

HOLY MONASTERY OF ST. CATHERINE, MOUNT SINAI



RESTORATION OF THE BUILDING COMPLEX OF THE SINAI MONASTERY'S' METOCHI OF ST. JOHN, BALAT, ISTANBUL, TURKEY

PRELIMINARY REPORT



*Petros & Marina Koufopoulos
Architects N.T.U.A.,
MA Conservation Studies, York University UK*

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INTRODUCTION

Position of the Metochi

The Metochi of Sinai is situated in the Balat quarter of Istanbul at the Marmel Pasa Caddesi. Towards the south it neighbours with the Bulgarian church of St. Stephen and the Metochi of Jerusalem and further with Fener where the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate is. To the east of the complex there is a green zone, that was created in the 1980s by extensive demolition of the large avenue along the seaside and the gulf of the Golden Horn.

Historical notes

The Church of St. John the Forerunner

Purpose of this preliminary technical report is the assessment on the condition and on the necessary restoration work that should be done at the building complex of the Metochi (dependency) of the Sinai Monastery at the Balat quarter in Istanbul, inspected during 29 to 31 August 2000 by the undersigned architects-conservation consultants.

The inspection on the building complex was made on the request of the Monastery of Sinai in Egypt and His Eminence Archbishop Damianos and along with Nicolas Vadis, the Monastery's representative. During our visit we have had the support of both the Metropolitan of Laodikia Mr. Iakovos under whose auspices is now the metochi at Balat and Mr. Demetrios Karakasis, president of the Council of the Church of St. John the Forerunner.

Before our visit we had been informed by Mr. Costa Carras, vice president of the Europa Nostra, where he represents the *Elliniki Etairia for the Protection of the Environment and the Cultural Heritage*, about the latter's interest for the restoration of the building complex of the above mentioned Metochi.

The interest of Elliniki Etairia for the restoration of the Metochi dates back to 1985 and since 1999 they have come in collaboration with *Cekul*, Turkish organization committed also to conservation of cultural heritage.

For the better understanding of the building complex of the metochi, Elliniki Etairia provided some existing drawing of a substantial part of the Metochi that were probably made by a German student and were kindly sent to Elliniki Etairia by professor Nikos Moutsopoulos. They included two -of the four- secular buildings. No drawings of the post-Byzantine church of St. John the Forerunner were found.

During our visit to the site in Istanbul we understood that the above mentioned drawings match more with the reconstruction of those two buildings than with their present ruined condition. During the fieldwork we made a roof plan of the complex that it is included in the present report.

A. POSITION - HISTORICAL NOTES -DESCRIPTION

Position of the Metochi

The Metochi of Sinai is situated in the Balat quarter of Istanbul at the Mursel Pasa Caddesi. Towards the south it neighbors with the Bulgarian church of St. Stephen and the Metochi of Jerusalem and further with Fener where the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate is. To the east of the complex there is a green zone, that was created in the 1980s by extensive demolition, the large avenue along the seaside and the gulf of the Golden Horn.

Historical notes

The Church of St. John the Forerunner

The church of the Metochi seems to be in a relatively good condition compared to the buildings of the complex because it has been always in use and well maintained by the orthodox community.

A dedicatory inscription on a marble slab permanently placed in its west wall refers to the last large renovation in 1730. The work was done one year after the destructive fire of 1729 by Nikephoros Marthales, the abbot of the metochi that had -some time ago- also been elected as archbishop of Sinai.

Another inscription refers to the work of the year 1831 when the ceiling of the metochi was repaired and to the year 1852 when the floor and the foundations were repaired.

The secular buildings of the Metochi

All the secular buildings of the complex of the Metochi date back to the early 17th century. The complex is referred in reliable guides of Istanbul as the most impressive among the existing mansions of Fener¹. Some more buildings of the Metochi, that existed towards the east and south to the Church and one more mansion that was among buildings no 4 and 6, were demolished in the 1980s during the implementation of the green zone project.

It is also recorded that the buildings have always been the permanent residence of the archimadrite who represented the Monastery of Sinai in Constantinople since 1686². After the fire of 1729 the buildings were also repaired in 1730 by the same abbot Nikephoros, archbishop of Sinai, who renovated the Church. In his historic notes there are records about the function of the Metochi during the early 18th century when several workshops and shops existed at the ground floor and the residence of the abbot and several guest houses were on the upper floors

¹ Hilary Summer-Boyd & John Freely, *Strolling through Istanbul, A Guide to the City*, 3rd edition 1983 (1st edition 1972).

² Hilary Summer-Boyd & John Freely, *Strolling through Istanbul, A Guide to the City*, 3rd edition 1983 (1st edition 1972).

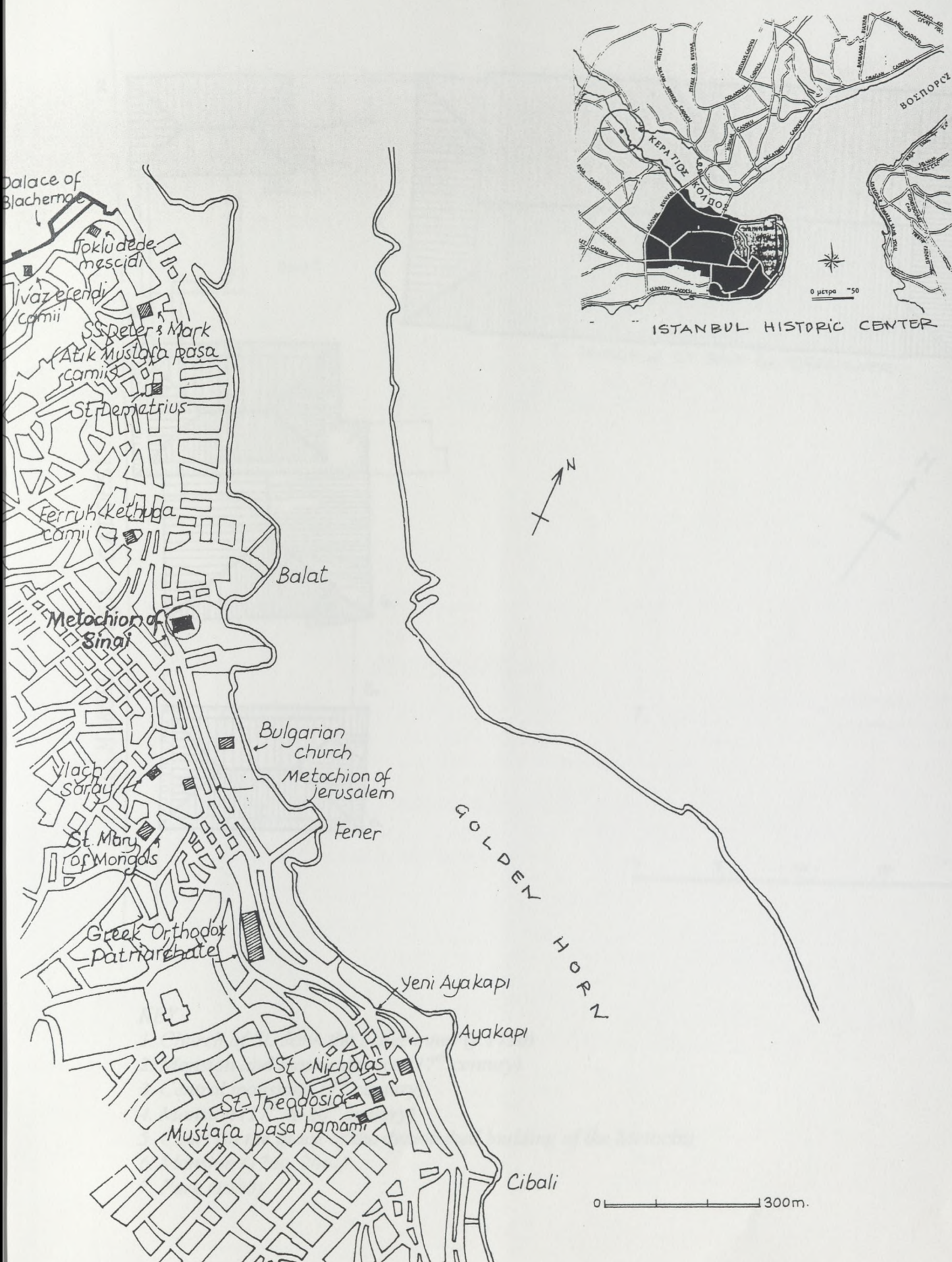
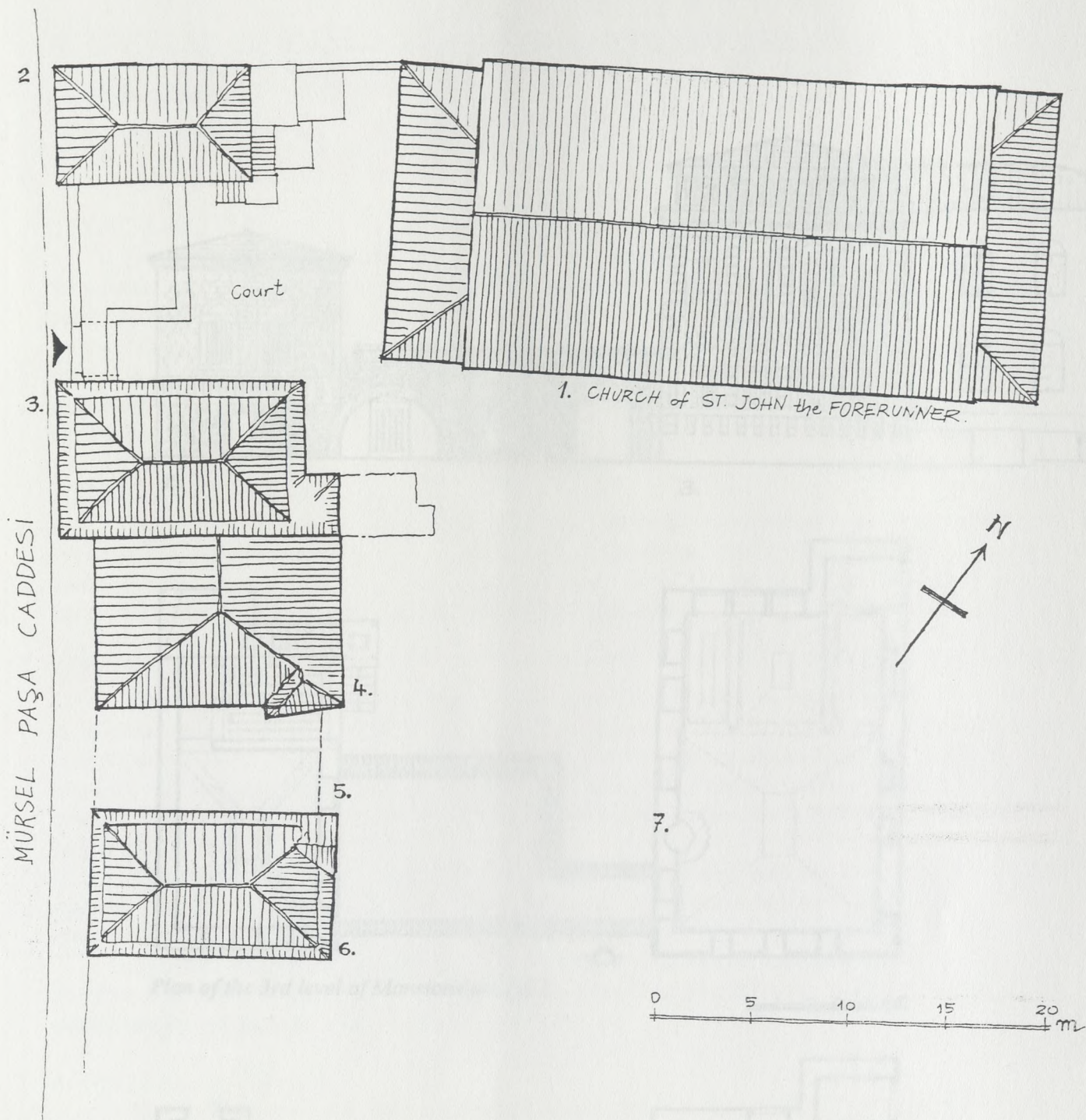


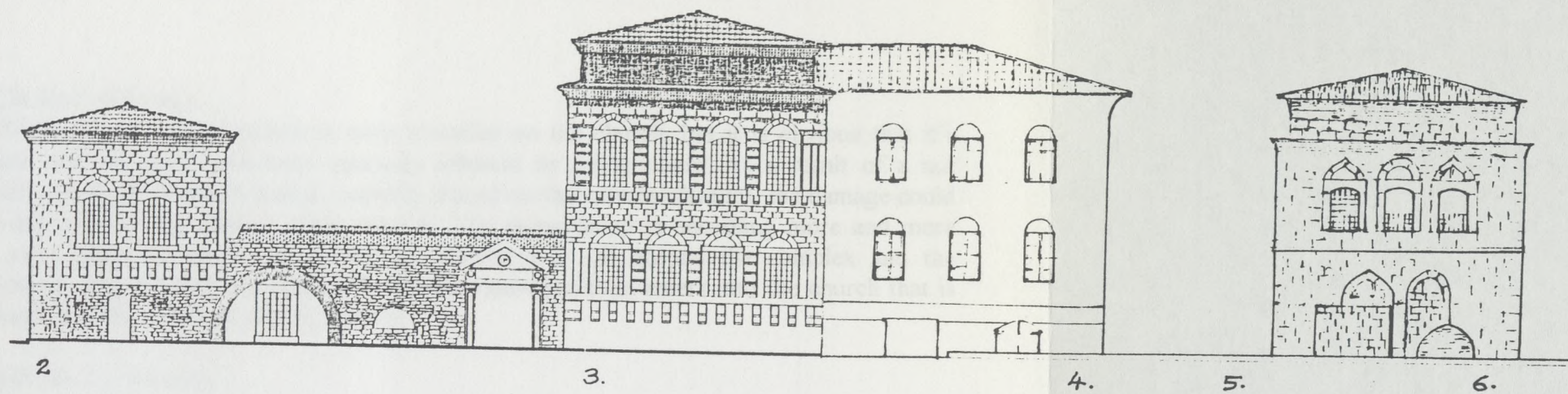
Plate 1. Map of the Balat area at Istanbul where the Metochi of Sinai is marked



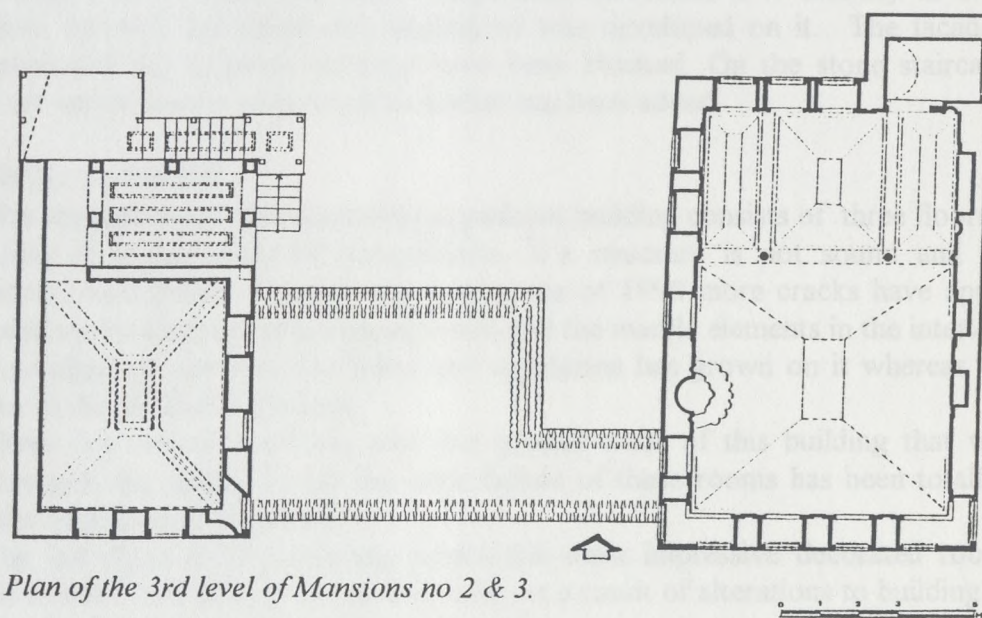
KEY

1. Church of St. John the Forerunner (y.1730)
2. Mansion and main entrance (17th century)
3. Central mansion (17th century)
4. Mansion (17th & 20th century)
5. Court (in the place of the demolished building of the Metochi)
6. Mansion (1700s, 2000s)
7. Park (1980)

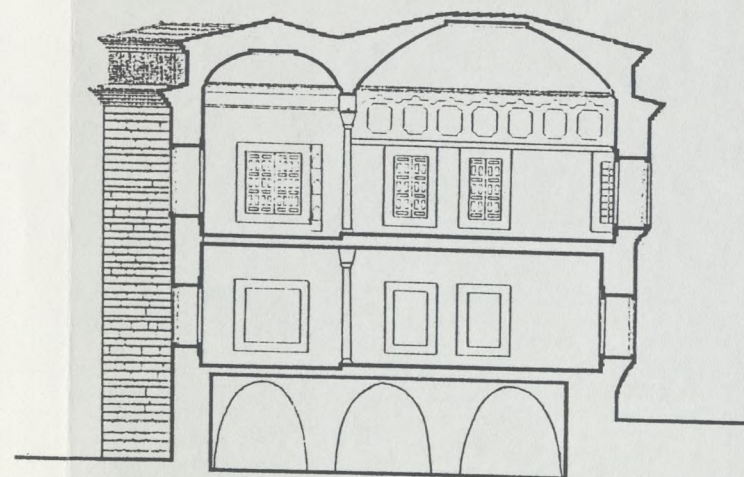
Pl. 2. Sketch roof plan of the existing building complex of the Sinai Metochi (August 2000).



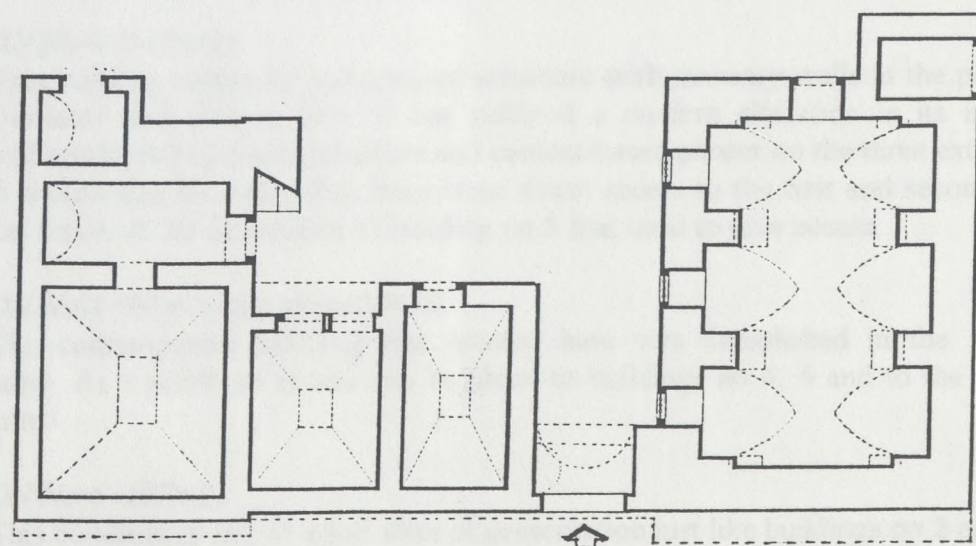
West elevation of the metochi buildings towards the street.



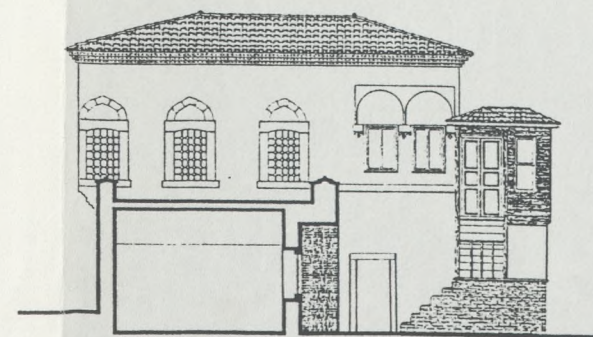
Plan of the 3rd level of Mansions no 2 & 3.



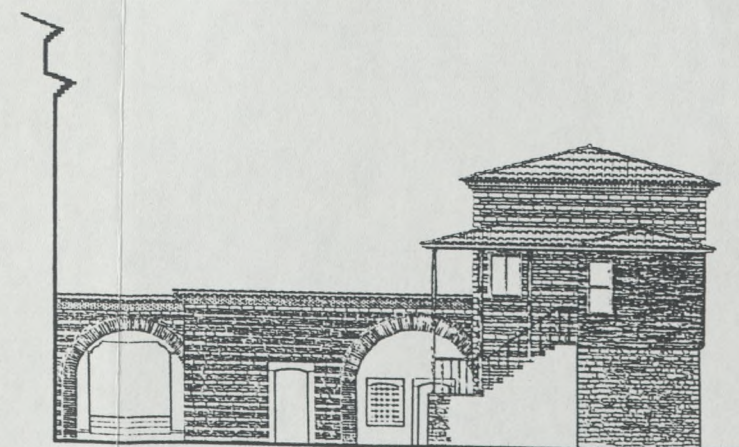
Section of mansion no 3 looking to the south.



Plan of the 1st level of Mansions no 2 & 3.



Section in the courtyard looking towards north (mansion no 2).



East elevation of the gateway and mansion no 2 in the inner courtyard.

B. PRESENT CONDITION OF THE BUILDINGS OF THE COMPLEX

CHURCH No 1 (539 m²)

No visible structural problems were recorded on the church, but it is obvious that its foundation and masonry have been seriously affected by rising damp. As a result of a not particularly successful modern plaster, recently placed on the external facades, the damage could be recorded only in the interior of the church. The rising damp is becoming more and more serious as a result of the accumulation of alluvial soil all around the complex and the neighborhood with the sea. We were told that the rainwater even enters into the church that is careful kept dry only with the help of a pump.

MANSION No 2 (190 m²)

Though this building has been temporarily inhabited, it is actually in a bad state of preservation. Its roof has failed and vegetation was developed on it. The facades have been badly treated and the original openings have been blocked. On the stone staircase that gives access to the upper floor a poor wooden shelter has been added.

MANSION No 3 (298 m²)

This important and architecturally significant building consists of three floors. It is actually in a bad state of preservation. Its structure is not sound and needs urgent consolidation. As a result of the recent earthquake of 1999 more cracks have appeared to the masonry and vaults and part of the plasterwork and the marble elements in the interior have either cracked or collapsed. Its roof has failed and vegetation has grown on it whereas the rainwater penetration in the interior is obvious.

There is a serious problem with the ground floor of this building that was originally opening towards the street. Today the west facade of these rooms has been totally covered as result of the high level of the street.

The last floor of this building where the most impressive decorated room of all the complex is found is not directly accessible today as a result of alterations to building no 4 and the demolition of building no 5 that used to give access.

MANSION No 4 (310 m²)

This building originally had a mixed structure with masonry walls in the perimeter and a wooden interior and eastern side. It has suffered a modern alteration in its interior by the insertion of reinforced concrete structure and cement-based plaster on the three external facades.

It should also be noted that there is no direct access to the first and second floor of this building as result of the demolition of building no 5 that used to give access.

MANSION No 5 (60 m² plot, demolished)

The contemporary building that existed here was demolished in the 1980's by the Municipality. As a result no access can be given to buildings no 4, 6 and to the upper floor of building no 3.

MANSION No 6 (177m²)

This buildings is also in a bad state of preservation just like buildings no 2 and 3. It has no direct access to the upper floor, while the ground floor is filled and abandoned.

C. PROPOSALS

The proposals listed below aim to the restoration of the whole building complex of the Metochi to its original form in order to reveal to the public a unique 17th century architectural complex. The restoration will be designed according to the internationally accepted principles for such an intervention (Venice Charter). Obviously its future maintenance will be only quarantined by its rehabilitation and as possible functions that will be proposed to the Monastery are synodikon, exhibition gallery or small museum for the public, residence or guest house, etc.

The proposed project will include:

1. The conservation of the church.
2. The restoration of the three secular buildings no 2, 3, 6.
3. The restoration of the facades of building no 4 and the full reconstruction of its interior that has been seriously altered.
4. The construction of a new entrance building at position no 5 (infill) in order to give access to the buildings no 4, no 6 and to the second floor of the building no 3.

The necessary studies by a team of experts should be:

A. **Studies** (estimated cost 100.000 \$)

1. Measured drawings-historical documentation
2. Architectural conservation study
3. Structural study (especially for buildings 3 and 4)
4. Conservation study for stone, plaster etc.
5. Electro-mechanical study.

B. **Emergency work** (estimated cost 15.000 \$)

1. Evacuation of the buildings 2, 3, 6 and arrangements for the homeless that need to be removed.
2. Fencing temporarily and steadily the whole property.
3. Removing the modern structures and sheds from building no 2.
4. Clearing of the ditch around the church.
5. Small scale clearing of the external plaster of building no 4 in order to make possible the architectural documentation of the facades.
6. Temporary water proofing of the roofs, especially of building no 3 & 4.
7. Shoring, pre-consolidation work of parts ready to collapse especially of building no 3.
8. Careful collection and documentation of fragments of plasterwork of the interior of building no 3 (that have collapsed during the earthquake of the 1999).
9. Temporary blocking of the openings (with galvanized iron sheets).
10. Inspection of the roof of the church.

C. **Actual restoration work** (total estimated cost 1.285.000 \$)

It could be done in 6 stages, equal to the number of the buildings but however according to the results of the final study.

Stage 1. Church (estimated cost 400.000 \$)

1. Improvement of the drainage around the church.
2. Reinforcement of the foundation.

3. Restoration of the facades (removing of modern plaster, repair of masonry)
4. Restoration of the plasterwork and the painted decoration of ceiling
5. Repair of the roof.
6. New joinery.
7. Conservation of the furnishings.
8. New marble floor
9. Painting

BUILDINGS no 2,3,6 (estimated cost 700.000 \$)

On the buildings 2, 3 and 6 only conservation work will be proposed as a result of their archaeological significance.

BUILDING no 4 (estimated cost 150.000)

On the buildings 4 restoration work will be proposed at the facades. A full reconstruction of its interior should be done

COURT no 5 (estimated cost 70.000)

Integration of a new two storied entrance building (2X60m2) That will give access to the floors of the buildings 4 and 6 and through 4 to the last floor of building 3.

COURTYARD-ENCLOSURE (estimated cost 65.000\$)

Removal of the alluvial soil, excavations if necessary.

Construction of a drainage around all the buildings of the complex

Planting on the side of the court

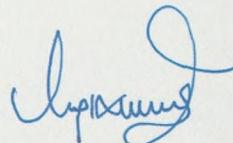
Courts anglais along the west side of the buildings on the side of the road

Construction of a new enclosure towards the south.

Total Cost of A, B, C 1.500.000 \$ or 590.000.000 Dr



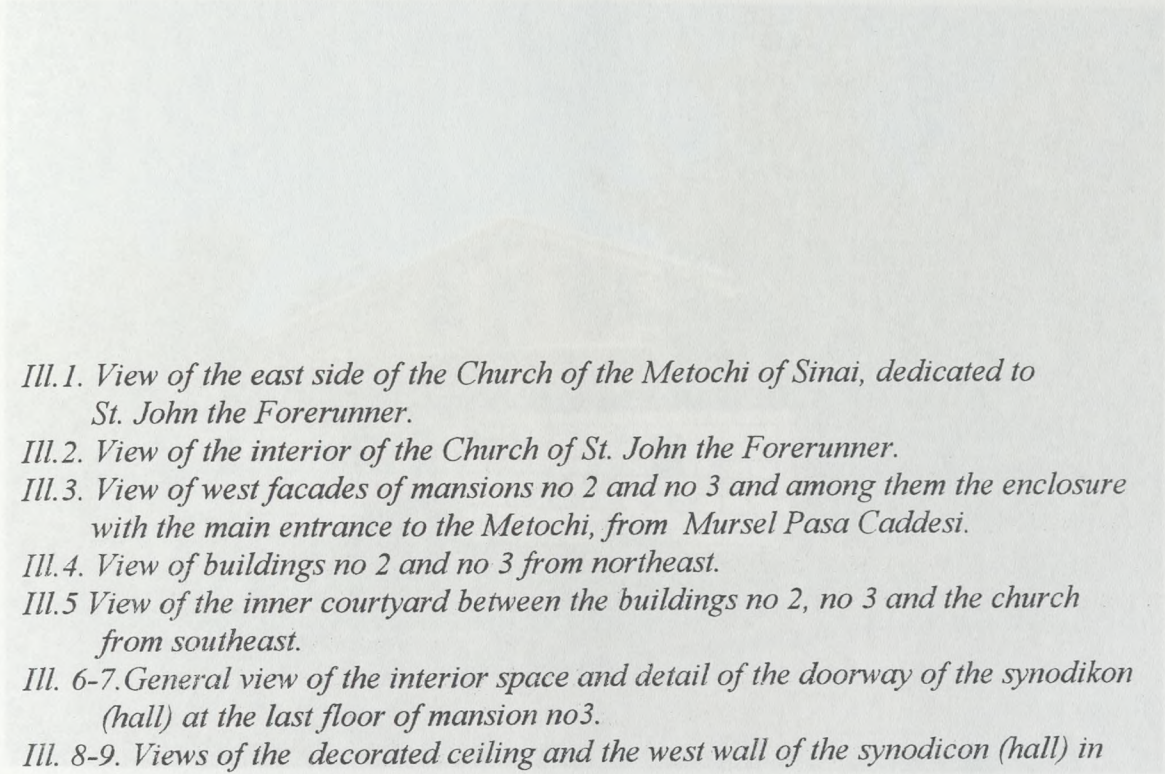
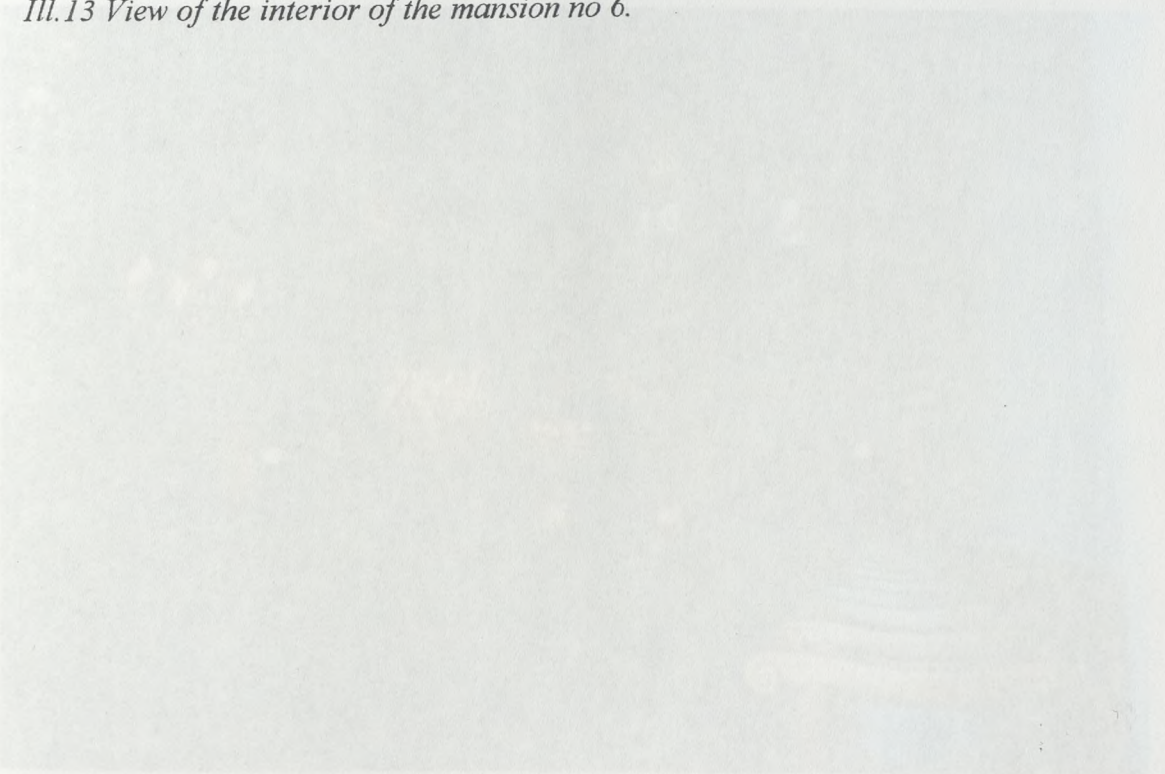
Petros Koufopoulos



Marina Myriantheos-Koufopoulou

Architects -conservation consultants

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Ill. 3. View of the interior of the Church of St. John the Forerunner.



Ill. 1. View of the east side of the Church of the Metochi of Sinai, dedicated to St. John the Forerunner.



Ill. 2. View of the interior of the Church of St. John the Forerunner.



Ill.3. View of west facades of mansions no 2 and no 3 and among them the enclosure with the main entrance to the Metochi, from Mursel Pasa Caddesi.

Ill.5 View of the inner courtyard between the buildings no 2, no 3 and the church from southeast.



Ill.4. View of buildings no 2 and no 3 from northeast.



Ill.5 View of the inner courtyard between the buildings no 2, no 3 and the church from southeast.



III. 6-7. General view of the interior space and detail of the doorway of the synodikon (hall) at the last floor of mansion no3.





III. 8-9. Views of the decorated ceiling and the west wall of the synodicon (hall) in the upper floor of mansion no 3.



III. 10. View of the entrance to the synodicon (hall) in the upper floor of mansion no 3.



III.10. View of the building no 4 and the passage no 5 from Mursel Pasa Caddesi (southwest).



III.11 View of the mansion no 6 from Mursel Pasa Caddesi.



Ill. 12 View of the mansion no 6 from southeast.



Ill. 13 View of the interior of the mansion no 6.

