

# Ulu House

*Gamze Özmertyurt*

District of Marmara, Ekinlik Neighborhood	Construction period/date: <b>June 26, 1827</b>
	Current status: <b>House, in seasonal use</b>
GPS: 40°32'50.5"N 27°29'20.5"E	Ownership status: <b>Private ownership</b>
Registration date and number: <b>Bursa KTVKKBK 18.08.1990 - 1297</b>	

## History

The building is one of the so-called Seven Brothers Houses on Ekinlik Island. According to the story well-known by the islanders, it was one of the seven houses constructed by a Greek merchant for his seven sons (Pl. XI-XII nos.44-45a-45b). According to the Oral Tradition Archives (folder B77), these houses were known as the 'Sarayia', meaning 'palaces' and were owned by wealthy captains of Koutali; however,

there is no mention of the captains being brothers. Therefore, the name 'Seven Brothers' was likely coined by the Turks of the island. Only four of these buildings have survived. According to information from the locals, the current owner of this property is the Ulu Family. The inscription panel by the structure's main door records the construction date as June 26, 1827 and the owner as Ioannis Panteli.



Fig. 1: General view

## Architecture

The entrance to the building is through the southern façade facing the Marmara Sea (Fig. 1). There are reinforced concrete buildings to its east and west, one of which is repaired. The building has a square-like, rectangular plan with a floor area of 10.89x9.84 m. The lot is 30 m away from the seashore and sits on sloping land that descends from north to south. The building is located on the western edge of the lot.

All the walls of the house were built in stone masonry with timber bands except for the southern wall of the upper floor, which was timber frame. The landing in front of the main entrance is elevated by five semi-circular, marble steps. The stone inscription panel to the left of the main door is embedded in the wall. Historical photographs of the building from the early 1900s show that it originally had two floors above the ground floor, and that the second floor had projections supported by timber brackets. The second floor has been completely lost.

There are rectangular windows on both sides of the entrance on the southern façade. There is also a rectangular top window above it. On the upper floor are five timber sash windows with rectangular forms and eight partitions, two to the west and three to the east. Timber lintels that are bevelled from their upper corners are used on the windows. Similar bevelling was also applied to the interior doors and windows. Circular top windows were later closed with bricks. Timber moulding runs between the existing floors along the entire façade and extends vertically from the corners of the upper floor to reach the roof.

It is observed that the stone wall on the ground level of the eastern façade continues to the upper floor. The flue projection can easily be seen on this façade. The flue's form reflects the architectural features of its period. To its left is a window that was later closed on the upper floor. To the right of this façade, there is a rectangular, timber window on the lower floor and a rectangular, timber sash window on the upper floor.

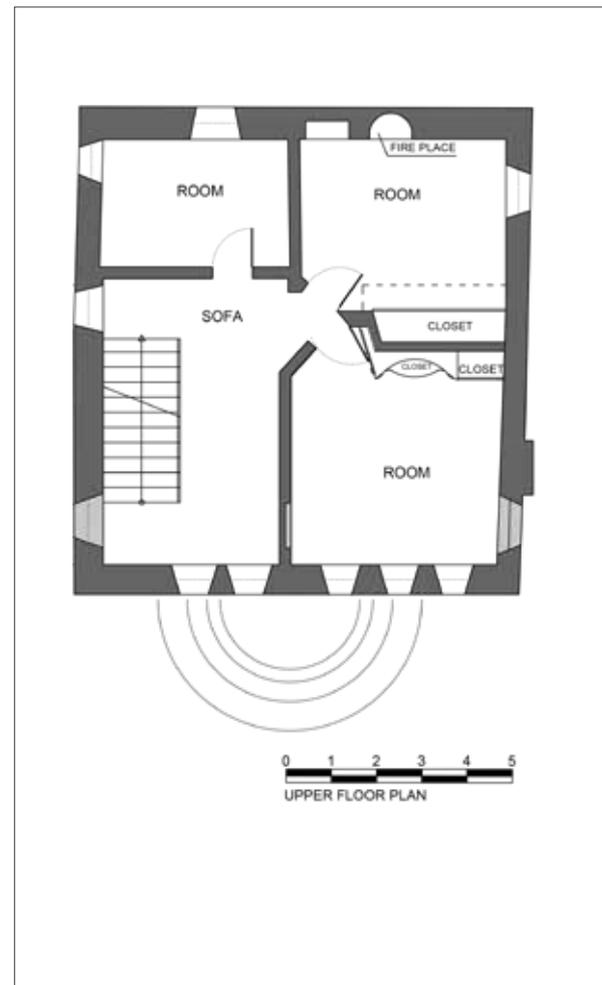
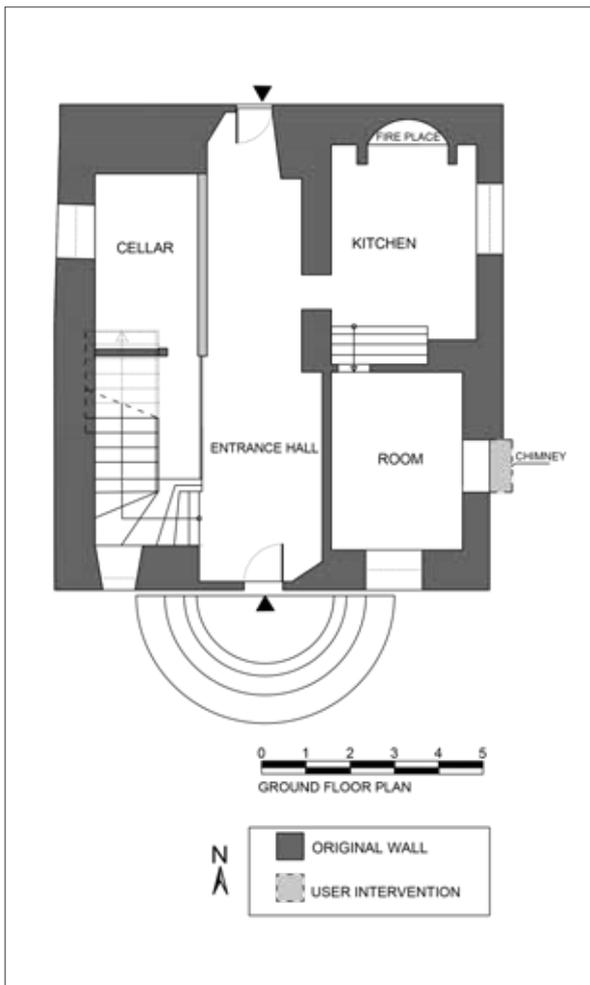




Fig. 2: Central hall on the ground floor



Fig. 3: Northern end of the sofa upstairs

The northern façade of the building has a second entrance, which also provides access to the building. The entrance is currently a single-winged PVC door with an aluminium awning. There is a rectangular sash window on the upper floor of this façade. The other opening, which was originally a window, is closed and currently used as a niche on the inside. On the western façade, there is one window on the ground floor and three windows on the upper floor.

The ground floor opens into a central hall extending in the north-south direction (Fig. 2). The original floor covering cannot be identified since the floors are currently covered with screed. There are doors, which provide access to the building, on both ends of this central hall. The stone masonry walls are about 90-100 cm thick. The ceiling has two rows of beams on top of each other. An L-shaped staircase provides access to the upper floor. After the first four steps, at a height of 70 cm, is a passage to the cellar underneath the stairs. There is a kitchen with a fireplace to the northeast of the central hall, near the northern entrance. Another room with a rectangular plan is accessed through this kitchen, elevated by four-five steps. The window on the eastern wall of this room was closed and converted into a fireplace outlet.

The staircase leading upstairs is timber. Its balustrades are also timber and painted white. The upper floor's layout features an outer *sofa* (Fig. 3). The timber ceiling of this *sofa* is ornamented with wood laths (*çitakâri*). On the eastern wall of the *sofa* is an *iconostasion* for



Fig. 4: Niche-shelf arrangement in the southeastern room upstairs

holding icons. To the southwest of the *sofa* is a closed window and the timber staircase leading up to the non-existent second floor. The *sofa* is surrounded by a room on the north, on the northeast, and on the east. The northern room is blocked with shelves and there is a top window over its doorway. All the doorways, niches and windows on this floor are accentuated with timber joinery for aesthetic reasons. The northeastern room is accessed via a single-winged wooden door, painted white. The door locks are traditional and original. This rectangular room has a fireplace

and a niche to the north and a window to the east; the built-in closet is by the southern wall of this room. The eastern room also has a rectangular top window over its doorway. It is clad with curving timber that also serves as a jamb. The door is painted dark green. The most striking feature of this room is the closet-niche along its northern wall (Fig. 4). The niche flanked by shelves must be decorative; the outward parts are arranged as closets. The other walls of this room have windows but the one opening into the *sofa* was later closed.

The upper floor was also built in stone masonry with timber bands. The building is covered by a timber hipped roof clad with tiles.

### Current Condition

The house, partially used as a warehouse, has been preserved without much intervention. Functional changes on the ground floor resulted in the closure of certain windows, the opening of a fireplace outlet, and the raising of the floors. The central hall downstairs was converted into separate rooms using timber elements. The northern entrance is not original.

Stone is used extensively in the building. The thickness of masonry walls reaches up to 90 cm. Stones of different types, colours, and sizes are used in the wall courses. Terracotta elements such as tiles and bricks are also used in the wall course with double rows of timber

bands. Timber bands are additionally used in line with the exterior window and door joineries, therefore they are prominent on the façade. The overlapping timber elements of the ceiling are connected by nails.

The doors and windows are generally original. The closet on the upper floor, cupboards, niches, sash windows, and balustrades of stairs are also original and in good condition.

### Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The building preserves its original form to a large extent. The closure of windows and the use of cement-based plaster on the façades, which damages the stone texture, both affect the authentic features of the building. Inorganic materials such as PVC doors should be replaced with timber doors. There is a loss of plaster layers in the upper floor. A bulging of plaster layers and the growth of mosses on wall surfaces were also observed. Such deteriorations indicate water leakage from the roof, causing disintegration of the stone. Therefore, a comprehensive restoration should be conducted for this building.

The building can be seen from the Marmara Sea. It is also one of the most unique and significant examples of houses on Ekinlik Island. This potential should be considered in the restoration project. Since the owners do not continuously reside in the building, it is at risk of neglect in the future.