Vernacular architecture in Crete, Greece: The Bey Sekeria Ottoman mansion of Heraklio

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Abstract

Ottomans occupied Crete by the middle of the 17th century. The multicultural tradition of the island—Greeks, Venetians, Arabs and Turks—contributed to the creation of certain architectural forms that were embodied in the vernacular buildings, as these characteristic features were deriving from all these cultures and were evident even during the 19th century. Especially by the mid and late 1800's, when European trends such as Neoclassicism were a major influence to the architecture of the island, the prosperous inhabitants at the main cities incorporated these features into their buildings. Case studies of urban mansions present a remarkable mixture of architectural expressions, local-vernacular as well as imported ones.

This article focuses on an exceptional Ottoman mansion building constructed in Heraklio, Crete, Greece. Being one of the rare remaining examples, the paper highlights the need for its restoration. The house has been built following a typical Ottoman practice, such as the *arşin* grid and has adopted a common Ottoman layout plan. Simultaneously, neoclassical forms are traced along the facade as well as historical Venetian 'memories' such as the fountain, which are present at its garden with the Ottoman *şadirvan*. The paper is based on an architectural measured survey. It hopes to facilitate its future reuse and safeguard its preservation.

Keywords: Ottoman mansions, *Konaks*, Balkan architecture, *arşin* grid, Crete

Introduction

The Bey Sekeria or Sekeryadakis mansion, owned by Blavakis-Kalogerakis family, is located at 15, Apokoronou street. (a narrow side road intersecting the main Yamalakis Street) in the 'Agia Triada' quarter of Heraklion historical centre. The area during the Ottoman era was known under the name 'Balta Cami' (Lembidaki 2008: 410).

According to the known historical sources (Tzombanaki, 2000: 132-133), 'Agia Triada' is located quite close to the city's Byzantine fortification; an expansion of the city area during the Venetian domination (Tzobanaki, 1997: 172) which consists one of the oldest neighborhoods of 'Candia' (as Herakleio was named by the Venetians) (Fig. 1).

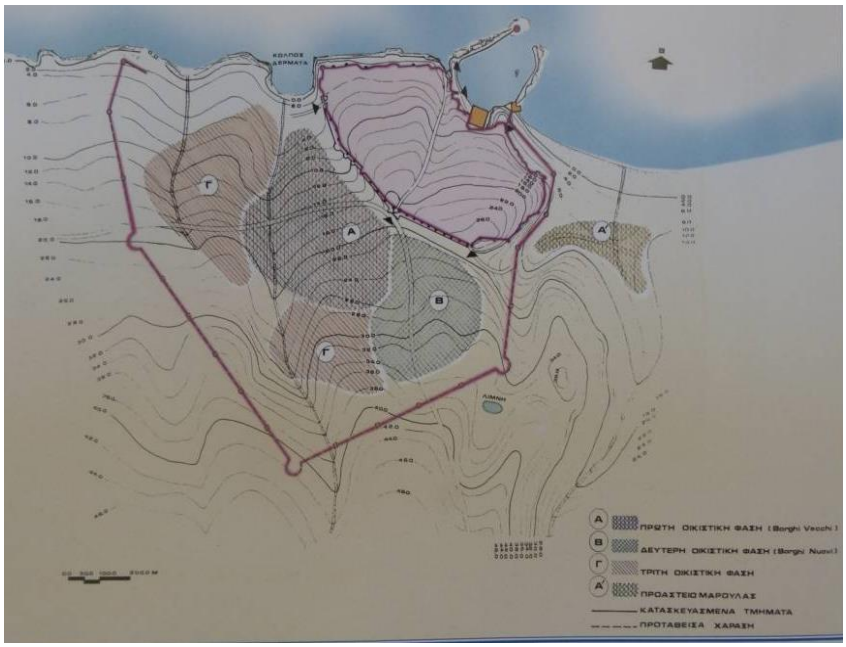

Fig. 1: The expansion of Heraklio urban fabric
Source: Tzobanaki, 1996; 219

The Bey Sekeria mansion is one of the few remaining *konaks,* as the big residential houses in the Ottoman Empire were named, that are characterized by similar features in regards to their spatial layout form, as well as to their relevant multicultural morphological characteristics, since they are estimated to have been constructed during the second half of the 19th century (before 1892). Unfortunately, today, the building does not exist in its integral form, as part of it was demolished during the 60's. It originally belonged to a Turkish merchant of Heraklio, while according to historical records (Lembidaki, 2008; 411) and archival data, it was acquired in 1893 by Sűleyman Haci Tzemali-zante (or Georgiadakis or Zekeriadakis).

The main issues addressed in this paper are related to the historical sources regarding the Bey Sekeria mansion, a noted listed building by the Greek Ministry of Culture as 'worthy to be preserved' and its constructional & morphological features. These were visible during the architectural measured survey conducted by E. Kanetaki and G. Antoniou in 2015, as well as during the research that was later followed in the Archives of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture/the local Department in Heraklio, the Municipality's Archives and and the private documents provided to the authors by the current owner Mr P. Kalogerakis. The project was aimed to apply for the permission to work on the building's restoration and reuse by the Directorate of Byzantine and Postbyzantine Monuments of Crete.

Existing literature regarding the island of Crete and the architecture in its urban centres during the late 19th century does not offer any detailed sources on the topic, apart from the work of Ch. Tzobanaki and her books. Relevant issues have been independently presented in International Conferences of Cretan Studies (Kanetaki & Antoniou, 2016), but still research of this aspect is inadequate. Therefore this paper contributes to the recognition of the importance of this building.

The research methodology involved the study of the local architectural stylistic features presented at a selected number of buildings located in the historical fabric of the city, a *palimpsest* of urban additions, through which the data was collected. Still today there are a few remaining examples of local vernacular architectural tradition influenced by the

European trends of the 19th century that can be located during a visit at Heraklion historical urban centre.

Local examples of vernacular Architecture: the case study of Bey Sekeria mansion

The Ottoman conquest of the island of Crete began in 1669 and lasted until 1898. The Ottoman officials and landowners faced the housing necessities (Tzombanaki, 2000; 70)—at least for the first period of their domination on the island—by repairing and renovating the previously constructed Venetian mansions into *konaks*, that were consequently equipped with the relevant Ottoman spaces: the *haremlik* and *selamlik*, reception room, coffee room (*kahveodasi*) and the most frequently used private small bath (*hammam*). After 1851, the capital of the island was transferred to Chania. Nevertheless, the commercial and economic growth of Heraklion was not affected. At the end of 1856, the city suffered considerable damage due to a particularly severe earthquake, during which a large number of buildings were destroyed.

Since they were built contrary to this practice, the post-earthquake buildings were clearly the result of new construction design practice, such as the Bey Sekeria mansion, by adopting an architectural morphological and construction 'vocabulary' that differed from the pre-existing, resulting also in the appearance of newly introduced architectural construction patterns and morphology. These can be categorized into the following.

- typical Ottoman style construction patterns (such as the closed balcony/*cumba*) with integrated Balkan influences,
- modern neoclassical decorative elements (i.e. the frames along the main façade openings),
- forms influenced from the local vernacular architectural heritage, mainly of the previous Venetian domination related with themes from the Renaissance period, such as the decorative elements along the elevation of the imposing fountain at the garden.

The Bey Sekeria mansion belongs to the ones built during this period and its construction shows various signs that display the above mentioned influences. The *konak* is located at the back side of a plot that faces the narrow Apokoronou Street and its main facade is oriented towards the street, while the courtyard opens up to the north; before the partial demolition that the 1/5 of the house suffered from, it used to open up also to the northeast. The southern and western sides of the house are now attached to the adjoining plots of land and have no openings. Not just the plot of the mansion, but also the building appears today as 'mutilated', since part of the property that belonged to G. Chalkiadakis & E. Makromichhelaki and Ch. Voulgari was demolished after 1967 and a three-storied block of flats was built in its place, which was adapted to the landmark line. A small two-storied construction in the southeast side of the plot of land (Fig. 3) was also sold separately and is now forming an independent property that has also been adapted to the landline. Part of the Blavaki-Kalogeraki property, which prompted its other boundary to the east was demolished along with the Chalkiadaki property. According to the owners, it was a fountain located along the street (*çesme*) which was provided water by the reservoir of the mansion's well preserved monumental fountain.

Access to the property was from the Apokoronou Street, but the Bey Sekeria building is not immediately recognizable from a long distance, except from the parking area along N. Kazantzakis Street, where the southern facade of its volume rises. In the large courtyard, measuring approximately 10,00x12,50 m, paved with large slabs, the monumental stone-built fountain of 4,95x2,80m is preserved at the western side, (Fig. 2, 4). It is characterised by mouldings with architectural features attributed to the Venetian period and at the eastern side an elaborated circular *sadirvan* is still found (Fig. 2, 3)[1].

[1]The formation of the *sadirvan* is typical for that period and is found very often in Ottoman buildings of that era, i.e at the Athenian bath of Rodakiou, Mpiris, K. (1996) Αι Αθήναι, Athens: Melissa, p. 19-20.

There are also planting areas associated with the fountain and the *sadirvan*. Small subtle constructions between the fountain and the external wall are obviously subsequent spaces for washing clothes. On the western side of the plot—in the area where probably there was an old stall—is the newest two-storied building dated in 1938, of general dimensions 5.50x10.30 m, which until recently was used as a warehouse. The building had been hosting the city's conservatory until 2008, while during the recent years it has remained with no use, waiting for its adaptation.

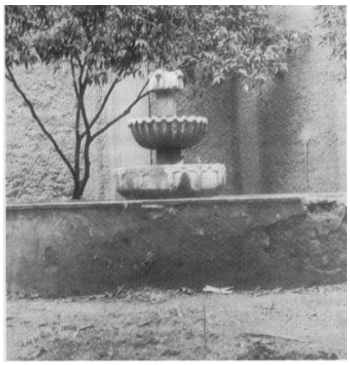

Fig. 2: General view of the yard and its fountain, Source: Kanetaki 2015, **Fig. 3:**The *sadirvan* that was once located in one of the Athenian hammams, Source: Mpiris, 1996

Building Construction and Structure of the interior spaces.

The now preserved part of the listed building extends at a rectangular plan with a total external dimension of 17,40x8,50 m. The ground floor, the perimeter walls and the majority of the interiors are of masonry. On the other hand, the inner walls and the projecting bay window (*şahnisi* or *cumba*) above the entrance door are timber framed (with the use of *çatma*=complex timber frame, as the wooden partitions are formed by vertical posts and horizontal battens, filled with adobe bricks and, in some cases, small stones or fired-clay bricks), while in other places, such as the circular staircase and the subsequent casting of closets, the similar construction of *bağdadi* was applied (*bağdadi*= the infill material ranging from bricks to wood, plastered over in lesser examples and finished in wood in the more elaborate ones). After studying carefully, the surviving traces from the demolished eastern part, it may be evidenced, that the same structure must have existed in the lost part. Finally, in the attic, all the walls are of timber frame construction. Cast iron corbels with floral decoration support the bay window (closed balcony or *cumba*), a common feature at the structural practice of the period.

The ground floors are generally paved with large marble slabs of white or sub-color and of standard size 74x74cm. The preserved paving of the yard clearly differs at the main parts – i.e. at the entrance hallway and along the zone parallel to the mansion - where the large marble slabs are of the same dimensions and at the secondary ones, where there are also marble slabs, but of smaller size and square shape (Fig. 4, 5). The room at the eastern side of the entrance is paved with wood paving boards, and probably the same material must had been used in the largest area of the demolished part. The first floor and the attic have also wooden paving.

Fig. 4: Marble floor slabs 74x74 cm at the entrance, lined up to the relevant at the yard.
Source: G. Antoniou, 2015

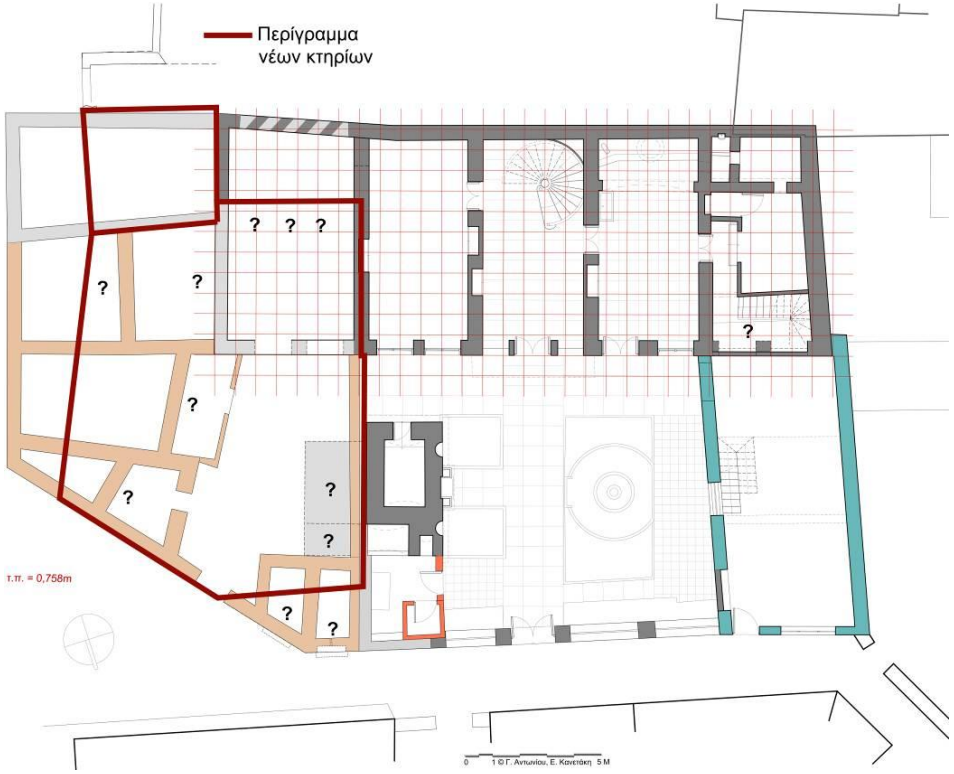

Fig.5: Ground floor plan indicating the constructional phases.
(The modern building is indicated with a red outline).
Source: G. Antoniou, 2016

The main entrance to the ground floor is from the inner courtyard through a double door located axially to the gates (Fig. 4). The joints of the external paving are extended directly into the entrance space (Fig. 5), a very clear evidence of careful axial design and choice of marble slab dimensions. On both sides of the main entrance area; measuring

general dimensions of 3,72x7,40m, rooms of approximately equal size are placed and a large circular stair of 1.40 m radius leads to the upper floor (Fig. 6).

The east-facing room, paved with a wooden floor can be considered as the official reception area due to the decorative features across the roof edging, displaying lunettes and other compositions with stars in the middle of each side (Fig. 18, 19). Traces of former constructions document the previous existence of a door to the east, that is to the demolished section (Fig. 5) evidencing the communication that had existed from the beginning of the building's construction between the two rooms[2].

The room to the west, paved with marble slabs is the kitchen of the mansion, in which a large fireplace is found on the southern side (Fig. 7), as well as a marble sink. An opening at the floor was used to supply the fireplace with wood for cooking, as well as for heating the adjoining bath. The *hammam* is situated at the western part of the ground floor layout plan, has a dressing room and a tepid room, located at a higher level[3]. A narrow door led to the warm chamber of the bath[4] with the marble basin (*kurna*) and the typical opening towards the hot water tank (Fig. 10). The water reservoir had two sections: the southern one was supplied with cold water and the northern part was provided with the hot water that was heated by the cooking hearth, as warm air and vapour was produced. The smoke from the burning wood, as well as the warm air circulated in the hypocaust (underground corridors' system). Some of the vertical clay ducts, through which the warm air was passing through (Fig. 11), are still preserved embedded in the masonry, as well as the termination of these ducts[5]. The small wooden staircase communicating with the floor is probably attributed to the initial phase of the building (Fig. 8) with a trapdoor. The original masonry wall has been replaced by a composite newer structure with cement blocks.

Fig. 6: The main staircase.
Source: E. Kanetaki, 2015

[2]The fracture on the south "blind" wall, at a distance of approximately 1.10 m from the north eastern side corner of the area, in combination with the externally visible continuing wooden joints (*hatil*-use of horizontal timbers) embedded into bearing wall masonry), contributes decisively to the estimation of the mansion's construction in one stage.

[3]The existence of the same level, as well as the continuous marble paving, could most probably prove the strong possibility of the floor's sub heating by the bath's the main warm room hypocaust. The disrobing room was probably the area with the openings toward the courtyard and with access from the women's section at the first floor.

[4]Existing traces of the bath's heating system are evidenced by at least four vertical clay pipes embedded in the masonry through which the hot air passed through, which decompose a little higher than the lowered dome.

[5]After studying the quality of the buildings' construction, it is noted that the adjoining building at the southern side of the mansion, must have been built at a second phase and has partially occupied the northwest corner of Bey Sekeria, at the area where originally the wall with the air ducts and their terminations must have been standing (Fig. 8).

Fig. 7: The kitchen with the fire-cooking- place and the fire door for the hammam.
Source: E. Kanetaki, 2015

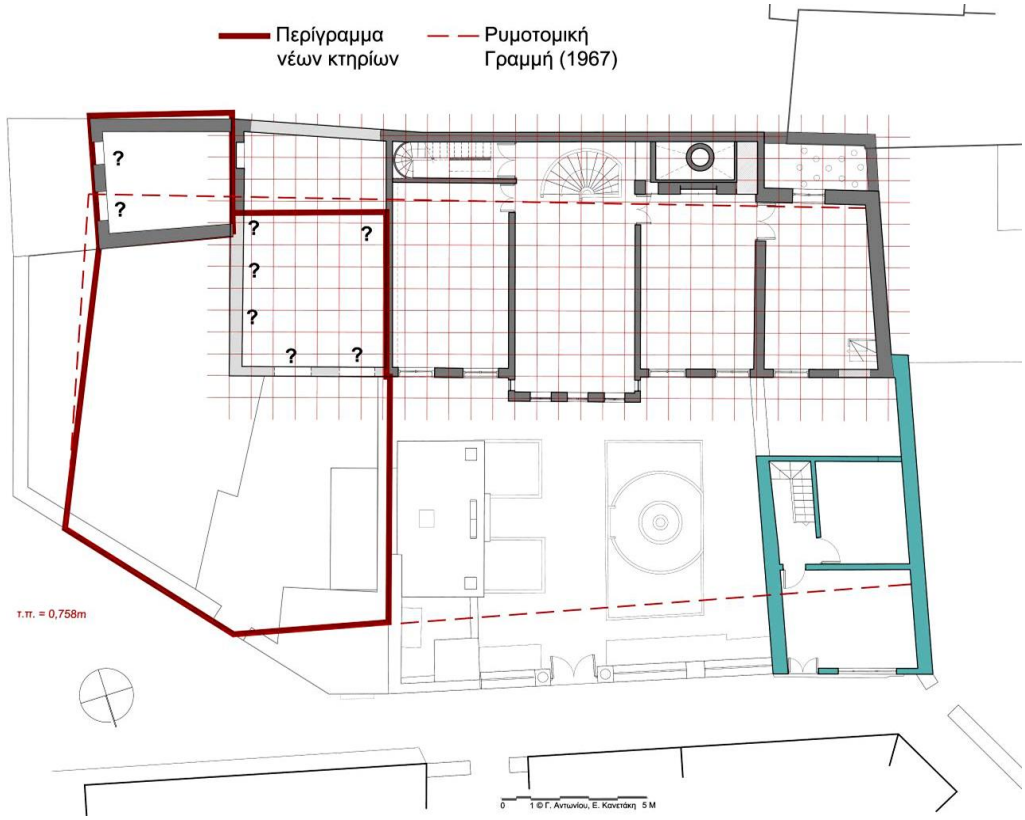

Fig. 8: First floor plan indicating the constructional phases.
The modern building is indicated with a red outline.
Source: G. Antoniou, 2016

The ceilings at all levels are made of wooden boards and have additional panel-like frames, supported on small wooden beams; cross-members adapted to either the load-bearing beams or to the roof tiles of four-storied roof tiles. The only exclusion is that of the bathroom at the ground floor that is covered by a type of lowered dome with intense ribs and circular lighting openings (Fig. 9).

The 1st floor has a disposition similar to the one of the ground floor. The space above the main entrance of the mansion protrudes from the outline of the ground floor masonry with an elaborate closed balcony/kiosk (*cumba* or bay window), probably corresponding to the typical Ottoman feature of a *sofa* (Fig.15). The windows follow the same form as the ones at the ground floor and have colored glasses, but no shutters[6]. To the east is an elongated room and behind it a narrow staircase leading to the attic. The timber framed wall at the eastern side is constructed from the interior to the exterior, as evidenced among other construction details by the continuous wooden beams of the floor at the western. The demolished eastern room might probably have been divided into two spaces, the northern-main room and the southern one; the auxiliary room.

[6]The archival image Fig. 14 shows the original pointed shutters. Such shutters had typical Gothic revival (Neogothic) buildings of the era and region, as the palace of Tatoi, Attiki, Greece. Stamatopoulos, K. (2011) Tatoi. A journey in time and space (Τατόϊ. Περιήγηση στον χρόνο και τον χώρο), Athens: Kapon, p. 164.

Two rooms situated in the western side 'open up' to the paved courtyard, while illumination is also provided by the south window of the western room, 'looking over' the bath's lowered ribbed dome with its lightning openings (Fig. 9). The ceiling at this room is painted with lunette decorations (Fig. 16). The window at its western side has been closed by a wall, a sign of intervention at a different stage after the mansion's construction (Fig. 6).

Fig. 9: The ribbed vault of the hammam.
Source: E. Kanetaki, 2015

The attic is located above the central part of the mansion and it is composed of an anteroom with the staircase, a marble sink (Fig. 10) and auxiliary cabinets and in the main room, which is also decorated with floral patterns along the ceiling (Fig. 18, 19).

Fig. 10: The basin (*kurna*) of the hammam. Source: E. Kanetaki, 2015.
Fig. 11: Hot air pipes and skylights of the hammam. Source: E. Kanetaki, 2015

Fig. 12: & 13: Attic: The edge of the railing of the stairs and the cabinet by the sink.
Source: E. Kanetaki, 2015

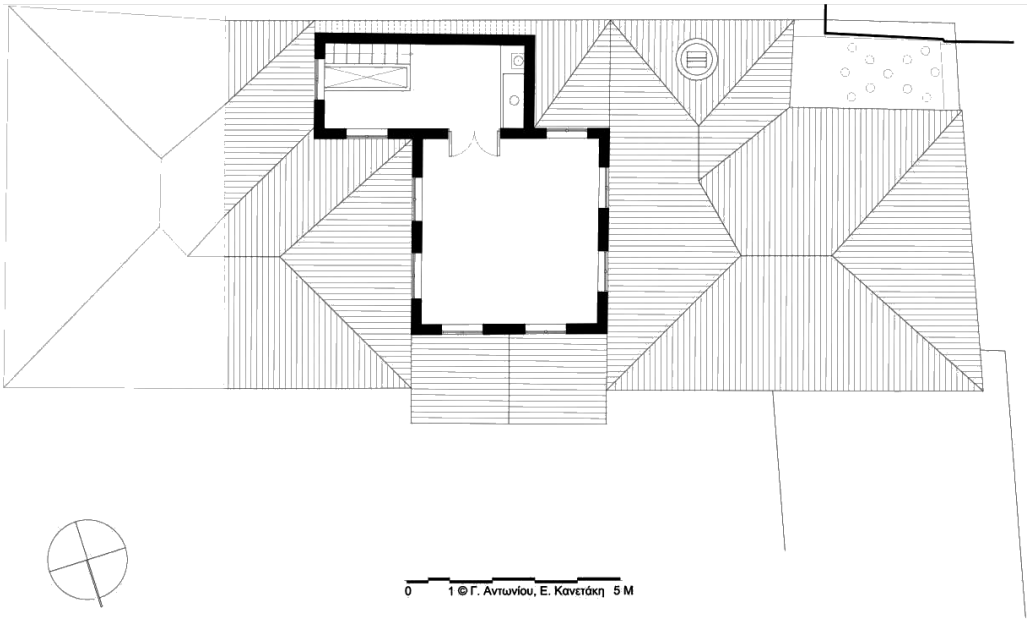

Fig.14: Roof plan with the attic
Source: G. Antoniou, 2016

Fig.15: The bay window -*cumba*- with the colored glass at the "*sofa*".
Source: E. Kanetaki, 2015

General morphological issues.

Although the disposition of the rooms at the mansion's plan, at least in the first floor, follows the old typical architectural layout of the Ottoman houses (*konaks*)[7], the building displays a morphological and constructional vocabulary that belongs to a special eclectic architectural style. This new architectural 'trend' is also found in other buildings dated to the same chronological period—the last period of Ottoman domination in Heraklion—the late years of the 19th century and the early ones of the 20th century. According to earlier published research (Xanthoudides St., 1927;76 and Tzobanaki Ch., 2000;54-55), the development of a new *bourgeoisie* (social class) is observed in the Cretan cities, with the consequence of building large mansions there, as well as 'tower type' houses at their outskirts.

In the case of Bey Sekeria mansion, the building and in particular its facade is characterized by an axial, almost symmetrical disposition. This design intention is reinforced by the relative indication of an axial spatial organization in the yard and the placement of the building at its background, in opposition to the usual, along-the-street position of other *konaks* dated to the same period. So, in addition to receding away from the strict privacy of the courtyard (*avlu*), it maybe added that there is an intention to apply perspective symmetry. The centrally placed entrance section with the protruding closed balcony (kiosk, *cumba*) and its wooden pediment is flanked by the two opposite sides of the mansion, also presenting a symmetrical, as a rule, synthetically intention. The absence of about the 1/5 of the eastern facade's part is evident.

[7]Which had central-axial room -*sofa*- and lateral rooms -*odasi*, Cerasi, M. (1988) Late Ottoman *Architects* and Master Builders. *Muqarnas.* V: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture, Oleg Grabar (ed.), Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 87-102, Oikonomou, A. (2011). The Use of the Module, Metric Models and Triangular Tracing in the Traditional Architecture of Northern Greece. *Nexus Network Journal*, 13, Issue 3, Kim Williams Books, p.763–779.

Fig. 16: Archival picture with original window decoration (Lassithiotakis, 90)
Fig. 17: Main façade. Source: G. Antoniou, 2015

The ogival arch windows centrally placed are symmetrically arranged along the entrance, both on the ground floor as well as on the first floor, and are decorated by a neo-classical frame. A similar frame is found at the other openings of the facade, apart from the ones at the attic. An archival image of unknown origin depicts part of the façade (Fig. 16): the roofed closed balcony (kiosk, *cumba*) presents many architectural features, such as decorative *balaustra* under the window sill, as well as the flower-shaped decorative elements along the central windows on both floors, probably belonging to the initial phase of the building. Along with the morphological formation of gothic influence (the ogival arch formation of the windows), the angles at the bay window are formed by added wooden ornamental pilasters with capitals, which are typical of the 19th century Ottoman buildings; a common feature also in Heraklion. The design excellence of both the pediment and the wooden cornice with its dentils, apart from the axial organization of the composition also emphasizes the neoclassical predominance in the stylistic morphology of the building.

Fig. 18-19: Ceiling decoration with ottoman (left) and neoclassical (right) motifs.
Source: authors, 2015

Another remarkable feature is the placement of a *spoglio* (construction element at a second use) from door frame of a Venetian building as a more dominant pilaster, in the well sculptured stele of corner blocks of stones at the northern end of the mansion's western side,

slightly elaborated at one side. In addition, the existence of a simpler feature (*spoglio*) of the Venetian era[8], documents a clear intention of structuring a neoclassical pilaster.

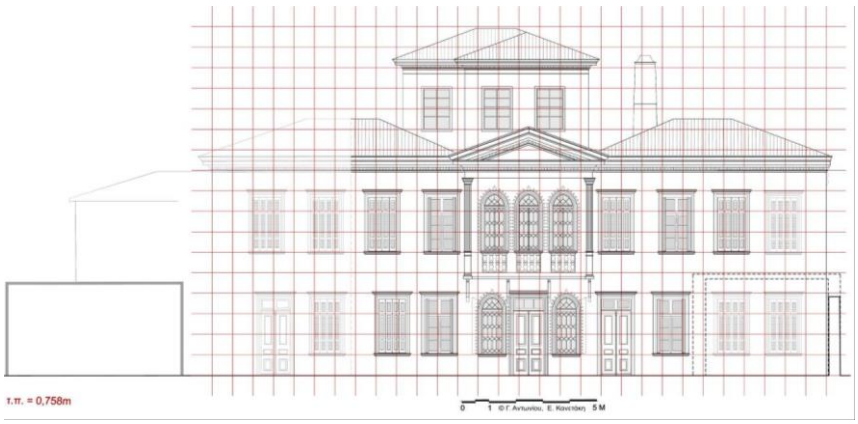

Fig. 20: Restored main façade with imposed *arşin* grid[9].
Source: G. Antoniou, 2016

The surviving French shutters, and the two paneled doors at the ground floor, probably belong to the mansion's initial phase. The imitation of ashlar masonry as noted in the attic (Fig. 13) and at the south wall coating is also an additional typical morphological feature.

Metrological data (Modular logic) and documentation of the building's original structure.

While studying the construction grid applied to the building's construction, one of the first observations was the integral number of the square-shaped marble paving at the entrance (5x10 tiles of slabs) and its alignment with the courtyard gate: this was one of the first clear proof of neat modular construction logic applied through an architectural grid. The previously mentioned dimension of 74 centimeters does not correspond to the current (at that time in use) Ottoman construction grid cubit of 75.8 centimeters (Zacharopoulou, G., 2015; 305-312). Given the length of the cubit in the 19thcentury—equivalent to 75.8 cm—we examined its application to the Bey Sekeria building. The results were positive and impressive, taking also into account the mansion's demolished part as proved by the 1967 topographical plan of the area: the ground floor plan of the mansion measured 30x11 cubits with minor variances in order to adapt its construction to the plot irregularities. The related control of the distance till the courtyard gate again was measured to an integral length of cubits, and the correlation with the total plot—based on the aforementioned topographic drawing-—also provided the integral length of cubits at its sides (Fig. 8).

Even the imposing fountain house in the courtyard, decorated with features of Venetian architectural influence, presents general dimensions of 6.5x3¾ cubits of 75.8 cm. In addition, the widths of the windows measure 1¼ cubits at the central pillars and 1¾ square cubits on the typical width windows. Apart from the above mentioned elements, a simple superimposition of the 75.8 cm square grid at the mansion's facade (Fig. 20) correlates the application of this measuring modular element to the synthesis of the design and the construction of the façade.

[8]The incorporation of that spoglio, is related to the preexisting church of St. George, of the monastery of the Italian nuns, according Starida L., (2016) Υπήρχε μια πόλη: Τα θρησκευτικά μνημεία του Μεγάλου Κάστρου (There was a city: The religious monuments of the Big Castle), Hraklio: Itanos, p. 127.

[9] About the *arsin grid*, Özdural, A. (1988) Sinan's arşin: a survey of Ottoman architectural metrology, *Muqarnas*. XV: An annual on the visual culture of the Islamic world, Gülru Necipoglu (ed.), Leiden: E.J. Brill, p.101-115.

The apparent correlation between the building and the plot of land with the 75.8 cm measuring modular grid is also a feature that confirms the constructional evidences—mentioned previously in the text—which document that the mansion was constructed as a whole entity from the very beginning, including the parts that extend at both sides of the central tripartite core, of which the east was demolished decades ago.

Morphological influences- exchanges of cultural character.

The already mentioned radical change at the general layout plan of the land's plot, setting the '*konaks*'—dwellings at the backside instead from the front side and the resulting relocation of the usually private area of the courtyard, from the back to the front side, is a major indication of influence from non-standard Ottoman standards. The architectural elements that characterize both the facade towards the inner courtyard, (i.e. the bay window—closed balcony or *cumba*) as well as the interior of the building (such as the impressive wooden round staircase to the 1st floor, the small *hammam* next to the kitchen, etc.), provide a morphological richness, attributed to an architectural 'tradition' of different origin, not only in regards to the provenience of the forms, but also related to its function and construction.

Clear influences are traced by the Balkan Architecture of the time, an indication of the intercultural relations that had existed and of the cultural exchanges between the population, as Ottoman Turks and Cretans lived in Kandiye (Ottoman Heraklion). Neoclassical ornamental features (the pediment of the attic, the door and window frames, the cornice with the wooden dentils along the facade, the corbels supporting the kiosk (bay window) are coexisting with other more traditional morphological features (the existence of the bay window-*cumba*), related also to the construction techniques (i.e. the timber-framed construction at the inner partitions between the rooms-*çatma* and *bağdadi*) and the application of an Ottoman construction modular grid.

The existence of the small Turkish bath refers to a typical Ottoman spatial disposition: its visit was dictated by the religion, as in the Koran, the sacred book of Islam, the use of the *hammam* was related to a number of events celebrated in everyday life, apart from corresponding to the actual needs of hygiene that was not served in the buildings of the time. The construction of a small private bath was frequent in mansions belonging to high-ranking Ottoman officials, as well as to Greek merchants living in the area; its size and decoration varied according to the wealth of the owner. However, the construction practices applied did not differ, but on the contrary, they appear unaltered through the architectural surveys and studies of similar surviving examples, i.e. the hammam located in the Bey Rasih Aspraki *Konak* (Chronakis house) at Herakleio. In the case of Bey Sekeria mansion, the small *hammam* is located attached to the kitchen, thus sharing their common heating space.

The layout scheme of the plan with the axial symmetrical juxtaposition of the rooms refers to similar examples of Ottoman prototypes (origins). Numerous studies in the past have extensively referred to the origin of the Ottoman mansions that had adopted synthetic, structural and decorative elements used in the *konaks* built in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople/istanbul, as well as in other cities. This model was brought to the Balkan countries, that were consisting provinces of the Empire and, accordingly, in the Hellenic region, as it is found in different areas such as Macedonia, Thessaly, Epirus, Peloponnese and Crete.

Similar morphological features are traced in other mansions of the same period found in the historic center of Heraklion, such as the Bey Rasih Aspraki *Konak*, also known as 'Chronakis House', the 'Bon Marché' (1887-1893), the 'Efkafi' (1878) etc. with minor stylistic variations, as Neoclassicist influences were incorporated. In Crete and especially at the historic centers of Heraklion, Chania and Rethymnon, the mansions of the Ottoman

period are easy to be differentiated from the earlier Venetian mansions (1648-1669), which exhibited numerous decorative features attributed to the period of the Renaissance in the Western Architecture and were built of elaborate carved stonework, morphological elements that in general are not applied during the Ottoman occupation.

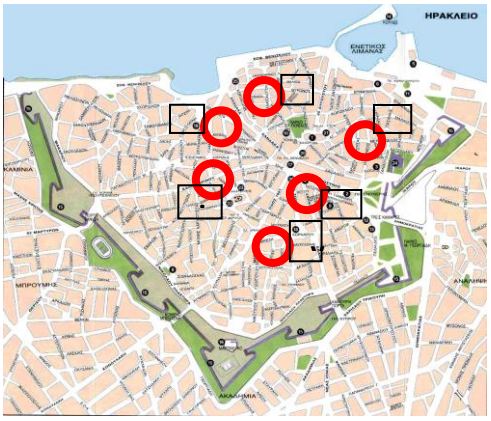

Fig. 21: Plan of Heraklio historic city center enclosed in the Venetian fortifications: the mentioned *konaks* i. Bey Sekeria, ii. Bey Rasih Aspraki, iii. Sami Bey, iv. "Bon Marché",v.Emirca Efendi, vi. "Efkafi Building.
Source: http://history-pages.blogspot.com/2012/10/blog-post_11.html

The former *Konak* of Bey Rasih Aspraki, at Chronaki 26 str., a wealthy Turkish merchant grandeur, now known as the 'house of Yiannis Chronakis' (Tzobanaki, 2000, 150-151), belonged to a larger mansion, that is partly preserved till today. The house exhibits a unique example of decorated sofa, adorned with carved woodwork coffered ceilings and frescoes of Ottoman cities that resemble the townscape of Constantinople. Another remarkable architectural feature of the mansion is its small bath (*hammam*), located in a similar location of the layout scheme—although in this case it is on the 1st floor—with the one of Bey Sekeria. It was one of the buildings that changed property during the Exchange of Population between Greece and Turkey in 1923.

Another building, the *Konak* of Sami Bey (formerly Kastrinogiannis) (Tzobanaki, 2000, 142-143) at Idomeneos 17 str., is dated back to the same chronological period. Its construction presents similar features to the Ottoman houses found in the big centers of the Empire: the ground floor is built by masonry, while part of the 1st floor was timber framed and the building was equipped with two impressive kiosks (*cumba*, bay windows), each one supported by five wooden stilts (*direklik*). Unlike the case of Bey Sekeria *Konak*, where the private garden is facing the street, the main entrance of the Sami Bey building is placed along the street, while a vast courtyard with a well, a small bath and ancillary buildings is extended on the back part of the plot. Despite the opposition by the citizens, the services of the Ministry of Culture demolished in 2015 the first floor of the mansion under the excuse of being declared '*dangerous as considered to be ramshackle*', leaving only the lower part of the bay windows' supporting wooden corbels (*φουρούσια*, a structural piece of stone, wood or metal jutting from a wall to carry a superincumbent weight, a type of bracket).

The 'Bon Marché', at 8, Agiou Mina str., consists another interesting example of an Ottoman building, presenting elements related to the Neoclassical and Balkan Architecture with a particular mixed aesthetic result. The building's layout plan, built in 1887-1893, is similar to the Bey Serekia *konak*'s scheme and it belonged to the sons of Hussein Muhammad Litsardakis (Tzobanaki, Ch., 2000, 135). The stalagmite Neogothic decorative elements of the wooden pediment at the 1st floor of 'Bon Marché' could have looked alike the wooden ornamental details at the frames of the arched openings in the Bey Serekia mansion. It functions today as a shop vending fabrics.

The *Konak* of Emirca Efendi, today belonging to the Italian Archaeological School (Tzobanaki, Ch., 2000;137) situated at Albert str., close to Vincenzo Cornaro square, is a two-storied L-shaped building opening up to an indoor courtyard with numerous trees. A similar bay window, like the ones found at the previously mentioned *konaks*, adorns its facade while a small narrow fountain is built on its base.

The 'Efkafi' located at 24, Evans str., was constructed by 1878 as one of the two public Ottoman buildings in order to host Charity Institutions. It presents also particular morphological features along its facade that are attributed to the Neoclassicism Architecture.

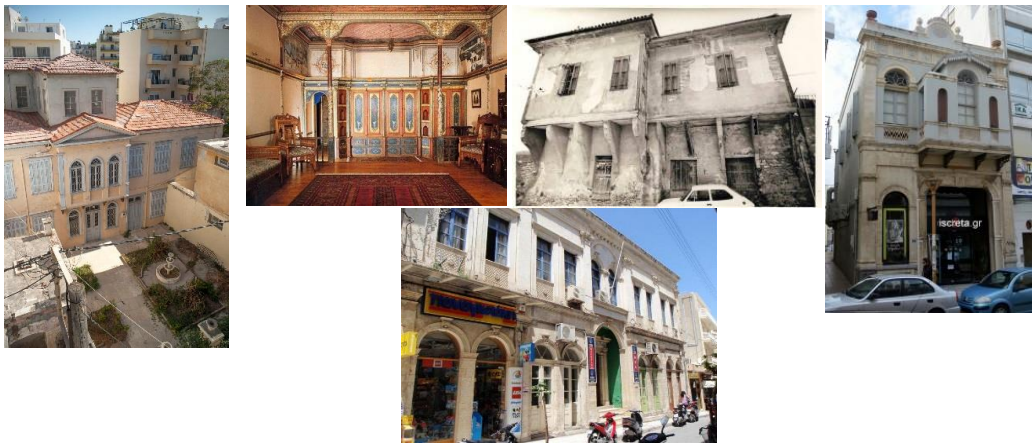

Fig. 22: i. Bey Sekeria, ii. Bey Rasih Aspraki, iii. Sami Bey, iv. "Bon Marché", vi. "Efkafi Building. (Wikipedia)

Conclusion

After conducting the survey and study of the Bey Sekeria *Konak*, along with its juxtaposition with the other Ottoman houses in Heraklio, it is now evident that many contemporary multi-cultural architectural elements had co-existed. The presence of clear neoclassical forms of the building, combined with the monumental character of its courtyard along with the Ottoman structural elements (such as the *cumba* and the *bağdati* walls), is consistent among other features with the co-existence of typical neoclassical motifs with Ottoman symbols in the interior spatial decoration (such as the lunettes), which are presented in a neo-classical manner. This practice reflects the open character of the Cretan society in Heraklion during the period of the late 19th century, maintaining financial and cultural relations with the corresponding centers of the wider—and not only—geographical region. At the same time, however, there is a clear intention to highlight both the majestic Venetian past, as well as to preserve the traditional Ottoman regulations, apart from the application of a similar module grid. It could therefore be stated, that the realized architectural features belonged to a *bourgeoisie*, embracing the broadly engaging characteristics and stylistic influences that prevailed.

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