

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF THE TURKISH EXTERIOR SOFA HOUSE WITH TWO ROOMS IN ANATOLIA

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Abstract:

The renowned Turkish architect Sedat Hakkı Eldem, who has carried out the most comprehensive study of the Traditional Turkish House, writes in his work entitled, *Türk Evi Plan Tipleri (Turkish House Plan Types)* (1955), that the element of the “sofa” is the main archetype of the layout of the Turkish House and creates a typology based on the “sofa.” In Eldem’s typology, 4 main types of plan are introduced: houses with no sofa, with an exterior sofa, an interior sofa and a central sofa. The exterior sofa plan type of the Turkish house layout scheme in Eldem’s typology constitutes the most widely applied plan among the various layouts of the Turkish House. This plan in its most simple form is used in country, town and city, and consists of a room or a series of rooms with an open sofa situated in front. In this type of plan, two to six (and sometimes more) rooms are situated side by side in back of the wooden columns. The most widely used form however consists of two rooms. An open sofa, usually with wooden columns with its top covered, stands in front of the adjacent and usually same-sized two rooms, looking out over the street, gardens or courtyard.

In this paper, the rural examples in Anatolia of the “Turkish Exterior Sofa House with Two Rooms” will first be introduced, followed by an attempt to provide a look into the similarities between these houses and their antecedents in the layers of Anatolian history.

Key words: Exterior Sofa; Turkish House; Anatolian Archeology.

INTRODUCTION

The well-known architect Sedat Hakkı Eldem was the first to recognize the element of the “sofa” as the main archetype in the classification of Turkish House plan types. In his famous study, *Türk Evi Plan Tipleri (Turkish House Plan Types 1955)*, Eldem created a typology based on the element of the “sofa,” setting forth 4 main types: house with without sofa, the exterior sofa, the interior sofa and the central sofa (Eldem 1955: 24). Eldem separated these main types, with the exception of the without sofa house, into some subtypes according to the number of rooms, iwans and the shape of the sofa. In Eldem’s typology, the sofa appears before us as an invariable element of the Turkish house. As the most important characteristic of the traditional Turkish house, the sofa is a common space which has been designed to interact with the rooms in the house. All of the room doors open out into the sofa. Besides being an area of circulation, the sofa is at the same time a sitting and gathering space. The sofa is called by various other names in different regions, such as *hayat, çardak, hanay, sergah, yazlık, divanhane* (Eldem 1955: 16).

In Eldem’s typology, the plan type with the exterior sofa constitutes the next phase of the no-sofa scheme of the Turkish house layout and in its simplest form, comprises a row of two, three, six or more adjacent rooms situated behind the columned open sofa (*hayat, çardak*). Cases where the number of rooms is more than three can be seen in konak types of houses. This type is divided into a multiple array of subtypes: the one-room exterior sofa type, the two-room exterior sofa type, the three or more-room (row of rooms) exterior sofa type with bench, the exterior sofa with iwan, the exterior sofa with kiosk, the exterior sofa with kiosk and iwan, the exterior sofa with a room on one end and an exterior sofa with a corner room (Eldem 1955: 33-34). The sofa situated in this way in front of rooms appears to be an anterior sofa that opens out onto the street, garden or courtyard in the form of an open but covered veranda with wooden posts/columns or arches. The courtyard side of the sofa is covered with wide eaves. This is a circulation and distribution space that provides interaction between the sofa and the rooms, and all of the doors of the rooms open out onto the sofa. The sofa is a service and common area. Sometimes there is a hearth on one end of the sofa. Daily life transpires in this common space in front of the rooms. At the same time, the sofa serves as a sitting and gathering space while another of its functions is to act as a service space. The sofa is the place in the house where different activities are conducted, depending on the economic status of the household. In this type, the rooms stand in a row in back of the open sofa and there is no passage from one room to the other. Each room is used for all types of needs, including sleeping, sitting, cooking, eating and washing.

In the most widely used of this plan, the number of rooms is two. Called the “exterior sofa house with two rooms” by Sedat Hakkı Eldem, this plan has been implemented throughout Anatolia. In this paper, the

rural examples in Anatolia of the “Turkish exterior sofa house with two rooms” will first be introduced, followed by an attempt to provide a look into the similarities between these houses and their antecedents in the layers of Anatolian history.

RURAL EXAMPLES OF THE EXTERIOR SOFA HOUSE WITH TWO ROOMS

The exterior sofa house with two rooms is a template that has been used in rural areas as well as in towns and cities. Throughout Anatolia the exterior sofa with two rooms has been the most popular layout used in rural architecture. Houses with this layout are made up of two plan archetypes—the rooms and the sofa. The first planimetric element of the layout, the rooms, are situated side by side behind the sofa. A characteristic of the layout is the wooden columned balcony (*direklik*) in front of the rooms that acts as a outer/front sofa. The sofa to which the rooms of the house open out onto is the structure’s sole area of distribution and service. The width of the sofa is always equal to the width of the house, sometimes with a single cheek wall and sometimes with side walls (*antae*) in two directions.

This type of plan can be one- or two-storied. In two-story examples, the lower floor consists of a barn. On the upper story, there are two adjacent rooms and a sofa in the form of an open balcony in front of these rooms. The sofa is accessed from the street or courtyard with stairs. In one-floor examples of the same type of layout, the sofa in front of the rooms is sometimes raised from the level of the sub-basement and sometimes has cheek walls (*antae*) on one or two sides of the sofa. If the building leans on another structure such as a house, barn or courtyard, the building adjoins the structure on the side where the sofa has a cheek wall (*anta*). In one-story examples, the sofa is accessed from a few steps positioned close to the center of the structure. In one-story examples with two rooms, the rooms can be of different sizes but in two-story two-room exterior sofa types of houses, the rooms are of the same sizes. The windows of the rooms face the sofa.

Two types of roof—flat roof or low/high pitch hip roof—are used in these buildings. The top of the sofa is covered over as a continuation of the roof. With the exception of houses situated over barns, in all other examples, the sofa is raised from the ground with a sub-basement. Some of the houses situated on a north-south axis stand on their own on the plot of land or within the boundaries of a courtyard while some have been built adjoining the courtyard wall. It can be seen that the wood-supported stone wall construction technique has been employed in these houses. Stone, rubblestone or cut stone have been used in the walls, which have been coated with white plaster. In some examples, mud plaster has been used. None of the examples have an indoor toilet; toilets are always outside the house. On the other hand, one of the rooms has a wood-lidded area in the corner that serves as a bath. Entrance into the “exterior sofa with two rooms” plan in Anatolian rural architecture appears in two versions- with “single-” and “separate” entrances.

1). Single-entrance exterior sofa with two rooms type: This type of plan consists of two adjacent rectangular rooms, one large and one small, and a wood columned sofa stretching out in front (Fig. 1). The entrance to this section is from a door at the center of the long side of the front of the small room. An interior door leading from the small room accesses the large room that acts as the main room. It is this room that serves sleeping, sitting and eating functions while the small room is used as an entry and a kitchen. Both rooms in the house have a hearth. The only circulation space of the house is the sofa, which also serves as an extra area of activity. The windows have one or two windows that open out into the sofa. The sofa sometimes has one, sometimes two cheek walls (*antae*) that act as a boundary to the sofa (Fig. 1, A). This type appears as both one- and two-storied. In one-storied buildings that rise above a sub-basement, the wooden-columned sofa is accessed by stairs of a few steps (Fig. 2). Examples of the two-storied versions of this type rise above the barn. The upper floor is accessed by stairs that lead to the wooden-columned sofa (Fig. 3). There is one large main room on the upper floor and a small entry room, side-by-side. The building is entered through the small entry room. An interior door from here leads to the larger room. A wooden-columned sofa stretches out in front of the rooms. In one-storied structures, the side walls are blind, while in two-storied versions, the main room has two windows, one opening out into the sofa, the other to the side facade.

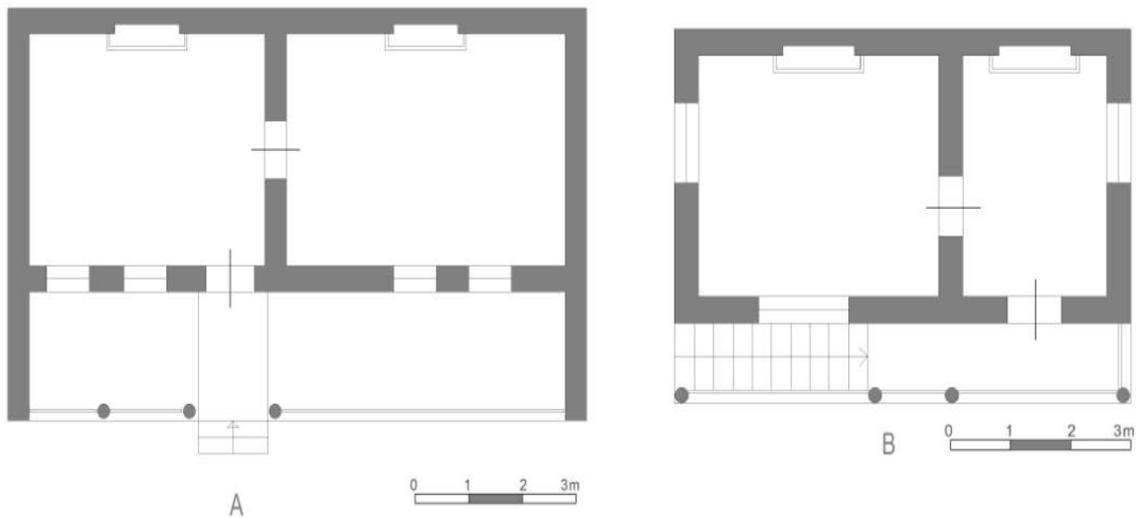


Fig. 1.
Single-entrance “exterior sofa with two rooms” type (Author).



Fig. 2.
One-story, single-entrance, flat-roofed “exterior sofa with two rooms” type (Author).



Fig. 3.
Two-storied, single-entrance “exterior sofa with two rooms” type (Author).

2). Single-entrance exterior sofa with two rooms type: This plan consists of two adjacent rectangular rooms of about the same sizes. The two rooms have separate entrances and there is no inner connection between them (Fig. 4). A wooden-columned sofa stretches out in front of the rooms. The rooms open out into the sofa, which is the sole area of circulation and additional activity center of the house. One of

the rooms is a space for sitting, sleeping and eating, while the other assumes the role of a food preparation space (kitchen) and a storage room. Both rooms have niches in the walls (Fig. 7). There is a hearth in both rooms, occupying the wall opposite the door (Fig. 4). The rooms have windows opening out into the *sofa* and there is no requirement for symmetry in the arrangement of the windows. This type is found in both one- and two-story buildings; in one-story buildings, the house rises above the sub-basement (Fig. 5). The house is accessed by a few steps of stairs starting from the center of the house and leading directly up to the wooden-columned *sofa*. In one-story structures, the structure sometimes looks out onto the street or stands freely. In instances where the house has been built adjoining the courtyard wall or another building, the courtyard or the adjoining building comprises one of the cheek walls (*antae*) of the *sofa* (Fig. 5).

In the two-storied versions of this type, the lower floor is again a barn (Fig. 6). The two-storied structures are of a larger dimension, and the upper floor is accessed by stairs connected to the wooden-posted *sofa*. In some of the two-storied versions, the *sofa* has one or two cheek walls (*antae*) on either side (Fig. 7). Each room looking onto the *sofa* generally has a window of the same size. There is sometimes a window on the side walls of the houses as well. All of the two-storied houses are free and stand-alone, looking out onto the road. This type has versions that are flat-roofed or hipped (Fig. 6, 7).

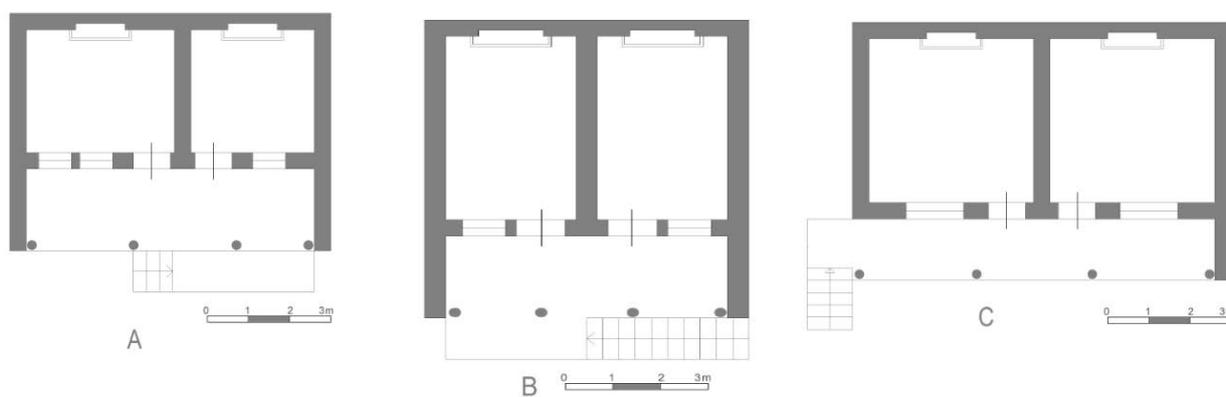


Fig. 4.

Examples of the “exterior sofa with two rooms” plan type with separate entrances (Author).



Fig. 5.

One-storied, “exterior sofa with two rooms” plan type with separate entrances (Author).



Fig. 6.

Two-storied, “exterior sofa with two rooms” type with separate entrances (Author).



Fig. 7.

Left: Two-storied, flat-roofed, “exterior sofa with two rooms” type with antae and separate entrances (Author). Right: Niche insets in the walls of the rooms (Author).

EARLY ANTECEDENTS OF THE “EXTERIOR SOFA HOUSE WITH TWO ROOMS” TYPE OF HOUSE IN ANATOLIA

It is seen in an examination of houses built over the layers of Anatolian history that the layout of the type of exterior sofa house with two rooms and single or separate entrances can be traced to the early stages of the Neolithic Age. One of these settlements is found in Bademağacı, a town in the district of Döşemealtı, Antalya. Besides the single-roomed houses dated back to Layer II of the early Neolithic Age, there is also a single-story house with two rectangular rooms, one large and one small, adjacent to one another (Fig. 8, left). Entry to the large room, which is the principal living room/main room, is through a door in the middle from the long side of the room at the front. The small room that is accessed from here is used as a storage room and bedroom. There is a hearth on the wall opposite the door in the large room (Duru & Umurtak 2010, 17). The structure is thus one of the antecedents of the “exterior sofa with two rooms with single entrance” type.

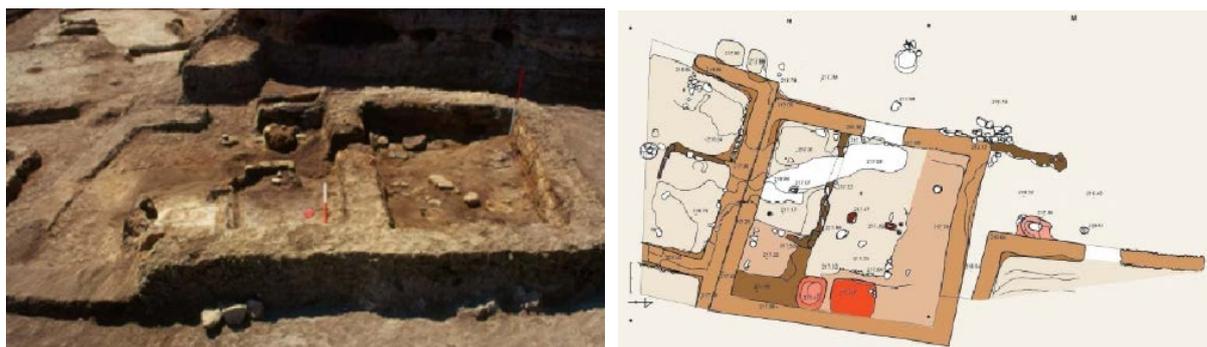


Fig. 8.

Left: Bademağacı Level II (Duru, Umurtak 2010, Fig 8). Right: Ulucak Höyük, Level IV, Structure No. 13 (Derin 2005, Fig. 4).

Another example of the plan type of “exterior sofa with two rooms with single entrance” appears in Ulucak Höyük. Located along the Izmir-Ankara highway, about 14km from the district of Bornova, Izmir, this settlement is a part of the Neolithic Layer of Ulucak IV (6000-5700 B.C.), and Structure No. 13 is a single-story structure comprising 2 adjacent rectangular rooms, one large and one small (Fig. 8, right). The structure, which is situated on a north-south axis, is accessed through a door in the middle of the long side of the large room in front. There is a hearth set inside the wall opposite the door. The large room, which is of the character of a main room, leads into the smaller room through a thin separating wall (Derin 2005: 88-89). The structure sits on a stone foundation and has mudbrick walls with a flat, wooden roof. The roof has been positioned in the middle of the structure and is supported by wooden posts/columns (Derin 2005: 88). The position of the posts can easily be discerned from the footing pit of the posts in front. A shallow porch/sofa can be seen that evidences a “one-story exterior sofa with two rooms with separate entrances” type of plan.

Another Neolithic settlement where the “single-entrance exterior sofa with two rooms” plan type can be seen is in the village of Hacilar V. Here, although the houses surrounding a central courtyard are generally one- or two-storied, house (Q5) features two adjacent rooms, one large, the other smaller (Fig 9). The main room of the largest house in the settlement is 10x5 m., the side room is 3x2m (Mellart 1970: 18). The entrance to this section is from a door at the center of the long side of the large room. The wall right across from the door has a hearth. Numerous wooden posts that bear the load of the roof and upper floor have been placed in a row along the length of the interior walls of the structures in the settlement (Mellart 1970: 11, 16-17). That these wooden posts are outside of the house and in front of the houses suggests that they were used to carry the eaves on the roof and point to the presence of a porch or sofa in front of the structure.

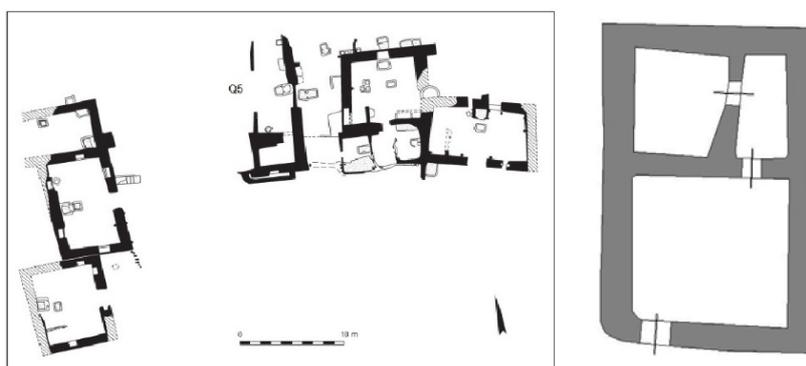


Fig. 9.

Left: Hacilar Level VI House No. Q5 (Umurtak 2011, Fig. 5). Right: .the house in Karmir-Blur (Tarhan, Sevin 1976-77, Fig. 7).

The single-entrance “exterior sofa with two rooms” type of plan was also used in the Kültepe-Kaneş settlement. A flat-roofed house on Layer II of the settlement is made up of a large, rectangular room with a horseshoe-shaped hearth and a smaller room adjacent to it which the outer door of the house opens into. The large room, which is the main area, is accessed through the smaller room (Özgüç 1986: 23). This is a type of plan that was popular in Urartu architecture. One of the houses inside a forecourt in Karmir-Blur comprises two adjacent rectangular rooms, one large and one small; the houses are accessed through the

small room that opens out into the courtyard (Fig. 9, right). From this small room, an inner door leads to the large (main) room.

Another variation of the “exterior sofa with two rooms” type of plan is the “exterior sofa with two rooms and separate entrance” layout. Two rectangular rooms almost of the same size stand side by side in this plan and have a sofa with wooden posts in front. Both rooms have separate entrances and there is no inner connection between the rooms (Özgüç 1999: 322). No one-story examples of this type of plan can be found in the historical residential architecture of Anatolia. The one-story house in the Kültepe-Kaneş settlement on Layer II that has in this case three rectangular rooms in a row with separate entrances leading in from the street is an important example in terms of evidencing the early existence in Anatolia of the layout plan of the exterior sofa with separate entrances (Fig 10).

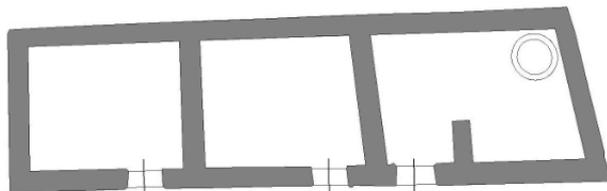


Fig. 10.

Kültepe-Kaneş Level II, one-story house with exterior sofa and three rooms (Özgüç 1986, Fig 37).

The template of the “exterior sofa with two rooms and separate entrances” is frequently seen in the two-story structures of Hitite and Urartu architecture. Another form of the same type is the “forecourt with two rooms” layout that was widespread in Hitite architecture. The structures using this layout can be widely seen in Kültepe-Kaneş Levels Ia-II-III and in Boğazköy Lower City in the Age of the Great Kingdoms. This open courtyard/garden is a working area where all daily activities take place and which also serves as a sitting area during the summer. The lower floors of the structures were used as barns and workshops while the center of daily life was the upper floor, which had two rectangular rooms of equal size, situated side by side and with two separate entrances (Fig. 11). The width of the courtyard is equal to the width of the rooms. The structures are flat-roofed and stand in front of the upper floor rooms. As in the “exterior sofa with two rooms” type with separate entrances, these rooms open out onto a covered balcony/sofa with wooden posts/columns (Naumann 1998: 381, 384). The area connecting the rooms comprises an additional area of activity for the household (Yakar 2007: 155). This area is accessed by stairs that lead up from the courtyard (Naumann 1998: 381, 384). The houses look out toward the street in this plan and according to the well-known Turkish archeologist Tahsin Özgüç, comprise a plan that is indigenous to central Anatolia (Özgüç 1959: 28).

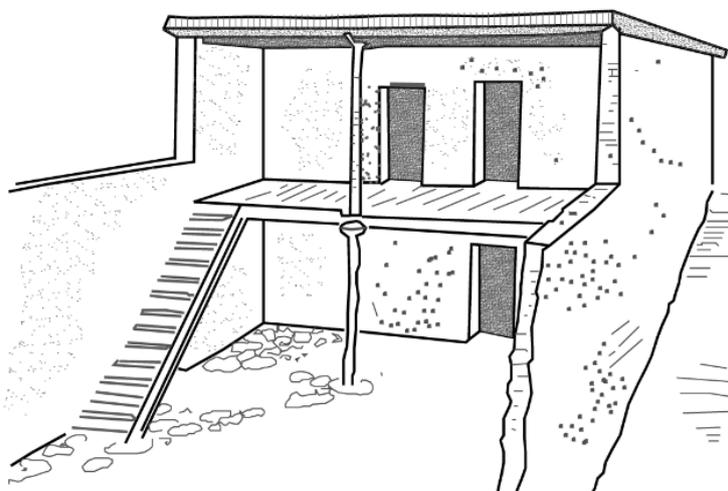


Fig. 11.

A house with “two rooms and forecourt” in Hitite architecture and in Kültepe-Kaneş (Naumann 1998, Fig 504).

The other Anatolian civilization that used the “two room and forecourt” type of layout that was the equivalent variation of the “exterior *sofa* with two rooms and separate entrances” type was the Urartu. This house plan was used in the expansive region of the Urartian cultures in lands that included Giyimli, Gövelek, Ağaçlık, Eski Norgüh, Zernakitepe, Bastam and Karmir-Blur, and again comprised two adjacent rooms with separate entrances in back of an open forecourt. Researchers have as yet not come to a consensus about the number of floors these flat-roofed houses had. Kellner claims that these houses were two-storied, as in Boğazköy and Kültepe-Kaneş (Kellner 1976: 39). There are others however who believe that this was a single-story plan (Martirosian 1964: 260; Tarhan, Sevin 1976-1977: 355). The fact that hundreds of house structures in Zernakitepe and Karmir-Blur have been built on this layout indicates that this plan was a structural form that was espoused by the Urartu kingdom (Tarhan & Sevin 1976-1977: 357).

CONCLUSION

The Turkish House researcher Doğan Kuban called houses with open exterior sofas the *Hayat* House, while many Balkan researchers named it the *Çardak* House (Kuban 1995, 35). The open exterior *sofa* type of house is the most common to be seen all around Anatolia, and according to Eldem, this is a type of house that is half-rural and half-urban (Eldem 1984-87: 64, 65). Eldem reports that the Turkish House was used with an open exterior *sofa* plan in the 16th-17th centuries, which he calls the “first era,” as was its variant, the “exterior *sofa* with two rooms” type (Eldem 1984-87: 88). The most original versions of this type of plan were seen in the first Ottoman settlements of Bursa, Birgi, Kula and Safranbolu. According to Sedat Hakkı Eldem, the true Ottoman/Turkish house was built on a “type of plan with an open exterior *sofa*” in Bursa and Edirne as well as in the rest of the Marmara Region, where its most original and early examples became the precursors of other houses of the same type appearing in the other regions of the country (Eldem 1955: 29,33). Similarly, Doğan Kuban also stipulates that the house with the “open exterior *sofa*” was the basic core of the Turkish house and, that houses with centralized plans did not represent the foundation of the Turkish style of house (Kuban 1995: 21).

Are the houses with “exterior *sofa* and two rooms” described above, which are so widespread in the rural residential culture of Anatolia, antecedents of the *Hayat* House of town and city? Or did each of the types of houses have a different development? It is of course difficult to answer these questions because of the scant data available. Maurice M. Cerasi asserts that the wooden posted/columned gallery (portico/*sofa*), or *hayat*, stretching out in front of the rooms in the house has its roots in Anatolia, Daghistan, Georgia, Armenia, Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia as well as in all western neighboring regions such as Kosovo and Macedonia (Cerasi 2014: 120, 132-140). The wooden posted/columned porticos in front of the rooms in Anatolian houses are familiar because of their appearance in Megaron and *Bit-Hilani* structures. The open columned porticoes (*hayat*, *sofa*, *çardak*) are situated on the short side of the house in the megaron, and on the long side in the *hilani* house and constitute the early antecedents of the columned porticoes used in houses of a later period. The researcher Klinkott suggests that these columned porticoes derived from the Megaron and *Bit-Hilani* types of houses (Klinkott 1978: 66). Doğan Kuban also confirms this view, stating that the *Hayat* house is a variation of *Bit-Hilani* (Kuban 1995: 24). According to Kuban, the *Hayat* House came into being in the countryside and most examples of the various types of *Hayat* House can be seen in every town and village in Anatolia (Kuban 1995: 46). Eldem writes that the houses of Anatolia are the distant rural relatives of the *Hayat* House (Eldem 1955: 29, 33). The principal room (*andron*) and the oriel (*şahnişin*) are some of the elements that were added onto the houses at later dates. Eldem says that the oriels (bay window/*şahniş*) in this type of house appeared as from the second half of the 17th century. It was after this time that the windows on the houses grew more in number (Eldem 1984-87: 40).

Wooden columned porticoes (*hayat/sofa/çardak*) and oriels (*şahniş*) were also made use of in the early Byzantine period in Anatolia. One of the resources on this subject is the floor mosaic found in the Daphne Yakto villa. Dated to the mid-fifth century and depicting a hunting scene, the edge borders on this mosaic reveals one- and two-storied houses on an “open exterior *sofa*” scheme (Fig. 12). According to the researcher B. Thomsen-Tsialis, there is an open gallery (*hayat/sofa*) to be found on the courtyard side of most two-storied houses in Constantinople and other Byzantine towns (Thomsen-Tsialis 2009: 51).

Another important visual resource evidencing the use of the oriel (*şahniş/bay window*) in Anatolian residential architecture is the Kelenderis Mosaic dating to the 5th century AD, which depicts a view of the city and port (Pomey 2006). The structures surrounding the port have prominent oriels (*şahniş*) supported by buttresses and having many windows on the upper floors of the houses (Fig. 12).

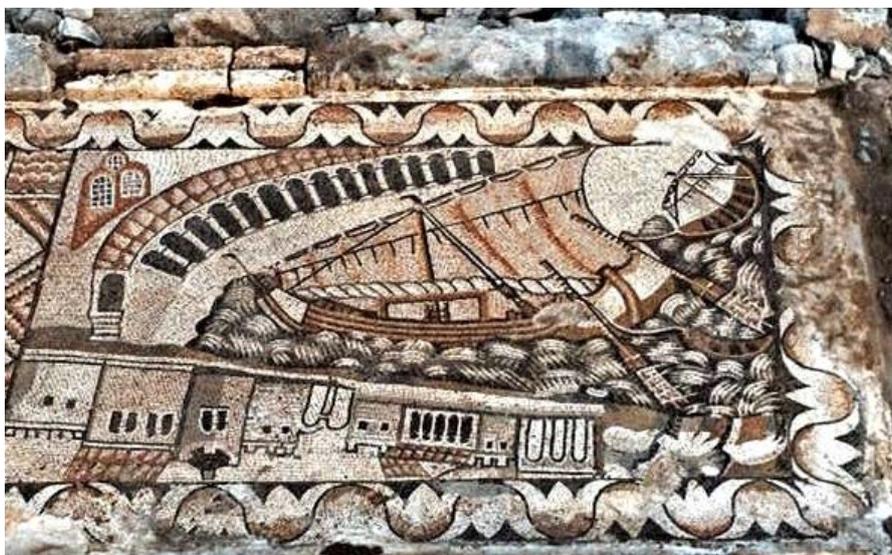
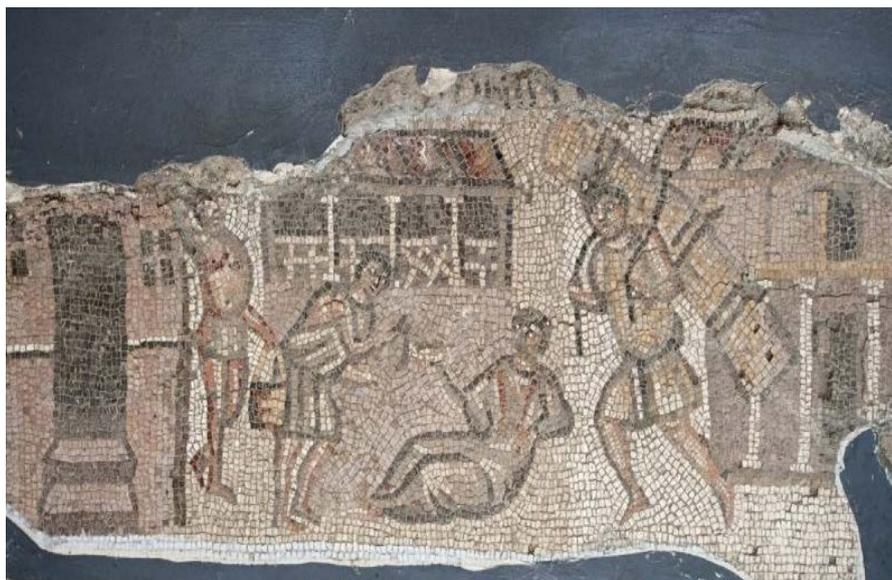


Fig. 12.

Above: Yakto Mosaic Below: Kelenderis Mosaic (Pomey 2006).

In short, this type of house is a product of the cultural environment of Anatolia. Ottoman architecture has a many-faceted cultural aspect, and its roots go back to the building traditions adopted in pre-Ottoman times. With the crossing of the Turks into Anatolia from Central Asia, it was doubtless inevitable that they encountered a rich building tradition that was embodied in the historical depths of Anatolia. The roots of the plan of house identified and designated as the “Turkish House” lie deep in the oldest layers of Anatolian culture. This knowledge makes it clear that the traditional Turkish House is a synthesis of the cultural legacy of hundreds of years of Anatolian history. The plans of these rural houses have their origins in the depths of the historical layers of Anatolia and have become a fundamental identifying characteristic of the Turkish house. The layouts of houses with which the Turks became acquainted after settling in Anatolia are the foundations of the Turkish House. The traditional Turkish House is the natural product of the dissemination of culture, cultural adaptations and cultural interactions that prevailed over the centuries.

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