

Marble Factory

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District of Marmara, Abroz Neighbourhood, Mermercik Locality	Construction period/date: Factory: 1912; Ottoman cemetery: 18th-20th centuries
	Current status: Abandoned
GPS: 40°37'55.9"N 27°44'06.6"E	Ownership: Private ownership
Registration date and number: Balıkesir KVKBK 25.10.2018 - 778	

History

The marble factory 'Mermer Taş Fabrikası' was founded in 1912 and it is the first marble factory in Turkey. The owner of the factory was Mehmet Efendi, son of Ethem Ağa, born in Kayseri in 1868-1869. Mehmet Effendi died on Marmara Island on 20 September 1934 and was buried in the cemetery next to his house that still stands by the sea on the factory grounds. He had a marble business at Unkapanı in Istanbul before opening the marble factory on Marmara

Island. Mehmet Effendi cooperated with shipowners Hakkı Bey from Paşabahçe (Istanbul) and Hasan Bey of Manizadeler family who, apart from transporting marble in their ships, also possessed shares of the business. Establishment of the "Marmara Taşı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi" was approved on 9 Safar 1330 / 10 June 1329 as recorded in the Ottoman Archives (BOA BEO 4054.304038). The archival document records the name of the bay as Marmaracık.



Fig. 6: Factory building, cutting machines

According to Yücel, the factory closed after a dispute between the owners. From 1928 to 1930 it was restored, as the roof tiles and the inscription above the entrance of the factory indicate. It is assumed that Salih Sabri Karagözoğlu bought the shares of the two shipowners in that period, most likely in 1928-1929, and the factory reopened in 1930 (Pl. VII.31). The machines for cutting marble came from England (John M. Henderson & Co. Makers Aberdeen; www.johnmhenderson.com) and Belgium (Thonar – de Jaiffe C.^{le} Belgique). The factory complex has several buildings (the house of Mehmet Effendi, offices, kitchen, and rooms for the workers etc.) and also includes the Ottoman cemetery that Mehmet Effendi is buried in, which is much older than the factory itself. Some of the gravestones are dated to the 18th century. This cemetery was used for workers in the Ottoman marble quarries at the nearby location of Glyfo. In the early 1930s, when Ankara was refounded and the construction of governmental buildings like ministries required marble, there was only one marble factory in Turkey with limited capacity. This paved the way for importing marble from Italy. Karagözoğlu went before Atatürk and explained that his factory was in business. So, with Atatürk's support, marble importation was stopped. The factory shut down in 1974 as its technologies became outdated. According to Avşaroğlu, it was inherited by Emel Saylam, daughter of Mehmet Effendi. The inheritors established a foundation and gave 60% of the factory to the foundation and 40% to Emel Saylam. Efforts to create a museum of marble history in Turkey were continued by the Governorate of Balıkesir and Rahmi Koç, but all of them were declined.

Architecture

The complex is located at Mermercik Limanı (formerly Panormi) between Abruz Cove and Genna Monastery. It is in a cove facing west, with buildings and the Ottoman cemetery are spread around. The complex comprises functions such as lodgings for the workers, a cemetery, refectory, workshop, offices, residences. The buildings have either one or two storeys. Descending from the main asphalt road, there is first the residence of Mehmet Effendi on the left towards the sea and the adjoining Ottoman cemetery. Then, there are small shacks



Fig. 1: Workers lodgings

for trucks and machinery. Further along, on the right, are the single-storey lodgings for workers, where the resident watchman lives today (Fig. 1). This first group of buildings is followed by a wide yard, across which are two major structures.

The first one to the east is a two-storey structure. Its ground floor was built with brick masonry and its upper floor was a residence of timber construction (Fig. 2). The ground floor was not accessible, but the upper floor was photographed. On the southern side, from west to east, the ground floor features one window, one doorway, and three more windows. The windows have very shallow arches; the upper floor's westernmost room protrudes from the rest of the façade. The upper floor is accessed via a masonry stairway on the western exterior leading to a doorway at the northern end of the western wall opening into a small vestibule. The vestibule opens into a corridor, which extends all along the northern side of the upper floor and terminates at the washbasin and squatter toilet. Along its northern wall are two windows and –just before the eastern end– there is a doorway opening outwards. There are three rooms along the southern side of the corridor, and a kitchen at its eastern end. The rooms feature timber ceilings and mid-20th century furniture; the kitchen has an old-style wood/coal fire stove and cupboards.

Between the two major structures, there is a pile of marble blocks and a crane. The second major structure is the factory proper (Fig. 3). Along its southern (main) façade runs a concrete pit and railways. The façade is accentuated by seven shallow, round-arched doorways on



Fig. 2: Administrative building, southern and western façades



Fig. 3: Factory building, general view



Fig. 4: Factory building, main entrance



Fig. 5: Factory building, steam furnace



Fig. 7: Mehmet Efendi's house and tombstone



Fig. 8: Refectory

the eastern part, the main entrance area in the middle, and an auxiliary section on the western part. The main entrance is crowned with the company's sign indicating the initial establishment in 1912 and the refurbishment in 1930 (Fig. 4). The main hall houses the machine from England and the steam production unit that the factory depended upon (Fig. 5). The eastern section of the building houses seven sets of cutters from Belgium (Fig. 6). The western section was used as storage.

There is the area where blocks of marble were cut and stored to the west of the factory building; untouched since the shutdown of the factory. To the south of the main group, there is an east-west oriented, two-storey building that is accessed by a stairway to the seaside. This building was not accessible to the field-work team but it is known to have been the residence of Mehmet Effendi (Fig. 7). The Ottoman cemetery houses tombstones from the 18th century onward. Among these is the tombstone of Mehmet Effendi –who passed away in 1934– topped with a fez but inscribed in Turkish, in Latin script.

The area between the cemetery and the workers' lodgings was originally occupied by the refectory and kitchen, which are now in ruins (Fig. 8).

Current Condition

The site and the complex are closed to visitors. A watchman lives on site. The buildings have not been maintained since they were abandoned in the 1970s. Therefore, the roofs

have deteriorated, the walls have cracked, structures made of weaker materials such as timber have collapsed, machinery and vehicles have rusted, the site is overgrown with vegetation, and so on. The structures are unfortunately doomed to collapse in a few years' time, unless measures are taken and repairs are made as soon as possible.

Risk Analysis and Recommendations

According to Avşaroğlu, the site and the complex are owned by Emel Saylam, daughter of Mehmet Effendi. It is known that the owner could not be convinced to transform the site into a museum. Not only is this complex significant to Turkey's industrial history as its first steam-powered marble factory, but it is also of the utmost importance as a cultural property for Marmara Island due to its architectural characteristics and the *in situ* machinery. One watchman is not enough to guard such a big site, especially from plunderers or illicit diggers, particularly during the winter months when the island is less populated and the nearby marble quarries are still active; and the site is easily accessible from the sea.

The site needs to be taken under protection as soon as possible. It is of the utmost importance that the complex is transformed into a museum and made accessible to the general public. The state authorities need to take the lead on this, while also paying attention to the owners' wishes and feelings. The site and the complex are too valuable to be lost.