

Map of Turkey, showing major centres and locations of houses illustrated.

Turkish Vernacular

HOUSES OF WESTERN ANATOLIA

TEXT BY MAGGIE QUIGLEY-PINAR
PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL VEYSSEYRE

In the traditional communities of Western Turkey, a remarkable number of different house types can be found, often within an area of only a few miles. This variety seems to reflect a certain turbulence in settlement patterns throughout the plateau of Asia Minor, a catchment basin for transhumant and settled cultures across the centuries. The variety of forms, techniques and materials in Anatolian domestic architecture appear infinite: timber-framed structures in the heavily wooded Northern provinces; mud dwellings on the hot, dry Anatolian plateau; and stone and timber, predominantly stone, houses in the Southern mountainous regions. Builders, preferring local materials, used timber in the North; stone in the South; brick and rubble in the South and West; and mud, straw, stone and wattle and daub across Central Turkey. But it is what the local masons

and craftsmen did with these materials which accounts for the real variety in the Turkish vernacular.

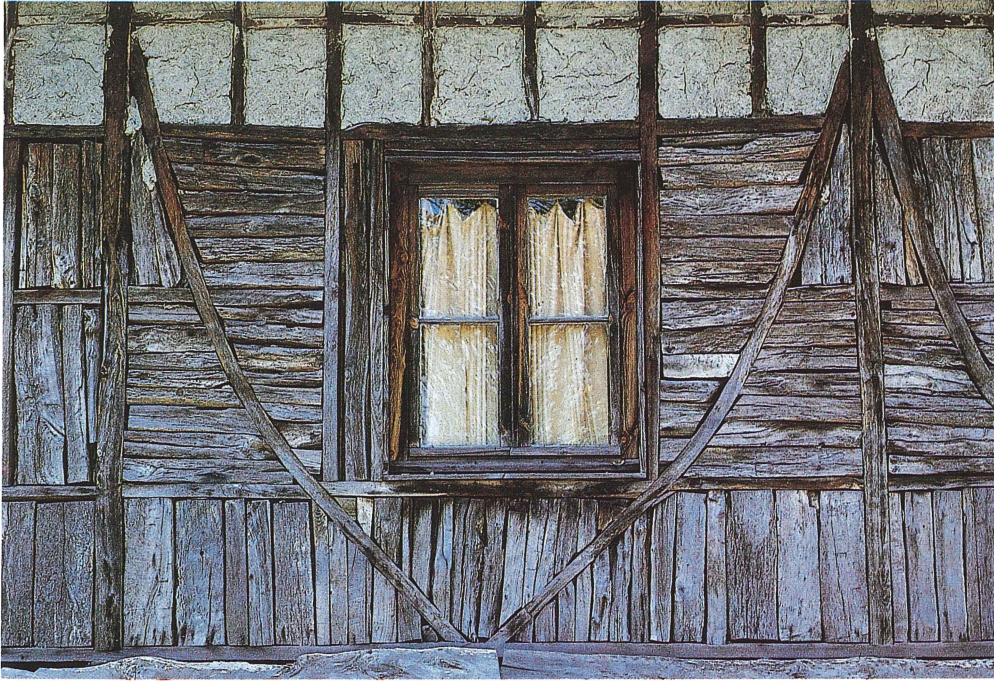
Materials indigenous to specific regions were, most likely, used out of convenience, but we can only speculate as to why they were used in so many different ways, often in communities just a few miles apart. Traditionally, travelling masons and craftsmen serviced vast areas and helped to adapt guild regulation norms to vernacular needs. In addition, a predominantly migratory and fragmented populace constantly brought its traditions from one area of Anatolia to another. Local communities were also, from time to time, supplemented and diversified by immigrants from the Balkans in the West, and the Caucasus, or even Turkestan, in the East. Some communities produced and exported craftsmen of one particular type, such as masons and carpen-



Left and left, below: A House in Akçakese

Found in a village of about 150 houses on the north-western Black Sea coast, this dwelling is set typically away from the shore line, on a ridge about 1-200 metres above sea level. Most of the houses in the community face inland, to the south west, with their backs to the severe northern wind. While slumberwork is the villagers' main form of income, fishing also used to be a common activity. Boat and house builders shared the same materials, and possibly also lent each other their skills.

This house, like others in the village, is timber framed. Few of them, however, have this type of wood infill, although the wattle at eave level is common. The concave curved brace between post and sill is an unusual feature, perhaps borrowed from the marine craft. The village is situated in a secondary earthquake zone which stretches across Turkey into the Caucasus, but quakes cause little structural damage to such houses.



ters, who carried their work to other communities. According to historical documents, some villages even preferred using craftsmen from another village. The guild system has now all but disappeared, yet some communities struggle to conserve a traditional architecture, and some even their traditional way of life.

The form of Turkish houses in general reflects a way of life common to areas wherever Turks had settled. Timber-framed houses, the most common form of dwelling, have one or more storeys built over a ground-floor foundation wall into which is set the main entrance, usually giving direct access to the street. The main living areas are confined to the upper floors, which generally jut out over the founda-



Left and right: Akçakese

The main façade of a large house in the village of Akçakese, on the western Black Sea coast. The timber-framed house has been plastered over with mud and straw only on this wall, which contains the main entrance. This is unusually decorated with two flowers springing from the door frame, and embedded carefully in the plaster which is used to provide contrast to this dark wood motif.



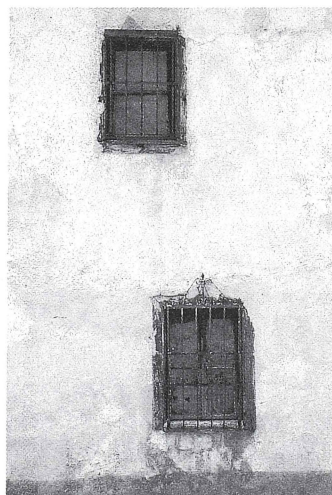


Typical cluster of timber framed dwellings in fortified town, northern province.

tion wall. Houses with mud walls also have living quarters raised over stone plinths or foundation walls, which always follow the contour of the street, however irregular this may be. The overhang, supported by brackets, supplies a symmetrical framework for the upper floors.

A hall, or sometimes an open gallery, on one or more of these upper floors, is the centre of communal life, and is flanked by rooms for individual members of the family. It was generally the rooms which were cantilevered over the street. They jut out where the extra space is needed to give them internal symmetry and to allow maximum light and air. The communal hall, located proudly in the heart of the home, overlooks an inner courtyard or garden.

In houses with more than one living storey, the best room on the highest floor would often be reserved for the *gelin* — bride brought to live in the husband's family house. This was the most traditional marital agreement in Turkey. The main door of the house led from the street into a flagstone hall, surrounded by galleries used as utility and service areas. The ground floor was generally without windows as it gave onto the street. The windows were confined to the upper storeys, and their number denoted the import-



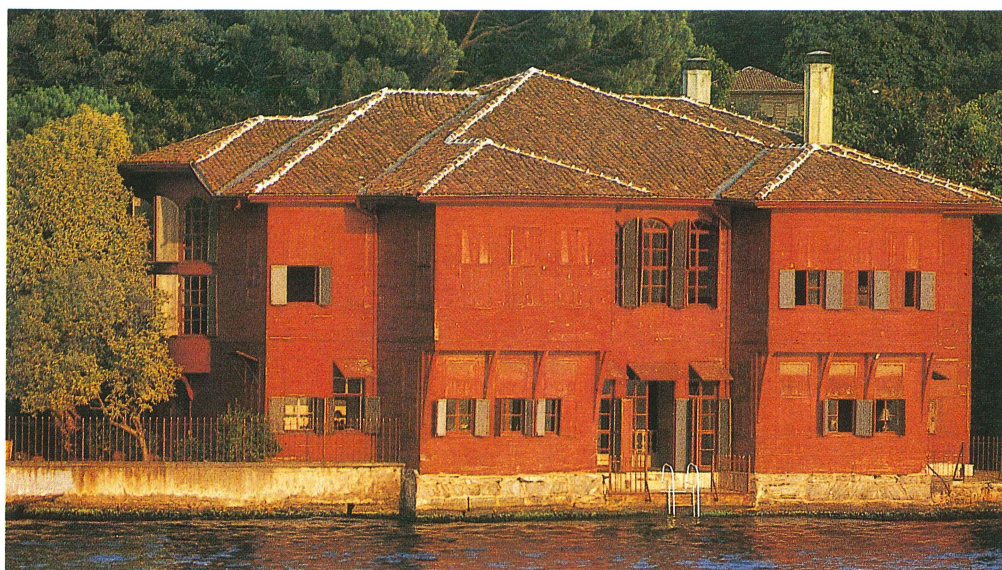
Left: Asymmetry and colour, the essence of the common dwelling in Bursa. The wall of a Bursa house painted with golden lime-wash and pierced by two modular windows.

Right: A Baroque House in Bursa. This bright green corner dwelling stands at a cross-roads below the old citadel of Bursa. It was built during the 19th century when Baroque influence was at its height in the Turkish provinces. The upper storey, with its deeply undulating façade, is cantilevered over a narrow basal wall to give maximum space to the living areas of this half-timber dwelling, on an



otherwise extremely narrow plot. Three modular windows, a common traditional touch, have been incorporated into the unusual curve of the façade with great skill. Fine

moulding over the upper windows and false wood-carved pilasters on the corner posts also add distinction to the building. The green lime wash finish is a typical Bursa detail.



Left: The Sadullah Pasha Yali — One of the last existing yali on the Bosphorus coast, the house is timber-framed, over a stone foundation wall. The façade is clad with weather boarding. Such houses were traditionally finished with a reddish stain thought to protect their façades from salt corrosion.

The main entrance to such waterfront mansions, called yali, was from the jetty, although there were doors in the centre of each façade. Traditionally, the waterfront façade was the most important aspect of the house, as the main mode of transport was by caique along the waterfront.



Above: A waterfront villa on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus straits, dating to the mid 19 century: the Fethi Pasha Yali. The weatherboard façade is painted over to distinguish between two separate wings split between separate branches of the resident family. A large central hall

was at one time cut in two by a wall built down the centre of the house for this purpose. As in the Sadullah Pasha yali, the main hall ran parallel to the waterfront to allow as great a sea view as possible, and to provide an imposing façade for passing caiques.

ance of the room behind them. Window grills served to filter light and air into the house, and provided the inhabitants with a view of the exterior while preserving the internal privacy essential to the Muslim household.

The most commonly used technique was a timber-framed structure raised on a stone foundation wall occasionally reinforced with laid-in timbers. After posts and sills were in position, a box-frame was built up of timber studs and plates. Often no struts were needed between post and sill, as the posts were firmly sunk into the foundation wall. The walls were infilled either with wood slats, log stud posts, wattle and daub or mud bricks, plastered over with lime mortar or mud and straw, and were very often mud-washed to give them a coloured finish. Weather boarding was used in the north, and became popular as a finish for town houses, especially in the Ottoman capital of Istanbul during the 19th century. The woods generally used were cedar, oak, pine, chestnut and willow, while linden was

preferred for decorative cut-out work. A very distinctive semi-cylindrical clay lip tile was used for roofs.

Mud-walled houses were modular, like their timber counterparts, but tended not to be as large, especially those with massive walls of laid-on clay, as the larger the building the greater the likelihood of cracking. Mud walls gave good insulation in the hotter regions where they were built. The main use for mud was as kerpiç — sun-dried mud bricks plastered with lime mortar or mud and straw. Monolithic mud walls and wattle walls were also plastered with clay and straw and finished with a lime wash. Wooden ceiling



Typical cluster of stone built dwellings in south west coastal region.

beams were laid over the walls, and the roof was a mass of reeds covered with layers of mud. Stone houses, straight-walled like the massive mud type, also had timber ceilings and floors, and a similar internal spacial arrangement.

Domestic Turkish life was predominantly communal, although the important members of the household could also retire to the privacy of their own rooms. The house was the women's domain; men conducted their business elsewhere, or at least on a floor apart from the women. The

communal areas provided a pleasant view of an inner court or garden while the rooms very often overlooked the street. This double view was obtained in an impressive variety of ways, always taking care to ensure that windows did not overlook those of any other house and overhangs did not obstruct a neighbour's view.

The joy of a Turkish house, in all its diverse forms, is the way in which it acts as one unit in the life of a greater, integrated community.



Left: A House in Ortakent — Küle Evi.

This küle evi, or tower house, is to be found in a small community near Bodrum, on the south western Aegean coast of Turkey, which looks out over the Greek island of Cos. The local stone houses are unique for Anatolia, but similar in many ways to the houses of the nearby offshore islands. The walls are solid stone, but the floors, ceilings and staircases wooden. This was the house of a local patrician and is set apart from the simpler, more cubic houses of the community. Houses of this particular type were entered via a drawbridge at first floor level. A wooden bridge was let down to rest on a free-standing flight of stone steps. The küle evi is isolated and faces inland away from the prevailing sea wind, and from the poyraz — cold north wind — by the slope. The region was formerly settled by migrating Turkmen who lived alongside settled Greeks for centuries. In the past local masonry and plastering was the work of Greek artisans, while carpentry was the province of the Turks. The houses are built of cut stone and rubble, fixed with a kaolin and lime mortar mixed with pebbles. The walls are up to 50 cms thick. Window lintels and posts are generally massive cut stone or marble blocks. Floors, ceilings, beams and stairs are made of pine and oak.



Above: House in Boldavin.

This half-timbered mud house is in a Western Anatolian town about 170 kms from the capital Ankara. Boldavin, in the centre of the opium poppy growing region, is a typical mid-Anatolian plateau town. The walls of the house are mud brick infill plastered over with a layer of mud, over foundation walls which typically follow the angle of the street. Below the overhang of the living areas are windows facing the street at ground level, which are not a common feature in a traditional Turkish house.

Paul Veyesseyre was born in Lyon (France) and has been photographing architecture in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries for 15 years. He shares his time between France and Turkey.

Maggie Quigley-Pinar was born in England. She is an art historian living in Istanbul.