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AUTHORS: Hilal Tuncer,Duygu Kurtoglu

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## Examining the Contributions of Foreign Architects to the Turkish Modernist Movement

Hilal TUNCER PÜRSELİM \* and Duygu KURTOĞLU 

Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi, Mühendislik-Mimarlık Fakültesi, Mimarlık Bölümü

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✉ Sorumlu Yazar (Corresponding author\*): [hilaltuncer@mehmetakif.edu.tr](mailto:hilaltuncer@mehmetakif.edu.tr)

☎ +90 248 2132784 📠 +90 248 2132704

### ABSTRACT

In terms of the assessment of the post-war period, Turkey was not directly involved in the war, but the country was as directly affected as any European country. Under the strong leadership of Atatürk, several reforms consisting of social, educational and industrial developments were carried out after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Architecture was one of the subjects that could be analysed within the framework of the educational reform. Robert Oerley, Ernst Egli, Clemens Holzmeister, Hermann Jansen, Martin Elsaesser, Martin Wagner, Hans Poelzig, Bruno Taut, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, Wilhelm Schütte, Robert Vorhoelzer and Paul Bonatz were some of the architects who were allowed to work in Turkey and who had beneficial works for the Turkish cities both in terms of urban planning and architectural context. The aim of this study is to evaluate the relationship between the works of refugee architects, particularly during their stay in Turkey, and their long-term and positive contributions to Turkish architecture in the post-war period. With the research, some questions will be answered, such as whether the foreign architects had a dominance or influence on the Turkish architects; and whether there are any foreign architects who tried to protect the existing traditional order.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Foreign architects, modernism, post war architecture

## Yabancı Mimarların Türk Modernist Hareketine Katkılarının İrdelenmesi

### ÖZ

Birinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası dönemi değerlendirmek gerekirse, Türkiye savaşa doğrudan dahil olmamakla birlikte, tüm Avrupa ülkeleri kadar doğrudan etkilenmiştir. Atatürk'ün güçlü liderliği altında, 1923 yılında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti kurulduktan sonra sosyal, eğitimsel ve endüstriyel gelişmelerden oluşan çeşitli reformlar yapılmıştır. Mimarlık, eğitim reformu kapsamında incelenebilecek konulardan biriydi. Robert Oerley, Ernst Egli, Clemens Holzmeister, Hermann Jansen, Martin Elsaesser, Martin Wagner, Hans Poelzig, Bruno Taut, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, Wilhelm Schütte, Robert Vorhoelzer ve Paul Bonatz Türkiye'de çalışmasına izin verilen ve Türkiye'nin şehirleri için hem kentsel planlama hem de mimari bağlamda faydalı çalışmalar yapan mimarlardır. Türkiye'nin modern çağa katılma sürecinin devam ettiği söylenebilir; gelen mimarlar geleneksel mimarinin yanı sıra modern akımların da Türk mimarisinde uygulanmasına yardımcı olmuştur. Bu çalışma, mülteci mimarların özellikle Türkiye'de kaldıkları süre boyunca yaptıkları çalışmalarla ilişkilerini ve savaş sonrası dönemde Türk mimarisine yaptıkları uzun vadeli ve olumlu katkıları değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma ile yabancı mimarların Türk mimarlar üzerinde hakimiyeti ya da etkisi olup olmadığı, mevcut geleneksel düzeni korumaya çalışan yabancı mimarlar olup olmadığı gibi sorulara cevap aranacaktır.

**Keywords:** Yabancı mimarlar, modernizm, savaş sonrası mimari

## INTRODUCTION

The polity of Anatolia, which has been described by foreigners as being far away from the urban culture and identity prior to the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (Bademli, 1985; Yaman, 2003), was changed in accordance with Law No. 364 of 29 October 1923. By changing the system inherited from the Ottoman Empires, the impact of the Islamic state in the collective memory was nullified and a Turkish national identity was constituted in the newly established Turkish Republic. The Republic is a nation-state based on six principles: Republicanism, Populism, Statism, Nationalism, Secularism and Revolutionism (Gülmez, 2016). These reforms were the beginning of a new country emerging from war, facing Europe and trying to establish a modern civilisation. With the Industrial Promotion Law of 1927, the importance of cooperation with foreign experts in some fields such as science, culture and arts were determined. Therefore, direct access to the European level of science and technology was provided (Alpagut, 2010). Due to the destruction of the First World War and the changed regime of the country, it was necessary to reorganise the master plans of the cities. Therefore, the change of this architectural identity in Anatolia was not a total rejection of the traditional Ottoman values, on the contrary, it was important for the revival of most of the Anatolian cities (Behçet, 1933).

At the beginning of the 1900s, the capital, which was moved from Istanbul to Ankara, was particularly reminiscent of the country. Thus, a journalist described Ankara as "loose, lazy, stagnant, tired, sick and complaining; it was also a large village that was unpleasantly irregular, closed to the rules of science, education and health, and the general situation was old" (Bademli, 1985). In this way, the style of architecture that was to be adopted in the first years of the foundation meant a strong uplifting of the nation. For Atatürk, who founded the Republic of Turkey, building modern cities where people could live in prosperity and meet the demands of the century was the first step in dreaming of creating a modern society. Through this policy, it was decided that foreign town planners and architects could be appointed for this task.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study analyses interaction and change by conducting a conceptual and theoretical literature research on how foreign architects who had to migrate to Turkey influenced Turkish modern architecture in public and civil buildings during the reform period

which began with the establishment of the Republic. Turkish modern architecture was examined through the designs of foreign architects who had the opportunity to work in our country, and data on plans, facades and massing were collected and examined. The data and findings obtained from researching the designs of foreign architects were evaluated using a table.

## Foreign Architects Coming to Turkey

In 1933, the Racial Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service in Germany began to purge liberals, socialists and communists who were considered anti-national socialists, as well as those who were married to Jews or of Jewish descent (Gülmez, 2016). Many academics, scholars and artists of Aryan descent were dismissed from their jobs and forced to leave Germany. According to Reisman (2011), these intellectuals who fled Nazi Germany were unable to go to the US and the UK due to new immigration laws and the economic crisis. Moreover, the fact that many European countries abstained from any action that could endanger relations with Germany led these people to immigrate to Turkey in order to survive. On the other hand, the brainpower needed for the reforms planned as a pillar of development policy was already available among the asylum seekers who had invited the country. A relationship of mutual interest had been established between the two sides. Subsequently, the number of German-speaking scholars and craftsmen in Turkey increased with the addition of Austrian and Czech nationals following the Anschluss and Munich Treaties in 1938.

The struggle for survival was not the only reason why these asylum seekers came to Turkey after the Second World War. At the same time, they have brought their culture and knowledge to these lands and have contributed to the creation of an ethnic country within the period of some of their lives until the end of their lives and sometimes until their migration to other places. This is why this migratory history occupies an important place in the history of improving Turkey.

Kazancıgil, Ortaylı, ve Tanyeli (2000), talking about the asylum seekers who fled from Hitler's tyranny, says that most of these people would not have come here as tourists if they had had a normal life under the conditions of the time. The situation in Turkey has put this event in its place in history. From this point of view, these revolutions have been recognised with gratitude. Because they could not accept the people who fled Hitler from many European countries, who know German

culture and admire German culture. In this respect, Turkey has an unbiased perspective, disregarding.

### Foreign Architects' Works in Turkey

During the 1st Nationalist Architectural Movement in Turkey (1890-1914), architects such as Giulio Mongeri, Vedat Tek and Mimar Kemalettin were influenced by European designs and built iconic buildings such as Ankara Palas, Is Bank and Vakif Apartment (Figure 1). However, it is reported that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk did not like the buildings of the 1st Nationalist Architectural Movement and expected Turkish architects to adopt a contemporary approach in their designs (Hasol, 2017). Due to the Republican period, there was a continuous improvement in several fields in the Turkish society. Architecture and urban planning were the developing fields led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Due to the National Socialist regime, Turkey was a destination country for refugee architects; therefore, Atatürk employed Austrian architects such as Robert Oerley, Clemens Holzmeister and Ernst Egli in the fields of construction, urban development and urban planning (Tekeli, 2010). There was no pressure on the architects to work; the expectations were clear: "train students and design more westernised projects" (Zanter, 2007).

The foreign architects who came to Turkey with the reforms that followed the proclamation of the Republic also focused on large public buildings, as did Turkish architects, and concentrated on administration, education-culture, entertainment-recreation, trade, production, transport, etc. It can be seen that small-scale settlements, which are necessary for all settlements, have not been sufficiently studied. It can be seen that small settlements with different functions, which are necessary in all settlements, have not been sufficiently studied (Ergut, 2009). Architects such as Sedad Hakkı Eldem and Kemalettin Bey are the Turkish architects who designed the public buildings of the Republican era and who have the largest number of structures.

The architects who lived in Turkey between 1925 and 1955 can be divided into 3 groups according to their fields of work;

- I. Professors who worked as deans of architecture faculties (Hans Poelzig, Bruno Taut and Robert Vorholzer at the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts and Paul Bonatz at the Istanbul Technical University),
- II. Tutors worked at the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts; also at the Ministry of Education of the Local Administrations (Bruni Taut, Franz Hilinger, Wilhelm Schutte, Margarete Schutte-Lihotzky and Martin Elsaesser),

- III. Architects worked in the offices of German professors at the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts (Hans Grimm, Zimmermann, Schiner, Konrad Ruhl, Willi Runge and Mundt) (Zanter, 2007).



**Figure 1.** Ankara Palas, Is Bank and Vakif Apartment (URL-1, 2023; URL-2, 2023; URL-3, 2023)

Modern architecture, which was started in 1927 by foreign architects, is a visual ideological reflection of the architecture and modern revolution, which is a demonstration of the economic, socio-cultural and aesthetic



perspective of Western countries (Nicolai, 2011). In addition, Turkish architects such as Seyfi Arkan and Sedad Hakki Eldem had an influence and played a significant role in the development of the modern buildings that were designed by Turkish architects. The details of the houses of Seyfi Arkan, who was a student of Hans Poelzig, can be seen as a re-interpretation of the current approach of Turkey in Europe. The Hariciye Mansion and the Presidential Cottage Mansion are considered to be the most important examples of the modern style (Gurel and Yucel, 2007) (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Hariciye Mansion and Presidential Cottage Mansion (URL-4, 2023; URL-5, 2023)

In the example of Iller Bank, Seyfi Arkan used multiple materials, circular cantilevers; it appears in circular form, decorative stone covered facade, crystal glass surfaced on metal doors, grooved, concave and convex shapes on columns which are deco aesthetic fea-

tures (unfortunately, this magnificent example was demolished in June 2017) (Gurel and Yucel, 2007) (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Iller Bank (URL-6, 2023)

Clemens Holzmeister worked during the same periods as Ernst Egli. Invited to Ankara for the Ministry of Defence, Holzmeister observed a dominant and monumental attitude in his designs; he argued that public structures should be designed in a more austere style (Nicolai, 2011). The Ministry of National Defence building, completed in 1930, is a structure that gradually carries the columns based on Turkish architecture, forming the courtyard with columns running along the facades (Figure 4). In the Supreme Court building, built by Holzmeister at the same time as the Ministry of Defence building, the details of Turkish architecture can be seen (Figure 4). This is also a sign of respect for the existing architecture. Holzmeister's other buildings in Turkey are the Ankara Military Academy, the General Staff Building, the Ankara Military House, the Deputy of Internal Affairs, the Gazi House, the Central Bank, the Emlak Kredi Bank and the Turkish Grand National Assembly Building. In addition, Holzmeister never stayed in Turkey continuously, travelling and working in different periods (Nicolai, 2011).



**Figure 4.** Ministry of National Defense, Supreme Court Building and TBMM (URL-7, 2010; URL-8, 2010; URL-9, 2023)

Ernst Egli stayed in Turkey for 13 years and worked as the chief architect of the Ministry of National Education for 8 years and as a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts (Erdal, 2012). Egli changed the basis of architectural education by making a revolution in the field of education; he believed that school buildings in particular should be designed in a modern style.

With the arrival of Egli; Mimar Kemalettin was dismissed from his work on the Gazi Teaching School as a result of a demand for a more modern style; Egli was commissioned to complete the Gazi Teaching School (Yavuz, 1981) (Figure 5). This building, which could be considered the last of the Nationalist Period, was completed in 1930 after the architect died. However, Egli was respectful of the original structure and maintained the integrity of the building until its completion. In addition, Egli criticised the understanding of modern architecture in Turkey, as it was a copy of foreign designs and did not take the local conditions into consideration (Nicolai, 2011).



**Figure 5.** Gazi Teaching School (URL-10, 2023)

The trend of modernisation in Turkey began with the acceptance of protective legislation for women's rights and gender equality (Nicolai, 2011). Ismet Pasa Girls Institute and Ankara Girls High School (designed by Egli) are the cases of female prominence in education (Figure 6). Ismet Pasa Girls Institute has a dynamic

structure with the horizontal windows and beams, console on the garden facade, vertical movements on the mass. Ankara Girls High School, which is designed with an arc plan, has a grid-shaped solid facade (Nicolai, 2011). In addition, the Music Teaching School is interpreted as one of the first monumental buildings with its colonnaded entrance and terraced roof (Figure 7).



**Figure 6.** The Ismet Pasha Girls Institute and Ankara Girls High School (URL-11, 2010; URL-12, 2023)



**Figure 7.** Music Teaching School (URL-13, 2023)



The differentiation of building blocks (both plan and facade) according to function is one of the key aspects of Ernst Egli's work (Nicolai, 2011). At the Academy of Fine Arts in İstanbul between 1930 and 1935, Egli introduced the obligation to draw freehand objects in order to enter the faculty, limiting the contingency to 50 and increasing the length of study to 5 years (Erdal,

2012). In Egli's Ragıp Devres Villa, the old Ottoman lifestyle was abandoned and the European lifestyle was adopted, creating a structure shaped by the wishes of the client (Nicolai, 2011) (Figure 9). Another example of modern housing is the Fuat Bulca Villa, which was completed in 1936 (Figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Ragıp Devres and Fuat Buca Villas (URL-14, 2013; URL-15, 2023)

After 1935, Egli resigned from the Ministry of National Education for various reasons and completed his modern designs with the Marmara Mansion (which was demolished), the Beer Factory, the Beer Factory Workers' Houses, the Hamam in the Gazi Forest Farm and

the Turkish Air Association Training Dormitories (Figure 10). Egli has also been involved in the restoration of several buildings, including the Tayyare Cinema (Aşkan, 2011).



**Figure 9.** Marmara Mansion, Beer Factory, Hamam (URL-16, 2016; URL-17, 2023; URL-18, 2023)



**Figure 10.** Faculty of Language and History Geography of Ankara University (URL-19, 2010)

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Bruno Taut designed Ankara University's Faculty of Languages, History and Geography with decorations specific to Turkish architecture, combining appropriate materials with structural elements reflecting urban identity (Gasco, 2010) (Figure 10). Taut, like Egli, provided training for students at the academy; he published a book entitled *Architectural Information* (1938) in which he attempted to lay the foundations for modern architecture (Gasco, 2010).

Taut has 24 structures in Turkey, of which 5 are public buildings, 1 is an exhibition pavilion and the house for himself (Nicolai, 2011). The ones that stand out among the educational structures are Atatürk High School, Cebeci Middle School and Trabzon High School (Figure 11).



**Figure 11.** Atatürk High School, Cebeci Middle School and Trabzon High School (URL-20, 2010; URL-21, 2010; URL-22, 2010)

Paul Bonatz lived in Turkey until 1954, when he emigrated back to his homeland. The Saracoglu Memur Houses is one of his works that highlight his perspective on modern architecture (Nicolai, 2011). Foreign architects not only designed new modern structures but also took part in the restoration of existing buildings.

Bonatz participated in the project to transform the function of the building, formerly known as Şevki Balmumcu's exhibition space, who had won an international competition. The building was subsequently repurposed as an opera house (Pekdemir, 2021) (Figure 12).



**Figure 12.** Saracoglu Memur Houses, Ankara State Opera House (URL-23, 2010; URL-24, 2010)



**Figure 13.** Ministry of Health and Central Hygiene Institute (URL-25, 2010; URL-26, 2010)



By building the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Theodor Jost started the modern movement. According to the press, the structure resembled European architecture, making this the most modern structure in Ankara at the time (Nicolai, 2011). Another building designed by Jost is the Central Hygiene Institute Chemistry-Bacteriology Building (Figure 13). It has an elliptical cantilever in the centre of the structure and a relief on the eaves.

Robert Oerley designed and built the Red Crescent Headquarters, Numune Hospital, Hifzisiha School, a residence and the Hali wholesale market projects during his stay in Turkey. The Numune Hospital favoured cantilevers and wings, pointed porticoes and pink granite cladding (Figure 14). For the Hygienic Institute and the Red Crescent Headquarters buildings, Oerley used a three-wing plan, vertical façade elements and a flat, steep roof. Although Oerley referred to Central European architecture in his works, he did not yet apply modern architectural principles; he was perceived as a modern architect by Turkish society (Nicolai, 2011).



Figure 14. Numune Hospital (URL-27, 2010)

Martin Elsaesser is one of the architects who lived in Turkey and designed many buildings. Elsaesser won the project competition of Sumerbank, which is his most important structure, made of Ankara stone with a concave plan form, a reinforced concrete frame structure, oval roof windows, horizontal ribbon windows and window blinds (Nicolai, 2011) (Figure 15).



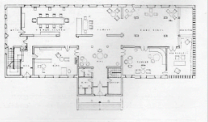


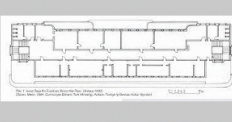
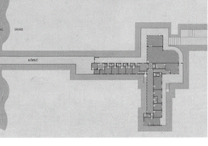


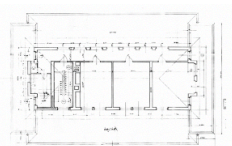



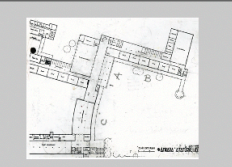
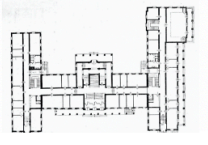


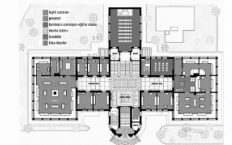
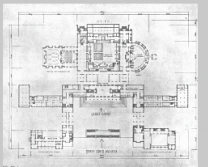
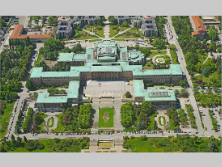

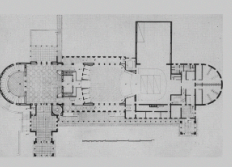
Figure 15. Sumerbank (URL-28, 2023)

## DICSUSSION

The first examples of modern architecture that appeared with the Republican period were public and monumental. There is a clear main entrance façade in the clean, open masses formed by geometric shapes that come together along the horizontal and vertical axes. The masses are symmetrical and asymmetrical. Looking at the works of both Turkish and foreign architects, it can be seen that the size of the windows tends to follow a certain order, especially in large-opening façades of public buildings. On the other hand, examining the materials the use of color and materials is similar and there is an intensive use of cut stone. The use of concrete sunshades is a common feature. With the introduction of the international style in Turkey by foreign architects, massing and façade movements began to be handled in a modern way, especially in public buildings, structural and functional features were brought to the fore, and designs in which reinforced concrete beams were the main feature came to the fore (Gökarslan, 2023). Examining the works of foreign architects who introduced modern architecture in Turkey, it can be said that the spatial organisation is functional and appropriate. As seen on the table below there are also traditional traces in the layout of the brutalist facades, but the plans and form reflect the solid state of modernism. The asymmetrical design of the buildings, the chamfered walls and the asymmetrical entrances with a single corner column are products of the modernist approach. The use of masses with clear geometry, brackets and terraced roofs are other modern architectural elements in the buildings.

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**Table 1.** Modernist movements' plan and façade organisation (URL-29, 2023; URL-30, 2017; URL-31, 2023; URL-32, 1975; URL-33, 2023; URL-34, 2012; URL-35, 2018; URL-36, 2020; URL-37, 2020)

BUILDING	PLAN	FACADE	FACADE	PLAN	BUILDING
Hariciye Mansion, 1934					The Ismet Pasha Girls Institute, 1930
Florya Presidential Cottage Mansion, 1935					Marmara Mansion, 1928
İller Bank, 1935					Atatürk High School, 1937
Supreme Court Building, 1936					Central Hygiene Institute, 1927
TBMM Building, 1939					Ankara State Opera House, 1946

**CONCLUSION**

In order to bring more advanced technical and industrial methods to Turkey, several specialists were sent to Europe during the Republican period. Conversely, certain European specialists were invited to Turkey. At the same time, as a result of the Nazi regime in Germany and Austria, architects were recognized as refugees and a slight modernization began to take place from 1927 to 1950.

The contribution of architects who immigrated to Turkey during and after the war was remarkable. Foreign architects tried to adapt to a completely different culture and work as professionals in a different environment. There was a transition of cultures, working attitudes, styles, languages and approaches. However, emigrating architects were welcomed in terms of opportunities; the Turkish government provided prestigious and influential working positions both in the con-

struction sector, in administrative work and in the architectural academies that most of the societies made their fields of work (Zanter, 2007).

As mentioned above, the modern translation between Turkey and Germany could be understood through the works of architects such as Seyfi Arkan, Hermann Jansen, Clemens Holzmeister, Sedad Hakki Eldem, Margaret Schutte-Lihotzky, Paul Bonatz, Martin Wagner and Bruno Taut (Akcan, 2012). These architects brought an international understanding and dominated modern Turkish architecture (Yavuz, 1981). By carrying out several projects and teaching university students, foreign architects have become more comprehensible to society. Working and interacting with a foreign community is inspiring and their buildings are cornerstones of Turkish architectural history. Emigrated and invited architects have also contributed to the awareness of urban issues in the Turkish context (Zanter, 2007). Students became aware of urban issues



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and tried to produce solutions for specific areas through architecture studio projects.

However, it is argued that modern architecture is limited to the construction of educational buildings and it is observed that public buildings are symbolic and follow a single structural typology. However, most of the foreign architects have made efforts to adopt modern architecture considering the identity; so it could be said that typology is a perceptual result of using local materials and modern movement principles.

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