underneath the eaves (Fig. 4). This timber piece that resembles a console supporting the eaves has fine workmanship and is in poor condition.

The northern façade has a door opening on the ground level, opposite the main entrance on the south façade, and a window opening on the eastern side of the upper level, which was later closed. The façade is otherwise blind.

The eastern façade (Fig. 2) has a toilet mass later attached to its northern section on the ground floor. The ground floor of the façade is blind except for a window opening to the north of the toilet mass. On the upper floor, there are two windows on the northern side and a drainpipe for the sink, which was added later according to information obtained from the owners.

The main entrance on the southern façade opens into a large hall (*taşlık*) with marble flooring on the ground level. A curving

timber console was placed to support the upper floor, just east of the doorway and in the northwestern part of the timber frame wall in the north. In the northern part of this space, elevated by timber elements, there is a doorway leading to the garden in the north. There is also another space, divided by a makeshift timber wall and a staircase leading upstairs. The lower part of this space is used as storage area. The eastern half of the ground floor is composed of two elevated rooms to the north and south, and a cellar on the lower level. It was learned that the room in the north was later turned into a kitchen. It has a fireplace niche in its northern wall. The eastern wall of this room has a door, opened later, to provide access to the toilet mass. The southern room is accessed through the kitchen space. This room has a single window opening on its south façade.

The upper floor is accessed via a timber staircase with ten steps that rises to the south, near the door leading to the garden in the north. This staircase reaches the inner corner of the L-shaped inner *sofa*. On the east side of the L-shaped *sofa* is a room, which was later modified as a kitchen. The *sofa* opens into a



Fig. 7: Closets in the southeastern room on the upper floor

room to its southeast that is accessed from the southeast corner, a room to its southwest accessed from the south, and a room to its northwest accessed from its inner corner. The *sofa* has a window to the west. The western end of the *sofa* functions as a kitchen, with a sink inserted into the window opening and a cupboard placed in on the southern wall. The upper floor windows, except those on the southern side, are arranged as embrasure windows. Since the southern façade is timber frame, the windows on this façade are designed accordingly (Fig. 2).

The northwestern room has a single window to the west. A narrow timber shelf runs along the entire room. The northwestern and northeastern rooms are separated from the *sofa* by timber-framed walls covered with wood laths (*bağdadi*). The ceilings and floors are also paved with wooden planks. There is a fireplace in the middle of the northern wall of the northeastern room, a rectangular niche to the east, and a window opening to the west that was later closed (Fig. 5). The southern window of the two in the eastern wall was later arranged as a kitchen sink such that the wastewater was discharged through

a pipe. The space is separated from the room to its south by a timber construction (Fig. 6). The western end of this wall is bevelled and arranged as a cupboard. There is also a cupboard at a higher level, close to the ceiling.

The southeastern room is accessed through a door opening in the bevelled wall, on the southeastern corner of the L-shaped inner *sofa*. The wall that the door wing opens towards separates this room from the kitchen and serves as an entrance space with a cupboard. The cupboard arrangement in this wall has three niches on top of each other towards the door, a large closet in the middle, and a *gusülhane* (bathing cabin in a closet) at the east end (Fig. 7). The closet is painted green and blue, and there is a shelf on top that runs along the western wall. The southern wall has three windows facing the sea. The top window above the middle one was later closed. The floor is composed of timber planks, while the ceiling is covered with timber and is simply articulated with wood laths.

The timber-frame wall separating the southwestern room from the *sofa* has a closet arrangement inside the room. The access from



Fig. 8: Closets and the painted panels of the southwestern room on the upper floor

the *sofa* is provided by a double-winged door in the middle of this arrangement (Fig. 9). The part between the door and the closets is arranged as rounded with three niches on both sides. The western side is arranged as a closet and the eastern side is divided into two as a cupboard. The door wings of both sides are lost. Like the room in the southeast, this room also has three rectangular windows facing the sea, and the top window above the middle is closed. At the southern end of the western wall is an embrasure window.

The southwestern room is the most ornate part of the house with beautiful decorations (Figs. 8-9). There are hand-drawn, stencilled decorations over the closets of the door-cupboard arrangement, on the lintels of windows on the south side, on the concave band that provides transition from the wall to the ceiling, and on the ceiling. The top frames of the windows, cupboards, and door have dark green-white ornamentations depicting curtain folds. There are the traces of voluted floral décor on the walls above the eastern and western windows, which is concealed under the whitewash. The panels between the closets and the ceiling plinth feature a fictive depiction of Ekinlik. In the west (left) panel (Fig. 10), from left to right respectively, there

is a tree leaning to the right, a construction resembling fortifications with seven crenelations, two trees on two hills and a single-storey building in between, a four-storey timber dwelling, two cypress trees, a small mansion, five trees on top of two hills, and a tree leaning to the far right that fills the spandrel of the entrance arch. In the eastern (right) panel (Fig. 11), from left to right respectively, is the depiction of a tree leaning left into the spandrel of the entrance arch, five trees on three hills, two adjacent houses with two- and three-storeys, two cypress trees rising behind a wall, a windmill between two hills with trees –the wings of this mill are behind the tree in the east, and two cypress trees on the far right. Dark green, brown, red, ochre yellow and grey colours are used in the panels.

There is an olive branch composition on the ceiling plinth, which extends along the four walls at the upper level of these two panels with landscape depictions. Two pairs of olive branches lie horizontally in the middle of the plinth and extend around a bar wrapped with two crossing ribbons. One branch intersects to form the shape of a rhombus, the other in the shape of an egg. Green, ochre yellow, grey, and brown are seen in the olive branch band. The flat timber ceiling is articulated by



Fig. 9: General view of the south wall of the southwestern room on the upper

wood laths (*çitakâri*) arranged as intersecting rhombuses and there is schematic vegetal ornamentation. The composition with green leaves emerging from a red-pink flower in the middle –on a light grey-green background– is repeated in between the wood laths. The wood laths are accentuated at the intersection points and corners with a stylised flower motif, and their remaining parts are highlighted with a gradient colour turning white.

The landscape depictions on the ceiling plinths, in the panels with C-S curves, and on the walls began to be seen in Istanbul in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were also found in private residences outside the palace starting in the same period. The earliest known example of a band of landscape depictions in Anatolia is found in a 1768 house in Bursa, the practice became widespread in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Renda 1977, 124-137). The extreme simplicity of the perspective and the motifs of Tahsin Tutucu's House allows us to make comparisons with Istanbul Kavafyan Mansion of 1750 (Renda 1977, 110 Fig. 78), the Mosque of Yazır Village in Acipayam of 1802 (Renda 1977, 152-53 Fig. 117; Arık 1988, 42-46), Tekelioğlu Mansion in Antalya from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Renda 1977, 137-38 Fig. 103 colour Fig. 14), and the time-keeper's office (*muvakkithane*) of the Beyazıt Complex in Amasya dating to 1840 (Renda 1977, 157; Arık 1988, 51-53). However, as Renda points out, a stylistic unity or development cannot be attested among the wall paintings, seen in various regions of the Ottoman Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1977, 137). Therefore, it will be safer to attribute the bands of landscape depictions seen in Tahsin Tutucu's House on Ekinlik Island to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Current Condition

The building has undergone various interventions during its long lifespan as a house, which was until 15-20 years ago. The historical photographs reveal that the Seven Brothers' Houses originally had three storeys. Their ground floors were stone masonry,

the first floors combined stone masonry and timber frame, while the second floors were entirely timber-framed (Pl. XI-XII nos.44-45a-45b). However, all these buildings have survived with only two storeys. Although there are no traces of the stairway leading to a second floor in Tahsin Tutucu's House, it probably rose from the landing next to the existing staircase. The northeastern rooms on the ground floor and the first floor were converted into modern kitchens with fireplace niches on their north walls, as well as a counter, sink, and water supply. The western end of the L-shaped *sofa* on the upper floor was also transformed into a kitchen. Since there are no fireplaces in the rooms other than the northeastern ones, the chimney holes on the walls were probably opened later. The biggest problem of the building is the lack of maintenance, which is causing rapid deterioration of its ceilings, timber flooring, and walls. There are water leaks, especially in the ceiling of the southwestern room with the painted ornamentation. The building was plastered with cement-based plaster to prevent further deterioration. However, it is likely that the floors and ceilings will be lost in the near future.

### Risk Assessment and Recommendations

This registered cultural property is under threat due to neglect. Because of changing living conditions and the difficulty and cost of maintenance, the families who once occupied one room of this house have moved to flats in the reinforced concrete apartment building to the west of the lot. Although the building has a roof, rainwater penetration is a problem. The timber-frame construction should be consolidated and renewed. The house should be restored and conserved by specialists in accordance with its plan scheme and pictorial ornamentation. The building is significant for Ekinlik as well as the history of residential architecture in Turkey. However, both this building and the other Seven Brothers' Houses do not have information panels, which should be added to raise awareness and increase the potential visitors to the island.

# Tahsin Tutucu House: Conservation Report of Wall Paintings

*Gizem Erten*

The southwestern room on the upper floor of Tahsin Tutucu's House is decorated with authentic wall paintings. There are examples of wall paintings on the upper sections of the timber closet arrangement on the northern wall (Fig. 8), on the lintels of the three windows on the southern wall (Fig. 9, 12), and the concave ceiling plinths running along the four walls of the room. Another remarkable feature of the room is the ceiling decoration with wood laths (*çitakâri*) (Fig. 9, 13).

It is not possible to consider the conservation of the wall paintings independent from the physical condition of the room and the building. For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate the current condition of the building against physical, chemical, biological, environmental and human factors. Structural problems may be caused by changes in temperature and humidity, water leakage, freezmelting-thaw cycles, harmful sun rays, intense light, the presence of soluble salts, wind, vibration, changes in use and renovations, as well as a lack of control and maintenance. The presence of some or all of these factors significantly affect the deterioration process and conservation status of the building and its decorations.

The water leakage caused by the damage in the superstructure of the ornate southwestern room is also observed to a great extent within the room. The water leakage triggers the formation of microorganisms, algae, and lichens as well as the infiltration of salts in the soil and building materials, which cause physical, chemical and biological problems. These issues, compounded by environmental factors, accelerate the deterioration of structural features and decoration details. The southern wall of the room overlooking the sea has three windows. Since its front is open, the building is exposed to long hours of sunshine (Fig. 9). It has been observed that these problems on the southern wall affect the entire room and make it vulnerable to external factors.

Wall painting layers consists of the main carrier (wall), support (one or more layers of plaster and whitewash), and the paint layers. For this reason, the current condition of the wall and plaster are taken into consideration in order to protect a wall painting in an appropriate manner. As a result of the observations made in Tahsin Tutucu's House about the condition of walls, it is noted that the northern and western walls are partially conserved, while the southern and eastern walls are severely damaged. Plaster loss is observed especially in the lower part of the window openings of the southern and eastern walls. The western wall is better protected than the others. A large portion of the northern wall is covered by a timber closet system, above which are wall paintings. The detachment of plaster fragments from the arched opening of the door and the existence of large cracks that may cause further loss of plaster threaten the conservation status of the paintings on this wall.

The paint layers are greatly affected by the deterioration of building materials, especially the wall structure and the plaster. Damages to the paint layer –such as flaking, spalling, chalking, disintegration, and cracks– generally occur in environments where temperature and humidity are not controlled. Water leakage is observed all around the room due to the condition of the superstructure. For this reason, water leaks are noted on the surface of the wall paintings and these leaks affect the conservation of the original paint layer and cause various problems due to the lack of temperature and humidity control on the original wall painting surface. In plasters where lime is used as a binding material, water that contains dissolved carbon dioxide reacts with calcium carbonate, causing deterioration. Therefore, changes in the humidity of the walls or the environment, water leaks, rising damp, and condensation cause various types of deterioration in paint layers as well as in other building materials (Figs. 14-15). Since a continuous wet-dry cycle will cause



*Fig. 10: Left panel, southwestern room on the upper floor*



*Fig. 11: Right panel, southwestern room on the upper floor*



*Fig. 12: The traces of the wall painting plastered with wash on the south wall above the western window*



*Fig. 13: General view of ceiling with wooden lath decoration (çitakâri)*



Fig. 14: Water leaks on the north wall



Fig. 15: Water leaks on the north wall and baroque ornamentation details of the closet on the north wall



Fig. 16: Wall detachment and poor-quality paint layer



Fig. 17: Poor quality paint, cracks and soot layer

the paint layers to disintegrate (chalking) and detach from the wall, the loss of paint will intensify, and the original wall painting will be lost if this cycle is not prevented.

The plaster layer behind the wall paintings on the northern wall is generally preserved, but there are occasional detachments and capillary cracks (Figs. 16-17). There are wide openings, especially at the points where the northern wall intersects with the eastern and western walls, which have probably affected the main carrier (Fig. 16). If these detachments and capillary cracks are not taken under control, serious interventions will be required in the near future. A black soot layer is observed throughout the fresco surface (Fig. 17). Soot may result from moisture problems, uncontrolled water leakage, negligence, the use of stove for heating, lost doors and windows. These causes will bring many other problems, such as the capillary cracks observed in some parts of the fresco surface. There are structural cracks in the paint layers due to the building's extended exposure to improper heat and moisture conditions (Figs. 10, 17).

Other examples of the wall paintings in this room are found in the concave ceiling plinths

running along the walls, the baroque decoration on the window lintels in the southern wall, and other ornamentations on the windows, which were later painted over (Fig. 12). In addition to these decorations, there is ceiling lath-work (*çıtakari*) as other important decorative elements of the room (Figs. 9, 13). However, it is noted that water leakage caused by the superstructure has had a significant effect on the ceiling decorations. Therefore, loss of paint, loss of fragments, loss of original decoration, humidity problems, intense dry deposits and loss of timber durability are observed in some parts of the ceiling decoration. The surface of the ceiling decoration was covered with paper in the past. This wallpaper was attached to the timber ceiling, which is thought to be original, with the help of iron staples. During this process, iron staples reacted with water and oxidized, causing the exposure of the ornamented surface to deterioration due to the corrosion of iron.

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.