

# Development of a Vernacular Settlement in the Balkans

## The Ottoman Kavala

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### Abstract

The town of Kavala in the present day Northern Greece is an example of Ottoman urban and residential developments. This paper covers the period of Kavala's development under the Ottoman rule between the years of 1391 and 1912. It focuses on the development of the Ottoman house and its characteristics presented through the examples of the houses built in the historical peninsula in the Ottoman era Kavala. The objective of the paper is to analyze the houses built in Ottoman Kavala, which still exist in the old historic peninsula. They have typical Ottoman floor plans amalgamated with local influences but can still be placed among the several typical architectural types of Ottoman house when analyzing their floor plans. The paper derives conclusions concerning the characteristics, origins and influences on the development of the Ottoman house in the provinces outside the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

**Keywords:** Ottoman house, Ottoman vernacular, house plan typology, Ottoman Balkans

### Introduction

Kavala became a vibrant port city due to the activities of the two Ottoman sultans Selim I, and later Süleyman the Magnificent and the Grand Vezir Ibrahim Pasha. This was from the region's conquest by the Ottomans in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century up until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, we do not have a source, which fully establishes that there was a town in existence at this site, after the conquest of the previous Byzantine Christoupolis and its leveling to the ground. This suggests that Kavala indeed was a pure Ottoman settlement on a site not having any pre-existing structures.

During this period, we observe the development of the Ottoman settlement of Kavala and in a smaller scale, the focus concerns the Ottoman *mahalle* system for the urban space organization and the house typology and its evolution. The Ottoman house with its specific characteristics has a special place in the history of house types all over the world. This special house was built in all territories of the Ottoman Empire, between Rumelia and Anatolia. In these territories, the Ottoman house was established and developed. Here we can see some differences between the vernacular type developed in the capital, Istanbul, and the provincial one; the latter more effected by the local construction systems, techniques and materials as well as by local culture. In this sense, Kavala holds a very complex architectural structure with numerous variations on their interior organization and morphology on the facades. Typological morphological and structural examinations of the existing houses make it possible to assess particular qualities and characteristics of the houses.

The evolution of the Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean towns and cities passed through rapid and constant changes in history, characterized since the beginning by multi-cultural and multi-ethnic elements. In order to understand those changes, we need to consider all the fragmentations and overlays of different civilizations, customs and religions as well as studies made by Maurice Cerasi which identified these very well<sup>1</sup>. Almost all of the most important Eastern Mediterranean cities and towns, as previously stated, were a product of many simultaneously active cultures. Beyond the very significant and ancient historical stratifications, virtually everywhere in their long formations, they acted, co-habited and lived together with more cultures<sup>2</sup>. This is certainly true of the Hellenistic-Roman period, more or less true for the Christian (late Roman and Byzantine) paradoxically known from this point of view, and is certainly characteristic of the Islamic-Ottoman period from the beginning, and in some cases until the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Alexandria, Izmir and Beirut were not just cosmopolitan lounges (the most often highlighted by publicity), but also deeply multicultural cities in their formation (and not just multi-ethnic in their social constitution)<sup>3</sup>. It is true that those of earlier and neighboring civilizations affect the art and culture of every nation. The Ottomans, even the Seljuks before them, were not exceptions<sup>4</sup>.

The wooden pitched roof house, the domed mosque, the peculiar layout of the urban texture, the *çarşı* market, the neat separation between economic and residential functions, and the urban composition open towards nature are characteristics of what we can call the typical Ottoman city. These have existed for almost three centuries in the Anatolian region (with the exception of the oriental and partially the central plateau areas). This Thrace region consisted of Macedonia, Epirus, Thessaly, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the big cities in Serbia and, in a minor and limited way, the south and the coasts of the nowadays Romania<sup>5</sup>.

### **Geography, Topography, Morphology**

It is known that climate as well as the geographical location and the morphology of the location influences the development not only of the Ottoman town or settlement but any settlement in any region of the world. Climate is a crucial factor in determining the disposition of the urban fabric and the development of its dwellings. Within the geographical boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, Anatolia, being a vast territory has a very different climate in various regions as well as a different geographical structure. In the Central and Eastern Anatolia, continental climate prevails with hard winters and dry summers, whereas moving towards the south, subtropical climate conditions are in place; warm and rainy winters and dry and hot summers. These conditions influenced the basic formations of the dwellings. Moving towards north and approaching the Black Sea, we face not just a different climate but different geographical terrain consisted of high mountains making Western and especially Northern Anatolia's climate temperate.

<sup>1</sup> Cerasi, M. (2005) *La Città dalle Molte Culture*. Milano: Libri Scheiwiller, pp. 13-22.

<sup>2</sup> Cerasi, M. (1988) *La città del Levante*. *Civiltà urbana e architettura sotto gli Ottomani nei secoli XVIII-XIX*. Milano: Jaca Books,

<sup>3</sup> Cerasi, M. (2005) *La Città dalle Molte Culture*. Milano: Libri Scheiwiller, pp. 13-22.

<sup>4</sup> Ünsal, B. (1959) *Turkish Islamic Architecture in Seljuk and Ottoman Times*, London: Alec Tiranti, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Cerasi, M. (1988) *La città del Levante*. *Civiltà urbana e architettura sotto gli Ottomani nei secoli XVIII-XIX*. Milano: Jaca Books, pp. 20

All these geographical and climate factors influenced the dwellings in drastically different ways.

Geography influenced the building material as well. North Anatolia being rich in woods and timber employed wooden constructions. On the other hand, the center of Anatolian Seljuk civilization, the steppes of Konya, owing to the hot climate had series of geological events that left the region with a quantity of building material such as clay and mud suitable for bricks as well as lake-limestone. Marmara and the Aegean coast were rich in marble; Eastern Anatolia was rich in stone built constructions<sup>6</sup>.

The Balkan region is a peninsula with a wide northern border, narrowing to a tip as it extends to the south. It is surrounded by The Black, the Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Adriatic. The Balkan region has been a crossroad for traffic passing to and from all these destinations. The Balkan Mountains lie east-west across Bulgaria, and the Rhodope Mountains extending along the Greek-Bulgarian border, and the Dinaric range extends down the Adriatic coast to Albania. In some definitions, the region's northern boundary extends to the Julian Alps and the Carpathians. An important infrastructure that was located in the Balkans was also influenced by the geography. It was the road that leads to Rome from Constantinople. This land road covered many places among which Kavala was coming down by the coast of the Aegean Sea due to the high hills of the Rodopi Mountains. This land route was a part of the main system connecting the Ottoman Empire capital with the western countries passing through Macedonia. Albania extended towards the West reaching up to the Adriatic Sea and then continued through the Ionian Sea reaching the town of Egnatia—from which the road took its name—and from there to Rome. This land route was adopted in ottoman times and used by them to develop settlements along it<sup>7</sup>.

### The core of the Ottoman town

Ottomans upon their conquest of Anatolia and the Balkans moved into pre-existing spaces. They altered them over time but were not creating anything new. There were no pre-prepared plans for the town's development. It was a way of shaping the city which was already broadly applied inside Anatolia and later the Balkan cities were just adapting to this.

The towns in Anatolia, after they passed into Ottoman hands still had their Christian quarters preserved undamaged, just now adapted to the Islamic requirements. The space was now readapted to their requirements in a way of re-adjusting the urban groups and establishing new, more appropriate for them. The space was divided into two separate entities, public and private. Public were the religious (mosques, *mescids*, *tekkes*), governmental and trading structures such as the bazaar, or *çarşı*. The religious structures, the mosques, inside the center of the town's core were surrounded by neighborhoods (*mahalles*).

The Ottoman core did not just exist in the center of the town, but each *mahalle*, further on had its own 'core', its own mosque around which it itself spread. The Ottoman element was the centrality of the town with its neighborhoods (*mahalles*) around the central mosque or the *çarşı*, the centrality of the urban units in the *mahalle* around a mosque which always gave the name of the neighborhood and a fountain (*çeşme*). The centrality of an image of a city composed of quarters, a representational

<sup>6</sup> Ünsal, B. (1959) Turkish Islamic Architecture in Seljuk and Ottoman Times, London: Alec Tiranti, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> For further information on the road network in the Balkan departing from Constantinople see: Orlandi, L. (2017), *Il Paesaggio delle Architetture di Sinan*, Istanbul: Ege Yayınları, pp. 49.

constant in the face of rapid spatial and demographic changes is significant in giving insights into Ottoman notions of the urban order<sup>8</sup>

The formal aspects of the Ottoman's town streets were an outcome of the dwelling form which directly reflects the existence of family life. The unimposing, modest houses had informal, asymmetrical floor plans dictated by their position on the street, thus dictating their floor plans and formation of the land plots<sup>9</sup>.

A characteristic of Ottoman town morphology was that the urban tissue was composed of not very large gardens within the plot. The house plan was generated within the plot but encroached on the street, thus conditioning its architecture. The peculiarity of the Ottoman linkage of street patterns to building type consisted in its development on an axis perpendicular to the street, articulating the volumes in a free pattern from the street inwards usually known as *cul de sac*. In the Ottoman house, only the ground floor adapted to the site, invariably edging up to the street front, even when it was irregular<sup>10</sup>.

The *mahalle* probably originated from a group urbanization process by a homogeneous community of new citizens, and immigrants from the same village, often led by a leader or founder, who settled in an area of the city and began to build the houses around the religious building, in the center of the community. This process was in use not only among Muslim citizens but also between Christian and Jewish citizens. As soon as it was founded, the *mahalle* presented a high degree of cultural, ethnic, social and professional homogeneity among its inhabitants.

The physical shape of the city, consisting of an organic accumulation of *mahalles*, was created by houses. The house appearance is directly influenced by the formation of the *mahalles* in the organic disposition of the street networks and the role of the woman in the society. For the woman, the house was her own, isolated from the world because of her seclusion from the public life outdoors. In the *mahalles* there were a great number of dead-ends or blind alleys, a characteristic of all Islamic cities, which had much to do with the Islamic concepts of family privacy and private ownership.

The wooden residence, with its light structure, a height limited to two or three storey and a certain overall dynamism, given by the movement of the flaps and the projections of the bay windows (*cumba*) [Fig.1], was, due to its extension on the urban territory, the element dominated by the Ottoman city. It constituted the base from which the monumental buildings emerged, by contrast. They were distinguished by solid masonry ashlar stonework or stone alternating with brick courses and the stereo metric shape of the volumes that were surmounted in the mosques from lead-covered domes. The family was the vital cell and essence of urban society. A *mahalle* was a finite, complete unity, defined by social character and qualities, but not an urban entity with a geometrical concept<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Kafescioğlu, Ç. (2009). Constantinopolis/ Istanbul Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital, The Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 183.

<sup>9</sup> Kuban, D. (1995) The Turkish Hayat House. İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık.pp.190-196

<sup>10</sup> Cerasi, M. (1988) La città del Levante. Civiltà urbana e architettura sotto gli Ottomani nei secoli XVIII-XIX. Milano: Jaca Books,

<sup>11</sup> Kuban, D. (2010). Istanbul, an Urban History: Byzantion, Constantinopolis, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları. pp.238



**Fig. 1:** Projections of bay windows  
Source: author

### Introduction of the Ottoman house

Ottoman urban culture—as we know it from Istanbul, Bursa and in the more important Balkan and Western Anatolian towns,—spread over a large area of the Ottoman Empire. However, this did not cover the whole - in the surprisingly brief period from the end of the Sixteenth century to the beginning of the Eighteenth, expressing not only its ruling class but also vast segments of its composite society. The culture of town society—much indebted to town culture and yet so distinct from it—and hence its housing survived and even expanded its influence up to the first decades of the twentieth century, long after the court's elite production had been changed or abandoned<sup>12</sup>. The typical Turkish-Ottoman house with its sharply defined characteristics that prevailed only in a core-limited area of the empire included a large number of Slavic, Macedonian, Armenian, and Greek communities and craftsmen. However, scholars have often associated this with Turkish ethnic elements. Whether the Turkish-Ottoman house existed as a distinct type before the Seventeenth century and imposed itself on the non-Turkish Balkan communities when they began to prosper, or whether the Ottoman house was a syncretic product of a multi-ethnic society from the Seventeenth century onwards with the imperial court acting as a powerful catalyst is an open question<sup>13</sup>. The Ottoman house has its specific characteristics and a huge value that has a special place in the universal history of the house types. The Ottoman house is a type of house that can be found within the territories of the Ottoman Empire, in the territories of Rumelia and Anatolia.

The Ottomans, by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, conquered the European territory of *Rumelia*. In these territories, the Ottoman house was established and developed. It is believed that the origins of Ottoman houses are in Anatolia and then they spread to

<sup>12</sup> Cerasi, M (1998) The Formation of the Ottoman House Types: A comparative study in interaction with neighboring cultures. Muqarnas 15, pp.

<sup>13</sup> Cerasi, M (1998) The Formation of the Ottoman House Types: A comparative study in interaction with neighboring cultures. Muqarnas 15, pp.



Europe through the territory of the newly conquered *Rumelia*. The origins of the Ottoman house are still uncertain and is a matter of debate by researches. The Turks, who were conquering these territories and originated from Central Asia, were nomadic tribes who lived in tents. After they arrived in what once was the Byzantine Kingdom, they faced some already existing architectural structures and an existing culture on the land that was home of the Ancient Greek and Hellenistic art and architecture too. The question of how the nomadic tribe's tent evolved into a hard material house is still open to question even today. If we assume that once the Ottomans arrived in the territory of Byzantine, they faced the existing architecture and used it as a reference in the development of their house. We still cannot prove this assumption and call it a fact because we do not have any material facts of how the Byzantine house looked like. The Byzantine house originated from the Roman house but we only have material facts of their religious buildings and their palaces in ruins. No material evidence of the Byzantine civic architecture is present and available at our disposal<sup>14</sup>.

### Ottoman house plan typologies

Cerasi deals with the formation of the Ottoman house and its typology related to its neighboring countries. The vast territorial expanse of the empire included many house types within it. Due to the absence of old houses and the lack of detailed historical studies, scholars and architects have been concerned mainly with the typology of Turkish houses. Turkish scholars, (Sedad Hakkı Eldem, Doğan Kuban, Önder Küçükerman, etc.) promote the hypothesis that the Turkish house emerged from the Turkomanic nomadic tribe tent *otağ*, while other scholars, such as Cerasi, maintain the thesis that it emerged from the Hellenistic house<sup>15</sup>.

The regional classification of the Ottoman houses happened because of the different topographical, social and climatic conditions. The Ottoman house found its classic being from Marmara and *Rumelia* regions and from places that were under the influence zones of these regions. Out of these two central regions, Marmara has dominated *Rumelia*, and Istanbul has dominated Anatolia. The Istanbul and the Marmara regions have special importance among the other six main house types. The Istanbul house can be considered as a typical Ottoman house while the house types of the other regions can be described as regional provincial types. Edirne comes also in the same group as Istanbul with the difference that the Edirne house type influence had spread towards *Rumelia* while Istanbul's Influence embraced the whole of Anatolia<sup>16</sup>.

While analyzing the vernacular house of Istanbul, it is inevitable to analyze the whole Marmara region and its towns in order to understand the development and the influences of the development of the Ottoman house from Istanbul to the other towns of the region and *vice versa*. The material evidence of the Istanbul house we have today dates as far back as the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the absence of existing buildings, the Istanbul house can be analyzed also through the photographs, records from visitors, paintings, and post cards taken of Istanbul in the previous periods. Finding existing houses from previous centuries is very difficult since the town was under a constant change of its looks, rulers and population. Some of the structures in the Topkapi Palace,

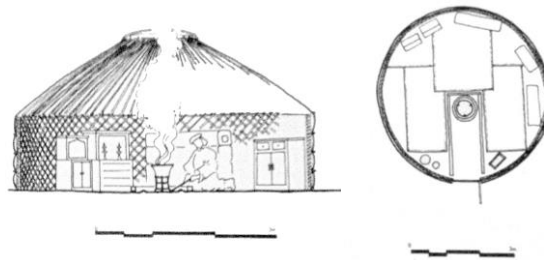
<sup>14</sup> Eldem, S. H. (1984) Türk Evi Osmanlı Dönemi. Cilt.1. Türkiye Anıt Çevre Turizm Değerlerini Koruma Vakfı,

<sup>15</sup> Cerasi, M. (2005) La Città dalle Molte Culture. Milano: Libri Scheiwiller.

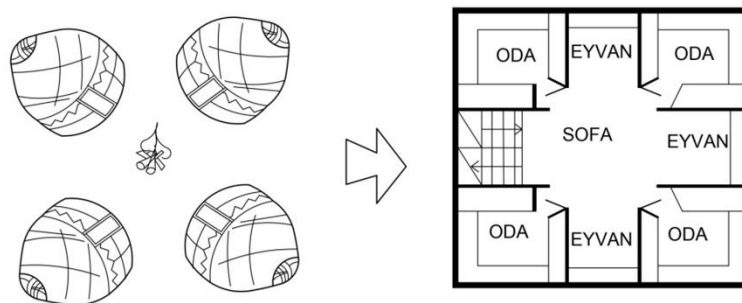
<sup>16</sup> Eldem, S. H. (1984) Türk Evi Osmanlı Dönemi. Cilt.1. Türkiye Anıt Çevre Turizm Değerlerini Koruma Vakfı,

and especially the harem section are also some of the few vernacular structures that give us a clear idea of the architecture of that era.

If we take a look at the tent that the Turkoman tribes were using as their houses, we can find similarities with the first Ottoman house which was a single spaced room (*oda*) and it was used as a place for everyday life (sleeping, eating, sitting) keeping the functional concept of the Turkic tribal tent *otağ* [Fig.2]. Later the house continued to grow and slowly two, three and four rooms were combined together forming the unity of the house; but the functions of the rooms were still kept as in the single roomed house (Fig.3). This is one of the characteristics of the Ottoman house, the *oda* or the room. Each separate room contained all the daily functions of the household unlike the Western houses where each room had its own defined single function, one for sitting, one for sleeping, and one for dining<sup>17</sup>.



**Fig. 2.** Turkoman Nomadic Tent (Yurt) Plan and Section  
Source: Kuban, 1995



**Fig. 3.** Spatial organization of a typical floor plan  
Source: Adachi, 2004

Sedad Eldem Hakki pioneered the typological studies of the Turkish house. Based on the classification of the plans of the main floors, he presented schematic drawings of the Turkish house types. In his thesis, Aksoy worked on the Turkish house and does not give a typology but it advances the concept of one of Eldem's types<sup>18</sup>, the concept of the central space. Both authors explained the differentiation of the house typology by the influence of local tradition and climate<sup>19</sup>. In his work, Turkish Hayat House, Kuban Doğan takes a different approach and finds Eldem's work lacking in an integral view, and a morphological analysis of the totality of the house. It does not take

<sup>17</sup> Ivkowska, V. (2016) Comparative Analysis between the Istanbul House Plan Types and the Plan Types of the Ottoman Houses in the Panagia District in Kavala / Vergleichende Analyse des Osmanischen Haustyps in Istanbul und dem Panagia Bezirk in Kavala, Journal of Comparative Cultural Studies in Architecture JCCS-a. vol. 09. pp. 15 (<http://www.jccs-a.org/>)

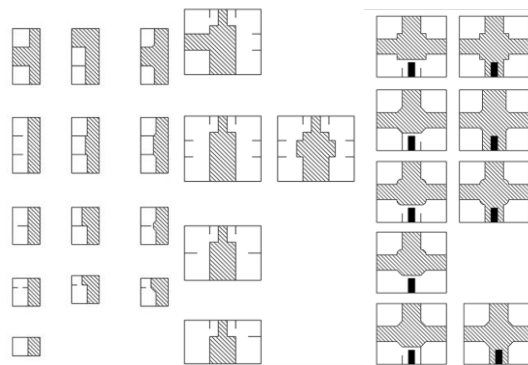
<sup>18</sup> Aksoy, E. (1963). Orta mekan: Türk sivil mimarisinde temel kuruluş prensibi. Mimarlık ve Sanat, 20, 39-92.

<sup>19</sup> Kuban, D. (1995) The Turkish Hayat House. İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, pp. 41

into consideration the exterior configuration and socio-historical analysis. However, Doğan goes back to the first Turkic tribes and their arrival on Byzantine territory, their socio-historical characteristics and influences.

The concept of the room was something that defined the Ottoman vernacular style that later—as it continued to develop—added other necessary features that also became elements of it. The story of the house is one of the elements specific for this vernacular. The house has the ground floor usually built in stone with an entrance and a small or sometimes no windows at all and the first floor or sometimes the last floor, in case of two story houses, where life took place<sup>20</sup>.

Another important element of the Ottoman house is the hall called *sofa*. The rooms always opened into the hall. If the room was compared with an individual house, then the hall can be compared with the street and all the houses opened onto it. Depending on the position of the hall and the way the rooms opened onto it, we can determine the types of the Ottoman house (Fig.4). This is how the four types of Ottoman house floor types are distinct: 1. House without a hall (*sofasız*); 2. House with an Outer Hall (*dış sofalı*); 3. House with an Inner Hall (*iç sofalı*); 4. House with a Central Hall (*orta sofalı*).



**Fig. 4.** House plan types with 1. outer hall; 2. inner hall; 3. central hall

Source: redrawn from Eldem, 1984.

The Ottoman's house classification is made according to their plan and not according to their order in time or to topographic and climatic conditions. The reason for this is that these types could not be attributed to certain periods or to certain regions, being independent of time and place. If a classification based on regional conditions had to be drawn up, it would have to be made according to the degree of progress and advancement that the towns and villages, in which the houses were situated, had reached<sup>21</sup>.

These four type plans developed further on but kept the basic classification of the plan by the position of the hall. The various plan compositions were executed with

<sup>20</sup> Ivkowska, V. (2016), Comparative Analysis between the Istanbul House Plan Types and the Plan Types of the Ottoman Houses in the Panagia District in Kavala Journal of Comparative Cultural Studies in Architecture JCCS-a. vol. 09. pp. 16 (<http://www.jccs-a.org/>).

<sup>21</sup> Eldem, S. H. (1984) Türk Evi Osmanlı Dönemi. Cilt.1. Türkiye Anıt Çevre Turizm Değerlerini Koruma Vakfı.



divisions such as the *selamlık* and *harem*, Bertram (2008) and junctions that allowed an increase in the number of halls in the plan.

The house without a hall is the most primitive state of a house plan and consists of one room or more, placed in a row and in front of the rooms there is a passage. In the houses that have an upper floor, this passage takes a form of a balcony. The outer hall house type is the first stage of the development of the house plan. The plan of these houses consists of a hall and a suite of rooms giving onto the hall. This plan offered the possibility of enlarging the space by adding more rooms with recesses between the rooms but also had its modifications when pavilions were added and the main hall developed.

The inner hall house type is the next stage of the development of the floor plan of the Ottoman house. It started developing by the addition of another row of rooms onto the outer side of the hall. The last type, the house with the central hall represents the last stage of the development of the Ottoman house plan. Here, the hall is situated in the middle of the house surrounded on four sides by the rows of rooms. Among these rows of rooms are one or two recesses (*eyvans*) made as cut-outs to allow light into the hall. The vernacular trends in Constantinople, as a capital, were innovative in comparison to those of the provinces. In addition, some house types could be still present in the provinces while abandoned in Istanbul long ago. Istanbul's urban landscape was changing rapidly and houses were always "modernized".

### **Ottoman History of Kavala and its urban development**

The pivotal role in the establishment of the Ottoman administration of the Balkans had the figure of Evrenos Bey or Hacı Evrenos. Every Ottoman conquest from the banks of the river Maritsa (*Meriç*) in the East to the shores of the Adriatic Sea in the West, that happened from mid-1350s until his death in 1417 was linked to his name<sup>22</sup>. The conquest of Byzantine Christoupolis by the Ottomans occurred in 1387, but the fate of the area had been decided later. In 1387, Christoupolis did not fall into the hands of the Ottomans directly, but became a tax subject and the new rulers assigned, for the period 1387-1391 the administration of the city to Manuel Palaiologos, ex-governor of Thessaloniki<sup>23</sup>. The Ottoman history of the settlement, that later became the important Macedonian port town of Kavala is considered to be very unclear since we do not possess sources that fully establish that there was a town in existence at the site in the century following the Ottoman conquest. Even though scholars generally agree that ancient Neapolis that later became Byzantine Christoupolis, and in Ottoman time became Kavala, does not confirm an unbroken continuity of the settlement<sup>24</sup>. Towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Christoupolis, following the Ottoman conquest of the region was conquered and burnt down by the Ottomans<sup>25</sup>.

All that remained was the castle, where the Ottoman guard settled in order to control the most important sea passage in the north Aegean Sea, the strait between

<sup>22</sup> Lowry, H. W. (2008) The shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350-1550: The conquest, settlement & infrastructural development of Northern Greece. Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University Publications, p.16.

<sup>23</sup> Papazoglou, K. N. (2008). Eastern Macedonia: Kavala and Drama - Time and Space (Eds.). Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace- Eastern Macedonia. Komotini: "Anglohellenic" - "Pelti" Publications S.A., pp. 184.

<sup>24</sup> Lowry, H. W. (2010a). Piri Reis Revisited: The Kitab-ı Bahriyye as a Source for Ottoman History-The Aegean Port of Kavala & the Island of Limnos (İlimli) as Described by Piri Reis. Osmanlı Araştırmaları 35.

<sup>25</sup> Schreiner, P. (1977) Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken. 2 Teil Historischer kommentar. Wien: Verlag Der Österreichischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften, p. 343.

Thasos and Kavala, and the semi-mountainous passage north of the city's port where Via Egnatia was coming down to the shore. Kavala's growth continued thanks to Sultan Selim I who had completed the construction of the fortress of Kavala at the peak of the peninsula<sup>26</sup>. His works were succeeded by his son, Süleyman the Magnificent and the Grand Vezier, Pargali Ibrahim Pasha. Ibrahim Pasha graced the city with very important public buildings, the most important of which is the aqueduct that brought water to the fortress. (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5:** Postcard from the beginning of the 20th century showing Kavala's Aqueduct built by Sultan Süleyman's grand vizier Pargali Ibrahim Pasha  
Source: HLAKE

Ibrahim Pasha placed the building program in Kavala high in his agenda, with first priority given to the city's safety. He thus reinforced and extended the old walls. Inside of this new, supplementary wall, new squares were fashioned and buildings erected; three mosques are mentioned to have existed during this era, the coastal one was the central (Fig.6), while the city also included of baths and caravanserais. The charitable Muslim institutions in the city included a *medrese*, *hamam* [Fig.7], two *kervansarays*, dervish lodge, *mekteb*, *han* (inn) and a soup kitchen<sup>27</sup>.



**Fig. 6:** Ibrahim Pasha Mosque, today converted into the church of St. Nicholas.  
Source: author

<sup>26</sup> Lowry, H. W. (2008) The shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350-1550: The conquest, settlement & infrastructural development of Northern Greece. Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University Publications, pp. 230.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pp. 234.

The French traveler Pierre Belon's account of his visit to the northern Aegean port town of Kavala in the early spring of 1547 discusses the role played by Sultan Süleyman's Grand Vizier, Ibrahim Pasha, in endowing a number of charitable works on behalf of the inhabitants of Kavala. He makes it clear that their services were in no way restricted to Muslims. Belon states that the *kervansaray-imaret*, or inn-soup kitchen which Ibrahim Pasha built as part of his *vakıf* (religious foundation), was open to all regardless of their religious affiliation<sup>28</sup>.



**Fig. 7:** Interior of the Pargali Ibrahim Pasha Hamam today  
Source: author

The traveler Evliya, as one of the most outstanding sources on the Ottoman world seen through the eyes of an 'insider'. His Book of Travels gives a good description of the town, with numbers of houses existing in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Kavala as well as its general urban outlook mentioning a number of existing neighborhoods, town gates, ports as well as information the number of the soldiers. Within the walls of the upper fortress was a garrison.



**Fig. 8:** View of the Ibrahim Pasha Mosque from the port  
Source: HLAKE

<sup>28</sup> Lowry, H. W. (2010b). The 'Soup Muslims' of the Ottoman Balkans: Was There A 'Western' & 'Eastern' Ottoman Empire? Istanbul: *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* (Vol. 36).



Even though Evliya does not provide us with information on the number of the inhabitants of the town, he does give us important information on its urban layout. These information actually helps us follow Kavala's urban development from its establishment by Pargali Ibrahim Pasha all the way towards the late mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.

This lower city, *Aşağı Kavala varoşu*, was actually the first settlement founded within the walls built by Ibrahim Pasha. In this part, that held the foundations of the Ottoman Kavala, Ibrahim set his huge built program and set the town's first urban unit, the first *mahalle*; Ibrahim Pasha's neighborhood. The center of this *mahalle* was the mosque he built by the coast and the other structures that were part of his *külliye* around it (Fig.8). The market was also located in this flat area and the houses grew up the hill all the way towards the castle, the *iç kale*.

The houses in this neighborhood were all three storey dwellings with ground floors built of stone and with single door openings whereas the two upper floors had window openings towards the street (Fig.9).



**Fig. 9:** House examples in the residential part of Ibrahim Pasha neighborhood.  
Source: author

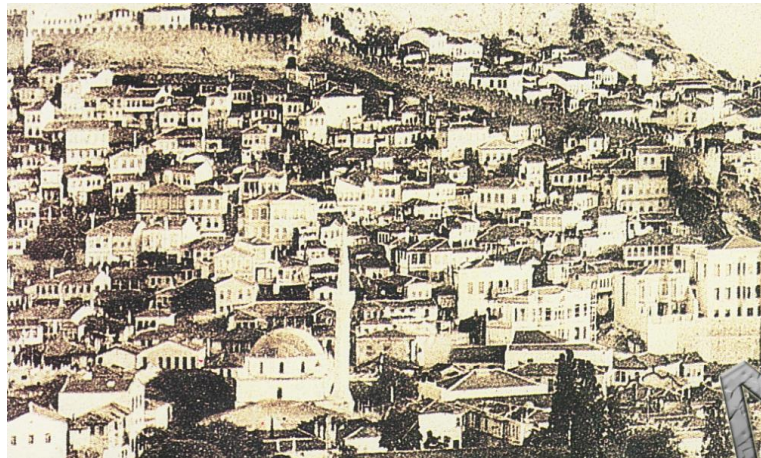
Evliya states that in the lower walled city i.e. the first settlement, there were an additional 500 houses, most of which were without gardens. This information allows us to have a better picture of the urban layout of the city's first *mahalle*, its parceling system related to the morphology of the terrain and the density of the house built program letting us conclude the nonexistent gardens.

In the middle of this neighborhood's residential area, up on the steep hill, was a small square formed at the intersection of the streets with a fountain positioned in the middle of it (Fig.10), thus providing the households with fresh water that was coming straight from the aqueduct.



**Fig. 9:** The fountain in the middle of the residential area of Ibrahim Pasha mahalle  
Source: author

Having all these information from the traveler's accounts, let us know that Kavala in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a small town that already had its urban character typical for an Ottoman town. The Friday mosque located by the coast by one of the three ports, in the first settlement positioned inside the new walls and the *küllîye*, all built by Ibrahim Pasha, with the bazaar and the residential area with its vernacular dwellings above it (Fig.10).



**Fig. 10:** View of the Ibrahim Pasha mosque and the enwalled residential area of the neighborhood.  
Source: HLAKE

### **Kavala's urban development between XVII and early XIX century**

The phase of prosperity for the city essentially commenced with the exploitation of its commercial port. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Kavala had grown into a small city with several neighborhoods and with a population of nearly 5000 people<sup>29</sup>. It was a town with many mosques located in the second intramural area (the middle walled town) where other neighborhoods were fashioned.

<sup>29</sup> Lowry, H. W. (2008) The shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350-1550: The conquest, settlement & infrastructural development of Northern Greece. Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University Publications, pp.239



The houses located in the middle walled town had two and sometimes three floors all facing towards the sea whether they were located on the East or the West side of the area. Few of these houses had gardens due to the density of the settlement. They all had wider ground floors than those in the Ibrahim Pasha *mahalle*, and first floors all facing the sea. The steepness of this second enwalled town was less narrow, so the houses, in chase of sunlight and view, were not built too high as those in the neighborhood mentioned before.

Compared to the houses built in Ibrahim Pasha *mahalle* from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, these new dwellings now had wider floor plans, open to light and view and were more spacious (Fig.11). Some of them also had gardens especially those on the East side of the peninsula facing the island of Thassos. The parcelation on this side was more orthogonal now, rather than being completely organic and randomly organized, following a grid with streets or stairs perpendicular to the sea front.



**Fig. 11.** House with symmetrical plan and wide front  
Source: author

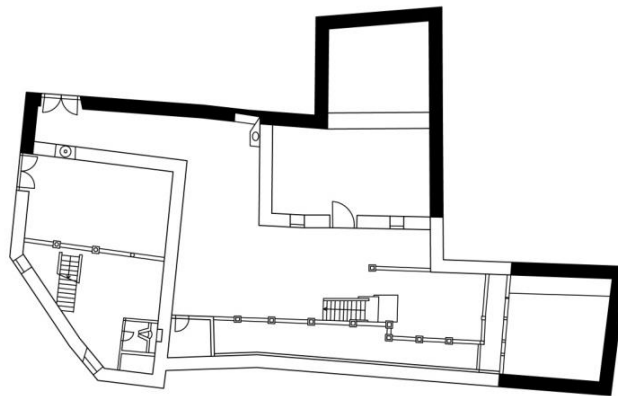
The most respectable and noble house of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Kavala was Mohamed Ali's house built close to the peak of the peninsula in the middle walled town, facing the island of Thassos on the East, the Bay of Kavala on the West and the Mount Athos on the South. His house is the only one in Kavala built as a mansion (*konak*) with some architectural features of an important, wealthy, Ottoman family. The Mehmed Ali house can be presented separately, because of its owner's importance not just to Kavala but also to the Ottoman Empire and his appointment as viceroy of Egypt, whose last dynasty he ruled. The house was owned by his maternal grandfather and Mehmed Ali had lived here after his parents' death<sup>30</sup>. Probably in the Eighteenth Century, Mehmed Ali's house was one of the town's very important and obviously, one of the few mansion houses. Typologically, the house is a traditional broad fronted two storey residence with a linear layout of rooms. It has an enclosed balcony (*hayat*) with cantilevered bay windows on its south end on the first floor, auxiliary areas and covered courtyard below (Fig.12).

<sup>30</sup> Lowry, H. W., Erunsal, E. I. (2011). Remembering One's Roots: Mehmed Ali Pasa of Egypt's Links to the Macedonian Town of Kavala: Architectural Monuments, Inscriptions & Documents. Istanbul: Bahcesehir University Press. pp.4



**Fig. 12.** Mehmet Ali's House  
Source: author

The house of Mehmed Ali is one of the few remaining residences in Greece which preserve the separate men and women's quarters (*selamlık* and *harem* respectively), which were some of the chief characteristics of the Ottoman houses of the well-situated families. Additions and alterations have not affected the basic typological coherence of the building<sup>31</sup>. The house, today used as a museum, maintains its Ottoman quintessence. Positioned on the steep terrain on its one side, it is laying on a solid rock over which a stone ground floor is built [Fig.13]. Above this masonry level lays the beautiful light wooden upper floor with its incredible plasticity of the several bay windows. This house has a strong relation with the landscape due to the retaining walls that elevate the house above the ground and all the window openings on every side of the wooden upper level.



**Fig. 13:** Schematic plan of the ground floor of Mehmed Ali's house before its restoration in 2004.  
Source: redrawn from Stefanidou, 1986

### **Kavala's urban layout and the house typology within the town walls**

The Ottoman town of Kavala was positioned on the peninsula in three enwalled sections. The first, also being the oldest, the Ibrahim Pasha neighborhood located by

<sup>31</sup> Kalogirou, N., Nomikos, M., Papadopoulou, T. (1992) Kavala Intra Muros: Spatial readings and Architectural Proposals. Kavala: Municipality Kavala. pp.65

the coastline and upward to the top of the fort on the north-west side of the area. The second following the first towards south and occupying the whole area of the peninsula and the third, the fort itself located on the top of the peninsula. Kavala's boundaries are defined by natural and artificial features as the cliffs, the harbor, the city wall and the aqueduct. The district consists of a number of sites, whose individual characters are a result of historical evolution, the configuration of the terrain and the way they are incorporated into the urban area of Kavala as a whole. Inside the old Ottoman nucleus, four defined localities can be determined and four Muslim districts can be distinguished. Hüseyin Bey neighborhood, Kadi Ahmed Efendi neighborhood, Halil Bey neighborhood and the first enwalled part of the town, the Ibrahim Pasha neighborhood.

The residential blocks in the historic peninsula of today's Kavala are of various shapes and sizes. These blocks tend to be narrow, their width takes up two plots, or sometimes only one. Those residential blocks that have one side faced toward the city wall or faced towards the sea differ from the typical residential blocks that are surrounded on all four sides by streets because they are not bounded on all sides by streets. Those in the district's north extension are of particularly varied and indeterminate shape, especially those on the outskirts and in the Ibrahim Pasha neighborhood. Access to those properties, which are inside the blocks, are the typical tiny dead ends (*cul-de-sac*)<sup>32</sup>.

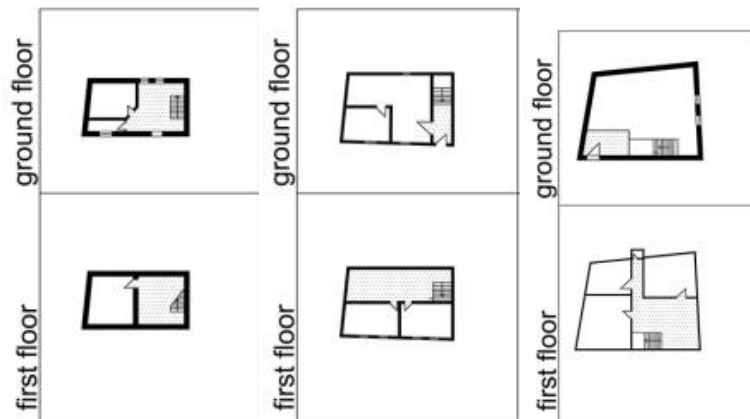
An examination on how the buildings are positioned in the urban fabric shows that they are organized in two ways: either as free standing units or in linear disposition along an axis. The relations between the buildings determine the overall profile of the district, most important of all being the direction of the building's main axes<sup>33</sup>. In Kavala, in order to achieve plenty of sunlight and a good view, the axes are at right angle to the slope of the ground and this uniformity reinforces the impression of a homogeneous whole. This and the intense built on the peninsula add to avoiding fragmentation and creating the unified whole.

A typological and morphological examination of the buildings makes it possible to assess their particular qualities and characteristics. A research conducted by the University of Aristotle lead to certain conclusions about the typology of the houses. By a close examination of the plans, three basic types emerged: types A, B and C<sup>34</sup>. The type A is a house with two rooms; one closed one semi-open. The simplest type in the historical district is the two storey building with a closed balcony- sitting room and a vertical access in a form of a staircase (Type A1) (Fig.14).

<sup>32</sup> Kalogirou, N., Nomikos, M., Papadopoulou, T. (1992) Kavala Intra Muros: Spatial readings and Architectural Proposals. Kavala: Municipality Kavala. pp.63

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. pp.63

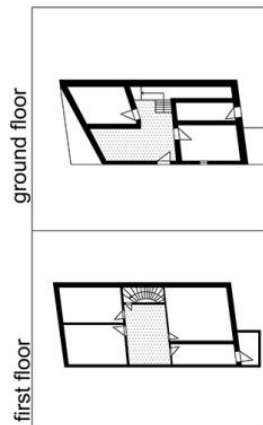
<sup>34</sup> Ivkowska, V. (2016), Comparative Analysis between the Istanbul House Plan Types and the Plan Types of the Ottoman Houses in the Panagia District in Kavala, Journal of Comparative Cultural Studies in Architecture JCCS-a. vol. 09. pp. 22 (<http://www.jccs-a.org/>)



**Fig. 14:** The type A1; A2;A3

Source: redrawn from Kavala Intra Muros, 1992

This balcony is actually the outer hall. The other more common is the A2 type with broader front, usually with 2 rooms next to each other and an enclosed area (balcony-sitting room) where the stairs are located. The A3 type is with even broader front and has 3 or more rooms in a row fronted by a spacious sitting room. From the floor plan analysis of the A type, we can conclude that this type of a house has an outer hall which is closed and from which we access the room or the rooms. The stairs are placed inside this hall. Type B is essentially a product of evolution of the parceling system and successive division of urban land. The buildings are two storeys, narrow-fronted structures presenting a limited area towards communal spaces. It is an urban type with transitional features<sup>35</sup> (Kalogirou, 1992) (Fig.15)



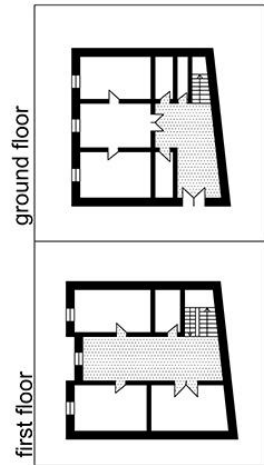
**Fig. 15:** The type B house

Source: redrawn from Kavala Intra Muros, 1992

In this case, the sitting room which gives access to the other rooms does not have the major role that it has in the A type but sometimes can be so narrow that the rooms are positioned on the either side of it. That way, it does not receive any direct light. In this type of a house we notice a transformation of the hall into some type of a corridor since its space became so narrow that only hosted the stairs and allowed access to the rooms. The term that is used for the hall here is the sitting room that in the B plan

<sup>35</sup> Kalogirou, N., Nomikos, M., Papadopoulou, T. (1992) Kavala Intra Muros: Spatial readings and Architectural Proposals. Kavala: Municipality Kavala. pp.63

type lost its function. The stairs lead to a smaller enclosed room that is sometimes at the centre of the house but its dimensions and position do not suggest a function of a hall since its very small and has no functions at all. The type C is probably more recent and is more urban in character (Fig.16).



**Fig. 15:** The type C house

Source: redrawn from Kavala Intra Muros, 1992

It comprises two storeys. It is box-shaped and can have a wide front. Some additional morphological features are visible. One feature that is common to all variations of this type is the internal central sitting room with the rooms positioned symmetrically on either side of it. There are usually two rooms on either side and they all open into the sitting area which runs through the length of the house with the stairs usually at the back. The type C presents the inner hall floor plan as we presented in the examples from the second period of the development of the Ottoman house in Istanbul. The long inner hall spreads in the middle of the house and the position of the stairs is sometimes at one end of it or in the middle. This type of house plan corresponds to the split belly floor type (*karnıyarık*) which is a modification of the house with an inner hall that corresponds with the type B that is used by the Greek scholars. Given the examples from the plan types in Ottoman Kavala, we notice that the central hall plan does not appear in the typology of the houses in the town. If the style itself presented nobility and social development, then we can conclude that the town kept its provincial character<sup>36</sup>.

## Conclusions

Ottoman vernacular style in general had undergone three major stages. Very little is known of the domestic forms from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Century. This is why an analysis of the development of the Ottoman house types cannot be taken further back than the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The phases are believed to have their roots in Istanbul and then spread over the Marmara region and had their secondary influences in the further geographical territories of the Ottoman Empire. Some of the types from previous periods still continued to exist parallel with the contemporary style, but mostly these older house types prevailed in the provinces. From the development of the urban area

<sup>36</sup> Ivkowska, V. (2016), Comparative Analysis between the Istanbul House Plan Types and the Plan Types of the Ottoman Houses in the Panagia District in Kavala, Journal of Comparative Cultural Studies in Architecture JCCS-a. vol. 09. pp. 26 (<http://www.jccs-a.org/>)



of the Ottoman Kavala it can be concluded that a constant impact on the urban fabric has been occurring through the decades after the Ottomans lost the rule over this town<sup>37</sup>. The Ottoman houses have undergone changes and modifications. From analyzing the floor plans we can follow the development of the house and determine few types of floor plans. Some of them correspond to the earlier development of the area due to their lack of space and modest development in its interiors. As for the houses with wider floor plans, we can conclude that they were firstly built probably in the later centuries of the Ottoman dominion, when the tobacco industry was in its bloom. This allowed a prosperous urban community and the rich families to build bigger and more spacious houses on larger properties instead of the small and often shady previous houses. The specifics of the terrain and the location of the settlement had a direct impact on the typology of the houses, too. They became a mixture of the Ottoman house type and traditional positioning of the house on the property according to the terrain<sup>38</sup>. The richness of the architectural elements that can be seen in this location are of exceptional importance since they show the ways how in those times problems were solved in order to design and build houses that would provide not just the basic needs for shelter but also commodity, view and light<sup>39</sup>. Kavala, being an Ottoman province, just like most of the towns in *Rumelia*, during the centuries of development of the vernacular styles kept its previous styles. The division of the style development by centuries, as it can be applied to Istanbul, could not be applicable to the towns in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Istanbul, being the metropolis, had its own lifestyle and specific vernacular architecture that developed with the more powerful and wealthier inhabitants, but also with the glory of the capital itself. In Kavala, the most respective and noble house was Mohamed Ali's house, the founder of the Egyptian dynasty. His house is the only one in Kavala built as a mansion with the specific architectural characteristics of a wealthy family.

In general, we can say that most of the houses built inside the middle walled part of the peninsula that are preserved, kept their "provincial" characteristics. However, the morphology of the terrain was an important shaping factor, which led to a different outlook of house and property. Being densely populated, the plots were very small, sometimes narrow, and also positioned on the slopy terrain that added to the difficulty of having wider or at least clearer forms of plots. This was not the case with the houses that were built by the middle and the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the tobacco industry started to flourish in Kavala. By then, foreign traders settled in the town and built their houses and brought with them western influences. But these houses were not built in the old district of the peninsula since it was already overcrowded. The parcels of the houses in Ottoman Kavala remained untouched and the houses kept their original floor plans. In this area, the central hall plan did not exist until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Several houses with an inner hall were built but they had their entrance from the upper floor which was something that was due to the topographic specifics of the plots. This specificity was not based on Ottoman influences or characteristics, but was rather a functional element. In Kavala, all Ottoman house elements are visible even today, the urban fabric kept its Ottoman organic structure with interventions made in later centuries, following the needs of the new life styles as well as the general

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp.26

<sup>38</sup> Ivkowska, V. (2016), Comparative Analysis between the Istanbul House Plan Types and the Plan Types of the Ottoman Houses in the Panagia District in Kavala, *Journal of Comparative Cultural Studies in Architecture JCCS-a*. vol. 09. pp. 26 (<http://www.jccs-a.org/>)

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pp.26

development of the town. The identification of the styles by the Greek scholars were in fact the same typologies related to the position of the hall. In Kavala, house types from previous centuries coexisted at the same time. To conclude, the Ottoman plan house typology well accepted by the scholars today corresponds with the floor plan types existing in Kavala today and all these exemplify the distinctive elements of the Ottoman provincial domestic architecture.

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