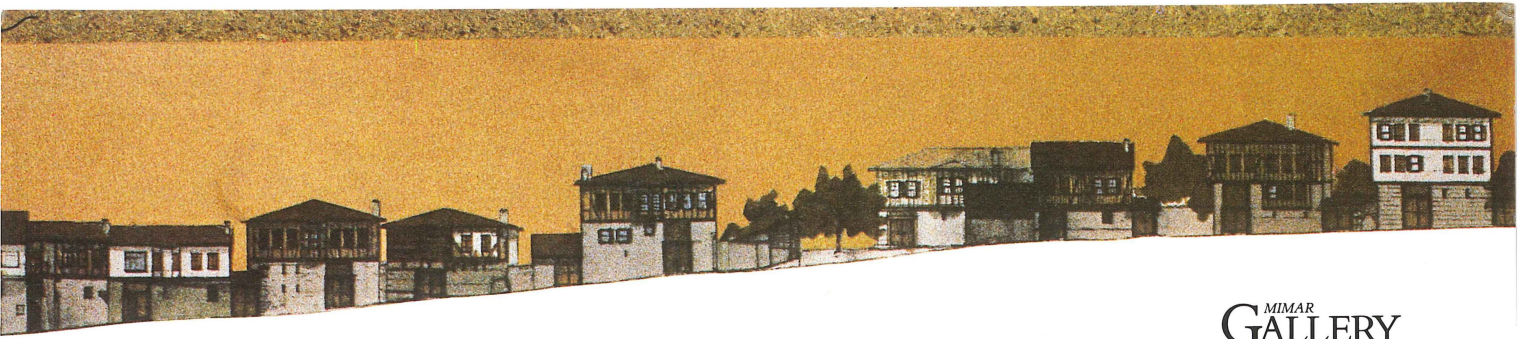




HOUSES IN YÖRÜK

The Spatial Pattern of a Turkish Village

ARTICLE BY ATILLA YÜCEL

Ten kilometres distant from the historical city of Safranbolu in the Western Black Sea region, Yörük village is easily differentiated from the neighbouring rural settlements by the richness and integrity of its architecture. The houses, which generally date from more than 100 years ago, reflect the structural and morphological characteristics and the general typology of the houses of Safranbolu — one of the best preserved and most widely-known historic centres in the country. However, some differences arise which are especially due to the prevalent agricultural activities on ground floors. In such a rural context, the imposing dimensions of these old houses, their sophisticated constructional and, in some cases decorative, features and finally the wealthy social life they reflect seem paradoxical and surprising.

This richness can be explained by the social and economic history of the village which, according to the existing data, dates back to the early 18th century. The Yörük village is one of the many Turcoman settlements of the region, and for years it has remained the most important of them. The fertile agricultural land, the ethnical integrity of the settlers in addition to the traditions and solidarity of this “Bektashi” community, probably contributed to the social autonomy, as well as to the economic life which developed. Originally this economic activity was based on a rich agricultural production of fruit, vegetables and saffron. The surrounding forest area provided the building material the rich community needed.

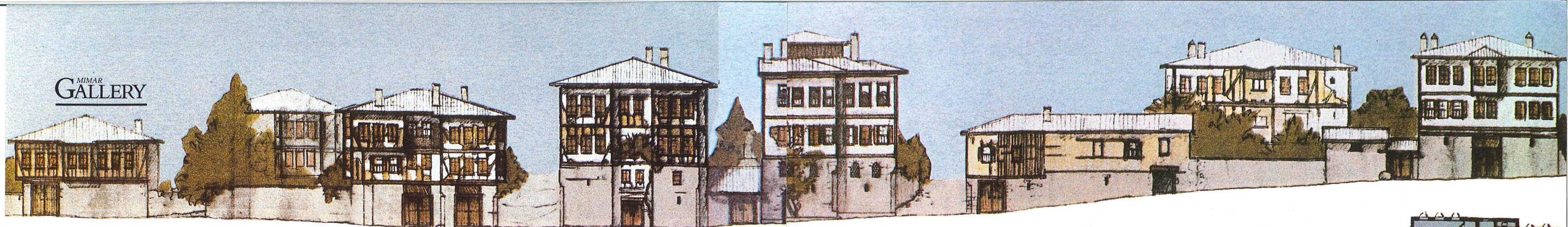


Typical house on main street of Yörük village.

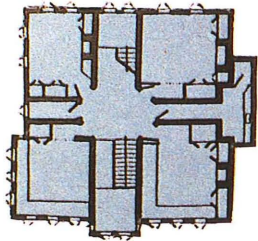


View of one of several streets in this study.

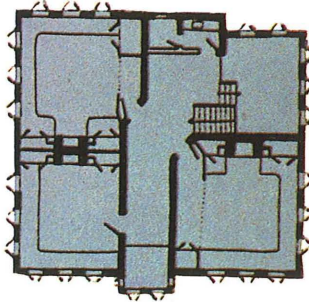
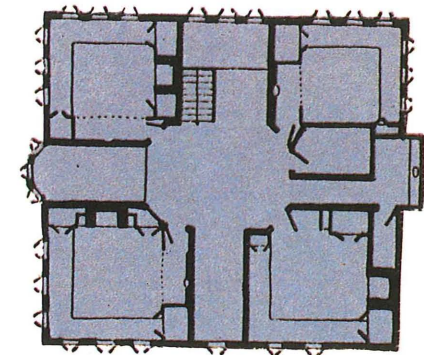
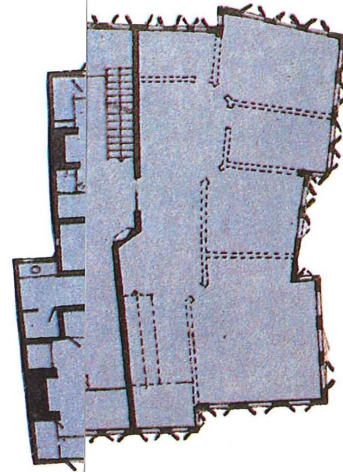
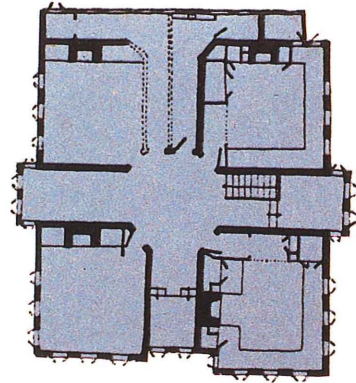




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Elevation of a portion of a street in
Yörük and floor plans.



In the 19th century, some families moved first to Safranbolu and then to Istanbul, where they soon became a rich community of bakers and merchants of cereals in the capital city. Members of this group have invested part of their revenue in their old village and this mechanism, in addition to the existing agricultural capital of the village, has been the principal cause of the extraordinary richness of its architecture. The highly elaborated buildings with their stylistic characteristics that reflect a certain "bourgeois and urbane" taste, and their imposing dimensions which rival, and in some cases even exceed, the average town houses in Safranbolu date from this period.

At that time Yörük became the sub-centre for the neighbouring villages. It had ten shops and workshops, a bakery, two mosques, two coffee houses, a public laundry, a guest house, a boarding school for all the rural area, and an open market activity. Probably, it is also the reason why Yörük village has become the centre out of which a remarkable folklore of wedding rites, dances, songs, etc. was generated. However, it lost this active life as a result of the degradation of the agricultural land, with the improvement of the road communications which allowed direct access to centres from the villages, enabling them to develop their own direct economic relations also. Finally, the creation of the siderurgical plant in Karabük has been another cause of the decreasing economic importance of the village. The population has continued to move to urban centres and they no longer build rich mansions in their native village. Also, as this was more common in rich families, the largest houses are increasingly abandoned.

Today, about half of the 140 houses of the village remain unused. These are generally the most monumental ones. The remaining population are small farmers and workers of the steel factory. Some families keep on returning to their village for brief vacation periods or for special occasions. This trend enables the upkeep and restoration of some important houses.

The decreasing economy of the last decades and the social integrity of a community which did not allow foreigners to come and buy land and consequently to build new housing in the village, have been the main causes of the present spatial integrity. As a consequence, despite the visible physical degradation of the structures, the village and its houses remain authentic examples of the traditional Turkish semi-rural settlement pattern and its vernacular architecture.

All the materials presented here are
excerpted from the study made between
1980-1984 by:

Argun Dündar: Architect, Assistant at
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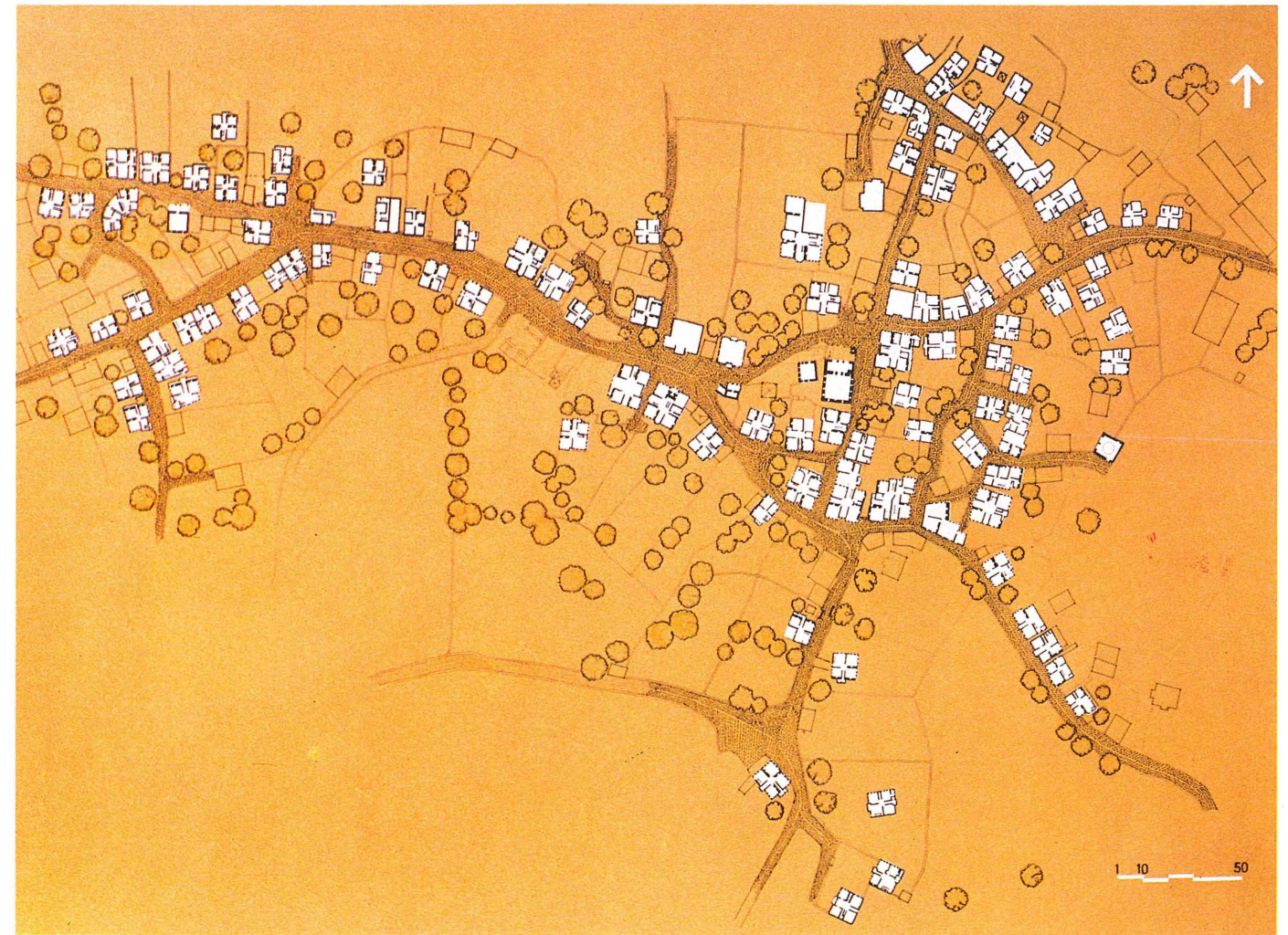
Iffet Orbay: Architect, studying at
MIT, USA.

Mecid Salehi S.: Architect, working in
Istanbul.

Sema Miller Camurdan: Architect,
working in Davos, Switzerland.

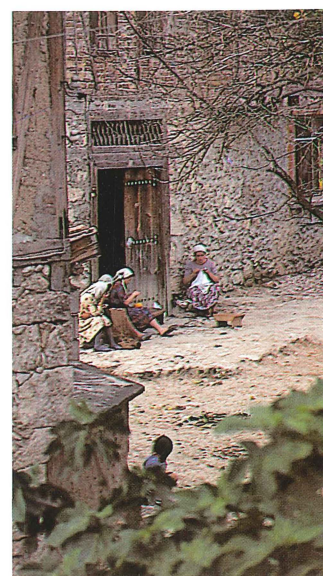
Sinan Öztekin: Architect, working in
Istanbul.

Site plan showing the spatial
organisation of the village itself and the
ground floor of the houses.





Left: Houses with tiled roofs in Yörük.
 Above: Four-storey house in Yörük.
 Right: Typical wooden framing for upper storeys, with mud brick or stone infill which is then given an outer coating as a rule.



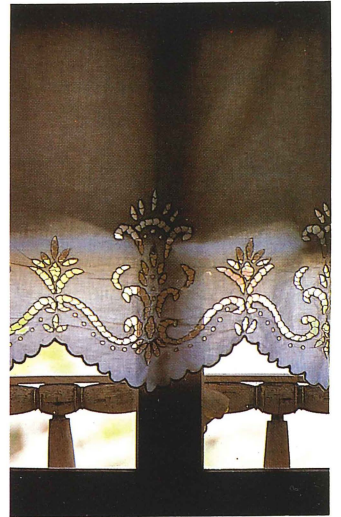
Domestic activities take place on some of the streets.

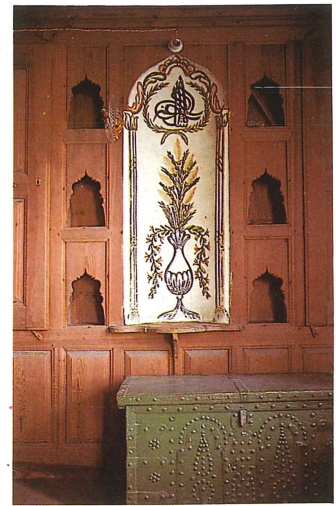




Above: Cantilevered upper storey and wooden lattice work of a house.

*Below: View through a window towards the exterior from a Yörük house.
Bottom: Painted wooden panelling in the bedroom of a Yörük dwelling.*





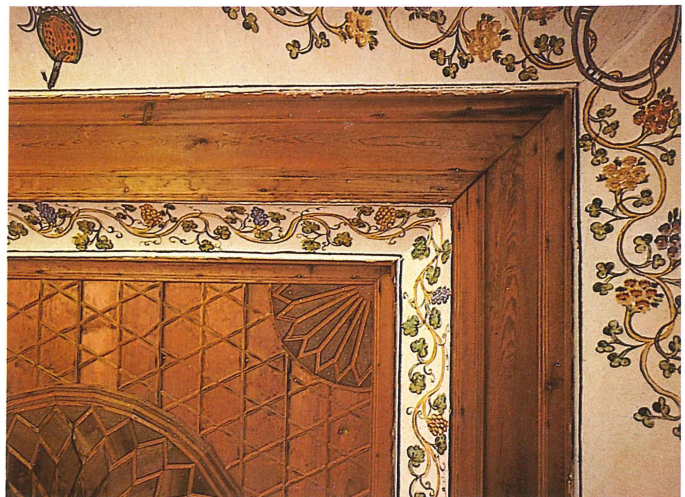
Above, left: Chimmey surrounded with cabinets and niches constructed of wood and frequently painted.
Above: Niche with painted colonnettes vase and calligraphy in one of the houses.



Above: Detail of a wall painting depicting a table with vases and a decanter.

Right: Detail of a ceiling decorated with natural wood and painted motifs.

Right, below: Wall decoration in a Yörük house.





Axonometric view of Yörük village.