

## AMBIGUITIES OF TRANSPARENCY AND PRIVACY IN SEYFİ ARKAN'S HOUSES FOR THE NEW TURKISH REPUBLIC

Esra AKCAN

**Received:** 03.09.2005

**Keywords:** Transparency, privacy, nationalist spectacle, domesticity, gender roles, veiling/unveiling, translation, cross-cultural relations, ideology and architecture.

1. "Şehrin [Ankara] aktüalitesi biraz da bu yeni binalarla Mustafa Kemal'in hayatıydı. Bu nerde basıldığı bilinmeyen, hatta hiç elinize geçmeyen, fakat sizden başka herkesin okuduğu ve her ağzın beraberce size naklettiği bir gazeteye benziyordu." Tanpınar (1945, 1992, 7). The earlier version was originally published in *Ülkü* (September 1942,10-15). The quoted passage was added afterwards. All translations from German and Turkish belong to the author, unless otherwise indicated.

The reality of the city depended as much on these new buildings as Mustafa Kemal's life. This was like a newspaper that nobody knew where it was published, that you never even saw once, but one that everyone else read and recounted to you as a chorus (1).

This depiction of Ankara by the contemporary novelist and thinker Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962) reveals the symbolic significance of Atatürk's and his circle's life for the implementation of the revolutionary changes in the new Turkish Republic. Tanpınar's metaphor of the new President's life as an invisible newspaper whose contents were nevertheless perfectly known to the city's population visualizes a particular tendency that held true for the Regime's approach to the making of a new residential culture. The Kemalist elites recognized in the practice of architecture and town planning an effective mechanism for making a modern country. For instance, during the late 1920s and early 1930s, several German-speaking architects and city planners were invited to Turkey, such as Carl Lörcher, Hermann Jansen, Robert Oerley, Clemens Holzmeister and Ernst Egli, to prepare the master plans of major cities and to design state-sponsored institutions. With the schools, hospitals, houses and governmental buildings of these architects, the Kemalist state sought to display the achievements of the Revolution, while subsequently disseminating symbols of modern and Western living to the nation by using a new set of architectural tropes.

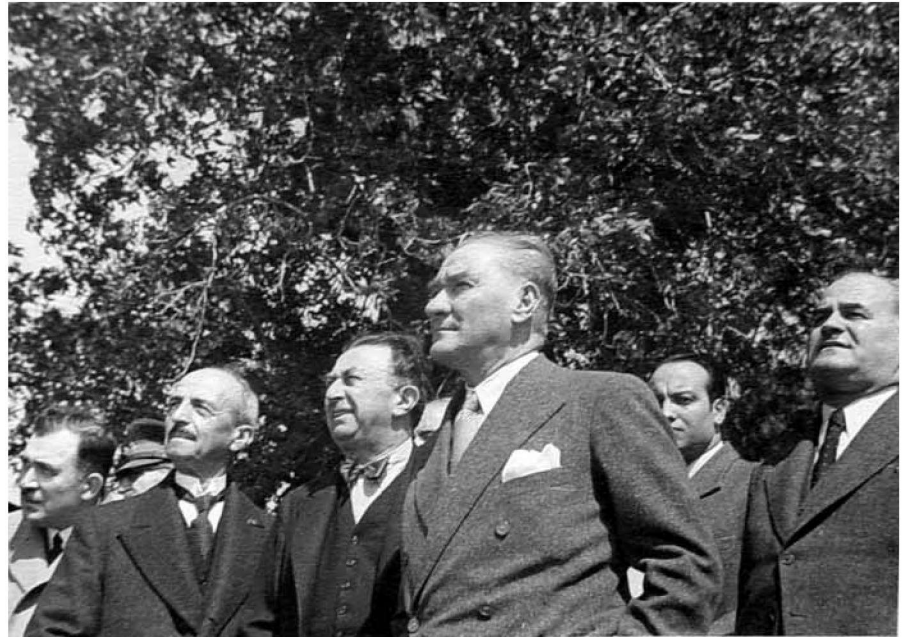
One of these influential German professionals, the architect and city planner Hermann Jansen reserved the southern hills of Ankara for the upper-class single-family villas in his master plan for the city. Many houses for the new Republican elite were also placed on the hills of Çankaya. I would like to argue in this article that these houses were promoted as emblems of modernization and Westernization, showcased to disseminate a new vision of living to the whole nation, and to exhibit to the rest of the world how the Turkish bureaucrats stripped off their

2. It is hard to determine the precise reasons why Arkan was chosen among other Turkish architects to undertake such representative tasks for Atatürk. Yet, it is possible that Atatürk wanted to reserve some important commissions for a young Turkish architect educated in Germany, while placing the rest of the institutional buildings for the new State in the hands of German architects. In one of the few articles written about the architect, Uğur Tanyeli suggested that Arkan could have attracted the interest of the official elite with the memorial he designed for the Kubilay incident. Tanyeli (1992, 88-95).

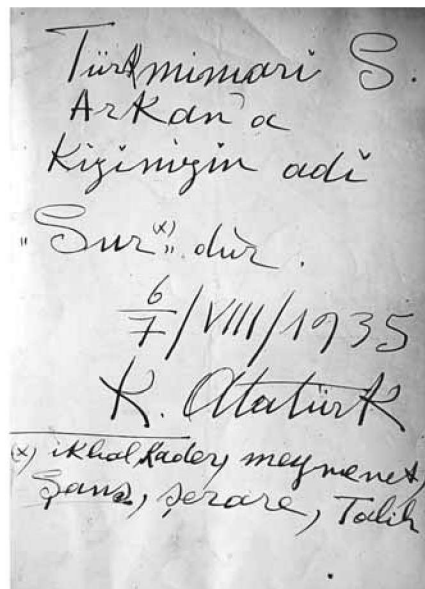
“Oriental” habits. Beatriz Colomina (1998) argued that the most influential houses of the twentieth century have been produced and used also for display, either in the professional exhibitions, or popular department stores, museums and fairs, or propaganda and advertisement. “The modern house has been deeply affected by the fact that it is both constructed in the media and infiltrated by the media. Always on exhibition, it has become thoroughly exhibitionist (Colomina, 1998, 164).” In the case of Turkey, some highly specific houses for the official elite confirm this account, albeit with a specific twist. In addition to their functional use as the living spaces of their owners, these houses can be seen as part of nationalist spectacles, namely the publicity and propaganda techniques of the new Turkish regime. They can be interpreted in terms of a *staged modernity*. I call them staged, not because the women and men in these houses were acting or because their modern houses were like a decor in a theater. This is in no way to claim that these houses were not “authentic,” just because they provided a transformed domestic environment compared to the traditional ones. On the contrary, they were as genuine as any other house, as long as they embodied the aspirations and future ideals of their residents. I call these houses staged, rather because the Kemalist project of modernization in Turkey started with the initiatives of a pioneering group who were on a stage. The lives of this official elite were meant to construct the ego-ideals of a nation, their houses were to establish the new standards of taste.

This article concentrates on three of these houses, two of them in Ankara, one in İstanbul, all designed by the Turkish architect Seyfi Arkan (1903-1966) who had just returned from Germany after working with Hans Poelzig. In a city where the German-speaking architects designed literally all of the state-sponsored institutional buildings of the Revolution, the Turkish architect Seyfi Arkan (1903-1966) stands out as an exceptional example—an architect whose career still awaits scholarly interest. Arkan had a close personal relation with Atatürk, who not only gave the architect his family name (previously Seyfi Nasih), but also suggested a first name for his daughter in a hand-written letter that survived the unfortunate destruction of the architect’s archives after his death (**Figure 1, 2**). The relation between the president and the architect was reinforced during the construction of these three emblematic villas designed for the regime (**2**).

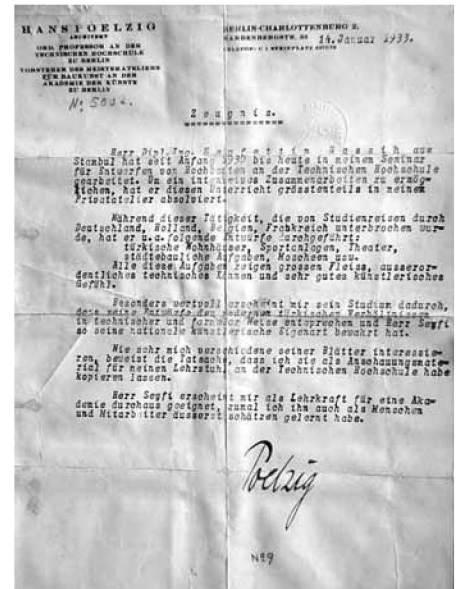
Unlike an historiographical approach that treats architecture only as a transparent and direct mirror image of the economic infrastructure or the political organizations of its context, my intention here is to show the historically and geographically constituted, and even at times incidental relations between ideology and architecture that gets redefined for each specific example. I will not therefore claim that architectural form in the Kemalist Republic was exclusively a fixed reflection of the Kemalist ideology, even if it was highly shaped by it, where the state officials allegedly demanded specific architectural expressions. On the contrary, by focusing on Seyfi Arkan’s buildings for the officials of the new Turkish Republic, I intend to show how the specific architectural expression of a certain ideology is considerably the result of the decisions of the architect, who nevertheless shares and is guided by the political ideals of the ideology he aspires to represent. The fact that Arkan’s formal approach cannot be neatly categorized with the same terms that define the formal preferences of many of his contemporaries such as Holzmeister and Jansen, to cite two names to be referred to below, will confirm this point.



**Figure 1.** Seyfi Arkan and Atatürk examining the Florya site (Arkan second from right; Arkan Papers, National Palaces Archive).



**Figure 2.** Atatürk's handwritten letter for naming Arkan's daughter (Melih Şallı Private Collection).



**Figure 3.** Poelzig's Letter of Recommendation for Arkan (Arkan Papers, National Palaces Archive).

**Education of an Architect: Hans Poelzig - Seyfi Arkan (Berlin, 1930-1933)**

Arkan designed these houses just after he returned from almost a three-year period of education in Germany where he studied with Hans Poelzig. Before departing for Germany with a state fellowship, Arkan had graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in İstanbul in 1928 (3). At the time, a pedagogical approach that was inspired by *Beaux-Arts* was promoted at the Academy by the teachers such as Vedat [Tek] and Guilio Mongeri whose Ottoman Revivalist buildings soon fell out of fashion during the selection process of Mustafa Kemal's Presidential Mansion, designed by Clemens Holzmeister. In Germany, Arkan experienced a different kind of pedagogical approach, as well as a first-hand exposure to the development of the new building style. Two letters of recommendation from Hans Poelzig and one from Erich Zimmerman (4)

- 3. Arkan's fellowship award was mentioned in the newspaper *Vakıf*, 8 October 1929.
- 4. Hans Poelzig, Letter of Recommendation for Seyfi Nassih (Arkan), 9 March 1931, Hans Poelzig, Letter of Recommendation for Seyfi Nassih (Arkan), 14 January 1933, Erich Zimmerman, Letter of Recommendation for Seyfi Nassih (Arkan) 9 March 1931 (Arkan Papers, National Palaces Archive).

5. In their letters of recommendation, Zimmerman talks about the fact that Arkan took the master class of Poelzig in the Prussian Academy of Arts; and Poelzig mentions Arkan's work in the Technical University.

6. In his supportive letter of recommendation, Poelzig mentioned that Arkan went on study-trips in Germany, Holland, Belgium and France, analyzing current architectural developments. Poelzig also noted that Arkan worked on Turkish houses, sport buildings, theater, mosques and urban design projects during his stay in Germany. What Poelzig found "especially valuable" in Arkan was the fact that his designs fulfilled the requirements of "the modern Turkish conditions in both technical and formal aspects." Arkan had "a very competent national artistic character," Poelzig said. "Besonders wertvoll erscheint mir sein Studium dadurch, dass seine Entwürfe den modernen türkischen Verhältnissen in technischer und formaler Weise entsprechen und Herr Seyfi so seine nationale künstlerische Eigenart bewährt hat."

Hans Poelzig, Letter of Recommendation for Seyfi Nassih (Arkan), 14 January 1933, Seyfi Arkan Files, Milli Saraylar Archive, İstanbul.

7. Arkan continued to speak appreciatively about his relation with Poelzig after he returned to Turkey in 1933. Although Arkan's own designs cannot be claimed to literally follow those of Poelzig's, his friends and family confirm that the architect often mentioned his debt to his teacher. The architect's stepson Melih Şallı also stated that Arkan was very interested in German literature, and that he mainly had German and French books in his library. Melih Şallı, Interview with author, 24 November 2002, İstanbul.

8. In an article in 1931, T. Friedrich explained the difference between Tessenow's and Poelzig's classes in relation to the University Reform in Germany. Although the writer found both methods incomplete, he clarified the distinction between the two seminars in relation to the freedom of expression allowed to the students of each. Poelzig let his students choose the project they would work for the term, whereas Tessenow assigned them all with the same particular problem. According to the article, the first method offered the students plenty of freedom, whereas the second "deprived" them from this autonomy. The writer also asserted that students with "inner energy and distinct self confidence" chose Poelzig, while the less self-confident students chose Tessenow, since they could find support and assistance to their concerns. Although the students in Tessenow's classes produced moderate work, the writer was appreciative of this pedagogical method at the expense of the loss of "seeming individuality," because, he claimed, the students learned architectural principles through multiple repetition and crystallization, out of the moderate exercise that they could apply to similar other design projects. Friedrich (1931, 453-455).

9. Helmuth Heinrich, a student in Poelzig's class, claimed that the young students who were familiar with Mies van der Rohe or the

confirm that Arkan (still under the name Nasih at the time) worked "intensely" with Poelzig both at Charlottenburg Technical University (*Technische Hochschule*) and at the Prussian Academy of Arts (*Preussische Akademie der Künste*) in Berlin from the beginning of 1930 until 1933 (5). He presented in the exhibition *Poelzig und seine Schüler* (Poelzig and his Students), and worked in the architect's private office (6; Figure 3).

I will show in this article that Arkan, as a graduate student in Poelzig's studio, initially worked in Germany on the preliminary designs of the houses that he later submitted to the Turkish State. However, the nationalist context in Turkey that guided the final designs nevertheless gave totally novel meanings and functions to these houses. These buildings stand as informative studies in illustrating the translation of a representational style from one context to another, as well as the impact of architecture schools in building cross-cultural connections (7). Poelzig had been teaching the master class in the Prussian Academy of Arts since 1922, following the resignation of Bruno Paul; and he was appointed at the Technical University in 1924. Since the two schools were next to each other, it was convenient for the students to work closely with Poelzig in either of his classes (Posener, 1992, 179). During his stay in Germany, Arkan followed both Poelzig's classes at the Technical University and his master class at the Academy. Berlin-Charlottenburg Technical University was the locus of important debates at the time. Heinrich Tessenow and Hans Poelzig were the two influential teachers in the school, whose pedagogical methods (and eventually politics) were often contrasted by their contemporaries (8) and students (9). In his memoirs, Tessenow's assistant and Hitler's future chief architect, Albert Speer (1970, 14), mentioned how the University eventually became the meeting ground of National Socialists: most Nazi sympathizers took classes from Tessenow, except for a group of "communists" who gravitated towards Poelzig's classes. However, Speer's memories should not be taken as a conclusive statement about Tessenow and Poelzig's political stances themselves. Instead, the difference between the two men should be regarded as a matter of pedagogical approach, without drawing any definitive political conclusions:

There are two types of teacher that may be classified as ideal...One expresses his own thinking and experience in a doctrine whose truth he is so convinced of that he feels it his duty to pass it on to the next generation...Such a master was, in the twenties, Heinrich Tessenow. The other teacher is one whose experience has convinced him that many ways can lead to a goal, to several goals...His purpose is to enable every pupil to pursue his own particular course. Such a master, then, was Hans Poelzig (Posener, 1977, 20).

The opposition between Tessenow and Poelzig also resonated in Turkey: In addition to Arkan's relation with Poelzig, Hermann Jansen was teaching with Tessenow at the School. As the city planner of Ankara who also gave influential decisions about the new buildings, Jansen promoted similar values with Tessenow. These could especially be detected in his proposed housing types and formal preferences, such as the original architectural projects of the Bahçelievler Co-operative Housing (which were changed during construction). Due to my limited space in this article and for the sake of a focused argument on Arkan, I cannot reflect on the intricate pedagogical and political details of the Poelzig-Tessenow debate in Germany, and how these resonated in Jansen's decisions, both of which

developments of modernism enrolled in Poelzig's seminar, whereas the "older and conservative students" in Tessenow's. "While Poelzig saw the promotion of the students' individual talent as the goal of their education, Tessenow made an effort to promote the highest possible average..." Another student, this time from Tessenow's class, Gerhard Heuß, recalled that Tessenow got angry and sent two Chinese students to Poelzig's class "for doing an orgy with steel, concrete and glass."

In a long and informative letter to Paul Schmitthenner in 1933 about the political and aesthetic splits amongst the architectural milieu of Berlin as well as in the Technical University, Heinrich Tessenow mentioned his problems with the "Poelzig circle," confirming these students' observations.

Heinrich Tessenow, Letter to Paul Schmitthenner, 31 January 1933. Nachlass Tessenow, IV.1.1, Briefwechsel, Kunstbibliothek, Berlin; Memories of Helmuth Heinrich (April 1980). Nachlass Tessenow, III.1.2.3. Kunstbibliothek, Berlin; Memories of Gerhard Heuß. Nachlass Tessenow, III.1.2.4. Kunstbibliothek, Berlin.

**10.** Two newspaper items in 1946 confirm Tessenow's invitation to Turkey as a master studio teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul: *Die Welt, Hamburg*, 28 November 1946; *Badische Zeitung, Freiburg* i. Brsg, 10 December 1946.

Tessenow discussed his invitation to Turkey in a couple of letters with Erich Böckler and Paul Schmitthenner, who advised him not to accept the offer. Tessenow had to spend the last years of the Second World War in a small village with serious financial difficulties and in deep despair. The position in Turkey would have solved many of his problems, yet his friends and colleagues who were concerned about his health tried to find him another post in Germany. In a letter to General Friedrich in 1947, Tessenow mentioned that he finally decided to stay in Germany fearing that he might not be able to return if he left, which could have been the case since the architect died three years later. In the letter in January, Schmitthenner mentioned that he was also invited to Turkey and looked forward to reuniting with Tessenow and Paul Bonatz in Turkey. In the letter written in April however, Schmitthenner asserted that the recent German existence in Turkey was already sufficient for all times and that he preferred to stay in Germany. He advised Tessenow to do the same.

Erich Böckler, *Briefwechsel aus später Zeit*, Vol. 10 (Hamburg: Matin-Carl-Adolf-Böckler Stiftung, 1938). See esp. Heinrich Tessenow, Letter to Böckler, 17 March 1947; Sattler, Manuscript entitled "Vermerk. Prof Heinrich Tessenow," 24 April 1947; Paul Schmitthenner, Letters to Heinrich Tessenow, 31 January 1947; 11 April 1947; Heinrich Tessenow, Letter to Schmitthenner, 21 December 1947, Nachlass Tessenow, IV.1.1, Briefwechsel, Kunstbibliothek, Berlin; Heinrich Tessenow, Letter to General Friedrich, 1947, *Nachlass Tessenow*, Sonderheft III.2.1.19, Kunstbibliothek, Berlin.

**11.** A letter of recommendation sent by Martin Wagner to Tessenow from Istanbul

I have explained elsewhere (Arkan, 2005). What needs to be stated for the sake of this paper is rather Arkan's relation with Poelzig and the subsequent different formal approach (though not necessarily the ideological) he promoted in Turkey in comparison to some of his German colleagues, including Jansen.

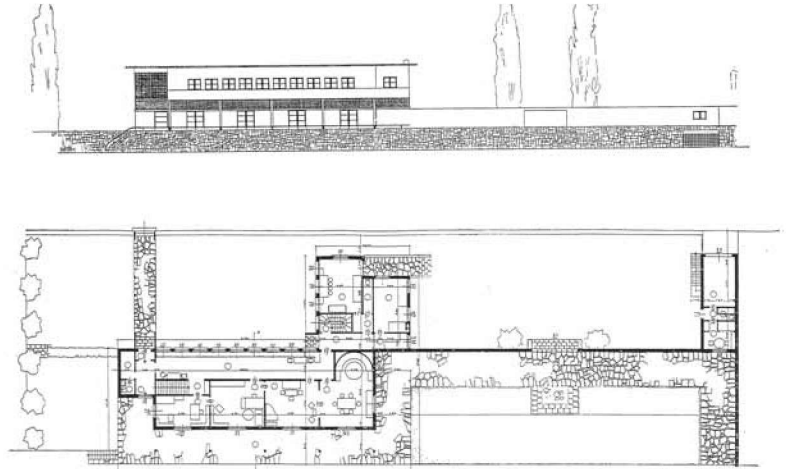
Tessenow never immigrated to Turkey himself, even though he seriously considered an invitation after the Second World War, which he had to turn down due to his deteriorating health (10). Nevertheless, the Turkish architects of the young generation at the time were familiar with his ideas (11). Tessenow's classes attacked metropolitan living conditions in the rental barracks, emphasizing instead small houses with a garden and the details of modest furnishing. Tessenow stressed the simplicity of peasant life and the importance of reclaiming the modern inhabitant's relation with nature. He thus hoped to replace the "ills" of the metropolis with the virtues of the small towns and peasant houses to be rejuvenated by the modern architect (Tessenow, 1953, 1982).

... today we seem to lack the ability to see what we love the most, ... we have a dangerous surplus of destructive characters or we always have great trouble finding and holding on to things that have, at least to some extent, calmness and clarity (12). ...let it be as silent as possible, very "incidental," very timid (13).

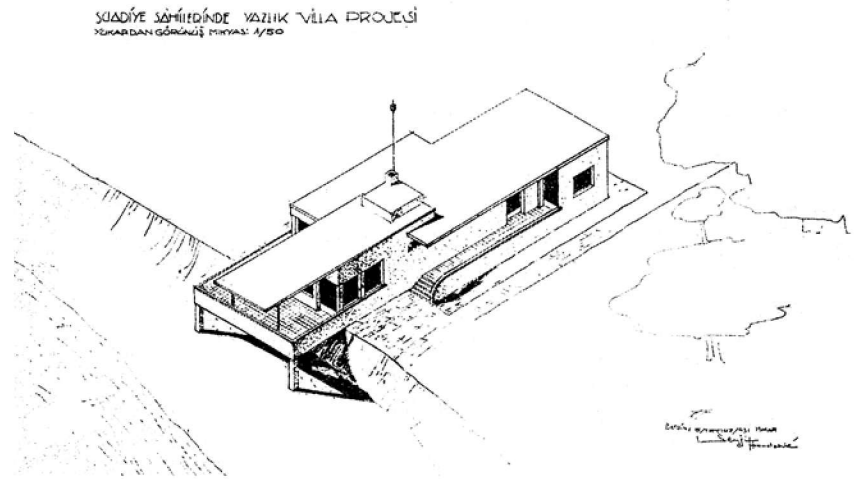
Repetition, regularity, modesty, everyday experience, mediation between extremes and collective unity were considered great virtues in Tessenow's classes; yet it was individual creativity and extraordinary expression that were emphasized in Poelzig's. Julius Posener, the well-known German historian and salaried contributor to the influential French journal *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, was a student of Poelzig at the Berlin Technical University between 1926-1929, namely a few years before Arkan. Herein, Posener describes Poelzig:

If one went into Poelzig's studio in the Technische Hochschule in Charlottenburg [Berlin] on a Thursday or Friday, one could see a group of students huddled in a semicircle around a column of blue cigar smoke and from there one could hear someone speaking: clearly, decisively, didactically, with spirit and wit. Poelzig was holding a crit. ... [T]here was no 'Poelzig school'. He tried to guide every student to his 'self,' even if Poelzig was not in tune with his 'self'. And he wanted us to approach each new work as if we had never designed anything before. He was an opponent of routine, of things that have been learned once and for all (Tessenow, 1916, 44-45). Poelzig was not an academic teacher; he was the 'the Master', and his students in Berlin used this term affectionately (14).

*Poelzig und seine Schüler*, the influential exhibition of Poelzig's student work in the *Akademie der Künste*, stressed the individual and differentiated character of each student. In his introductory text to the exhibition catalogue, Poelzig underlined his "non-formalist" approach, stating, "it would only be a self-delusion to apply formalist canons to the mental, technical and economic problems of the time (15)." The Poelzig School, if there was to be one, was not a matter of form, but a "mentality of building" (*Baugesinnung*), the architect concluded. The exhibition, in which Arkan also participated, was portrayed in *Wasmuths* magazine in 1931, which quoted the respected critic Walter Behrendt's appreciative description of Poelzig as a "stimulating and entertaining teacher (16)." The article stressed that Poelzig did not seek the creation of a style attached to his personality, or to educate his students as his literal followers. Poelzig was praised for teaching "creative power"



**Figure 4.** Seyfi Arkan, A Small House at the Sea, Student Project in Germany, 1930-33 (*Arkitekt* (1933) 4, 111, 112).



**Figure 5.** Seyfi Arkan, Waterfront House, Student Project in Germany, 1930-33 (*Mimar* (1934) 1; 6).

in 1937, asking him to accept Leman Tomsu, one of the first graduate woman architect of Turkey, to his office in Germany reveals that Tessenow's ideas were received in Turkey. Martin Wagner, Letter to Heinrich Tessenow. 9 June 1937. Nachlass Tessenow, IV. 2.3., Kunstbibliothek, Berlin.

**12.** "... es fehlt uns heute daran, das zu sehen, was wir besonders lieben, ... wir haben einen gefährlichen Überschuß am Zersetzenden, oder wir haben immer wieder die größte Mühe, das zu finden und ferzuhalten, was nur einigermaßen das Ruhende oder Geklärte habe." Tessenow (1916, 14).

**13.** "... sei es möglichst suntil, sehr 'nebenbei' und schüchtern." Tessenow (1916, 44).

**14.** Tessenow (1916, 179). Posener also recalls that Poelzig believed an architect could never have enough education, therefore an architecture student needed to be inspired. In the Beaux-Arts tradition, he held short competitions and encouraged a student to follow the project if the result was good, or to go on to the next competition if it wasn't.

**15.** *Poelzig und seine Schule, Ausstellung* Veranstalter von der Preussische Akademie

(*Schöpferkraft*) to his students, rather than the rules of his own school (Hegemann, 1931, 100-103). Although the architect was against teaching a single style of expression, his studio work nevertheless had an identity that could explicitly be differentiated from what was perceived as the repetitious and collective, aesthetically conservative and traditionalist approach of the *Heimatstil*. His promoters defended Poelzig's approach as creative, free and individual, because it was different from traditional styles, not because it lacked an identifiable style. Poelzig's approach was in close dialogue with the Bauhaus, and moreover, his master's classes in Breslau were the first pedagogical steps toward what would come to be known as the revolutionary Bauhaus workshops (Akan, 2005; Frank, 1983; Schirren, 1989).

Seyfi Arkan's close contact with the "progressive" German architectural developments and debates for three years made him a crucial agent of translation in-between Turkey and Germany. Throughout the 1930s, Arkan became one of the most outstanding Turkish architects fulfilling a modernist agenda, in the aesthetic-formal sense. He was one of the first architects to translate European modernist features into the Turkish scene. To the extent that modern architecture is considered the representation of the new and advanced technologies, it is legitimate to state that Arkan promoted a European-inspired modern architecture more enthusiastically

*der Künste zu Berlin, Exhibition on March 1931* (1931) Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, Berlin, 3.

**16.** Arkan's name was listed in p.13 of the Catalogue. *Poelzig und seine Schule...* (1931, 13). List of Students who participated in the exhibition:

William Anders, Andreas Barany, Wolfgang Bangert, Walter Bangert, Asta Berling, Maz Berling, Hans Brandt, Maz Cetto, Egon Eiermann, Karl-Joseph Erbs, Albrecht Friebe, Werner Friebe, Moritz Hadda, Felix Hinssen, Gunther Hafemann, Rudi Hamburger, Fritz Jaenecke, Adolf Kegebein, Theo Kellner, Hans Köhler, Walter Kraupe, Emil Lange, Heinrich Lauterbach, Curt Liebknecht, Friedrich Mews, Carl Otto, Richard Paulick, Richard Prietzel, Walter Rothschild, Max Säume, Sakamoto, Seyfi Nassih Himmetzade, Camilla Sommer, Heinrich Schapiro, Max Ernst Schneiders, Ernst Scholz, Rudolf Schwarz, Carl Heinz Schwennicke, Rambald Steinbüchel, Zdenko Strizic, Friedrich Tamms, Heinrich Tischler, Ludolf Veltheim, Konrad Wachsmann, W.W. Zschimmer, Hermann Zweigenthal.

**17.** Poelzig won the first prize in İstanbul Opera House Competition, which was partly the motivation behind his invitation. He also designed two other unbuilt projects for Turkey. One of them was the *German-Turkish House of Friendship* Competition in 1916, the other (with two versions) was designed for the House of Diplomats in Ankara, in 1935.

In 1939, Poelzig's friend and biographer Theodor Heuss wrote about the "tragic end" of the architect after he was invited to İstanbul. "His friends observed this tragic play of wanting to go [to Turkey] and not being able to go with deep spiritual perturbation and understood its symbolic significance. What a misguided stroke of fate, that this man of exceptional talent, a talent that in its instincts and responsibility was so completely linked with the German people and Germany, should be expelled on an adventure into intellectual and cultural exile! A sense of responsibility and desire to be creative called this untiring spirit to his new life. But was this to be the last twist of fate in the life of a great man—to go and teach the Turks something about good architecture? ... He took his departure very seriously and died."

Theodor Heuss, 1939, 79. Translated in: Posener (1992, 255).

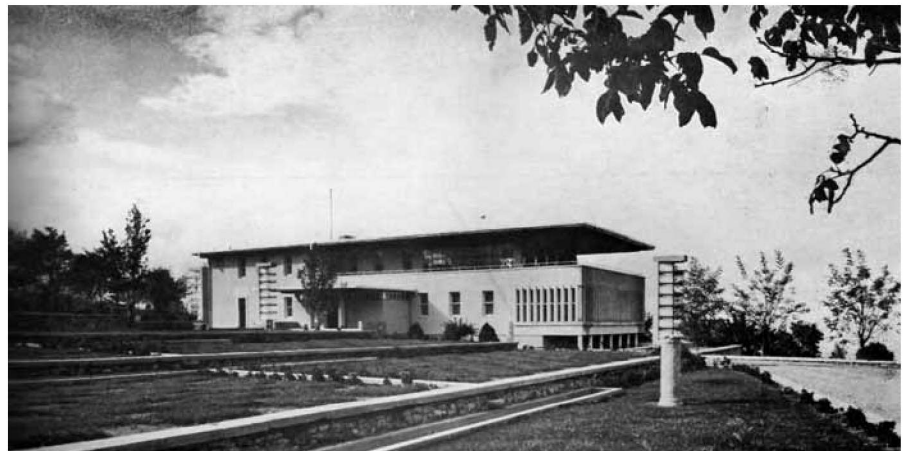
For more information and discussion on Poelzig's unbuilt projects in Turkey see: Nicolai (1988, 130-133).

**18.** In 1935, Arkan entered the İstanbul Opera House Competition in which his teacher Poelzig received the first prize. Arkan won the first prize in three other major competitions during this period: Competitions for Sümerbank, Municipality Bank and İstanbul Port Passenger Hall. Although the commission for the Sümerbank was eventually passed to the German architect Martin Elsaesser, Arkan did have a chance to build his competition project for the Municipality Bank. Arkan's projects just after his arrival from Germany stand out as distinct projects of the time in

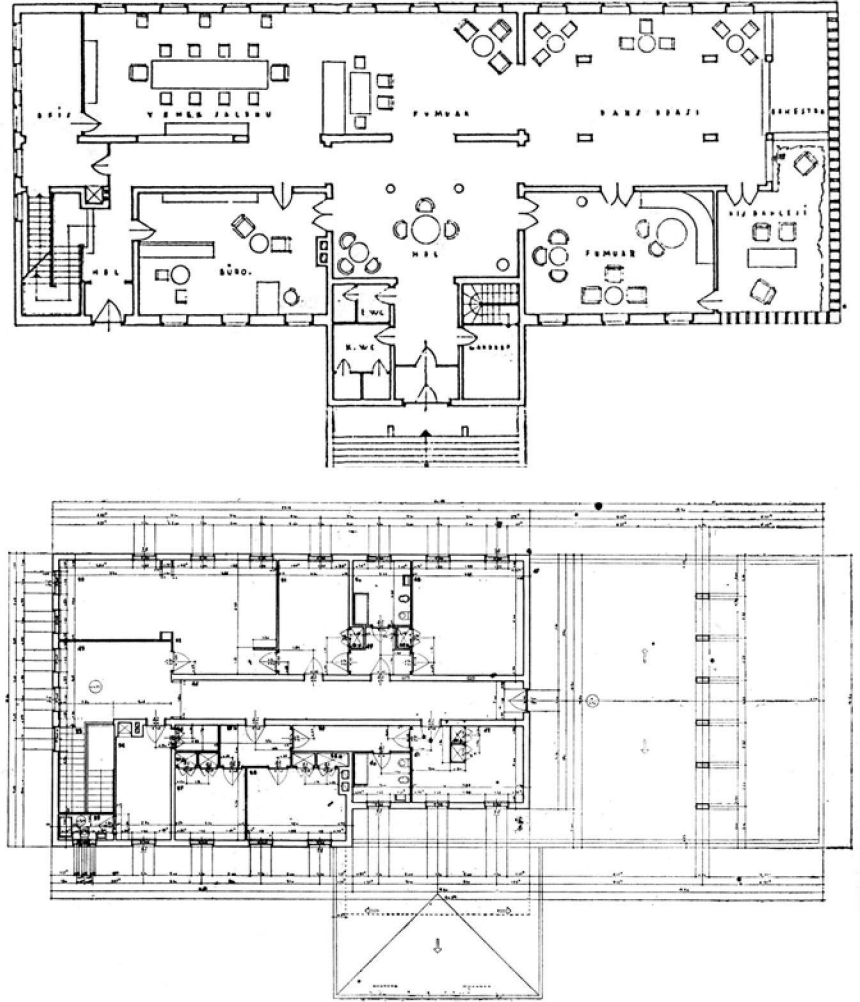
than many of the German and Austrian architects working in Turkey during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Apart from formal expressions of modernism, such as horizontal windows, white walls and flat roofs, Arkan also explored the organization of the open plan, the dissolution of boundaries between the outside and the inside, as well as the functionalist standards of collective housing and minimal dwelling types. His teacher Poelzig was also invited for a position to Turkey in 1936 upon the recommendation of Martin Wagner, yet died just before he could make it, opening the post for Bruno Taut (**17**). After coming back to Turkey, Arkan began delivering urban design lectures at the Academy and found himself in a growing controversy with Sedat Eldem. The mid 1930s were definitely the brightest years of Arkan's career, which brought him recognition in numerous competitions for institutional buildings (**18**). As far as the residences for the state officials are concerned, Poelzig's architectural approach that sought for the individual expression of an artist "genius" was a perfect match for the clients' desires to represent themselves with exceptional houses. The single-family houses Arkan designed as a student of Poelzig in Germany influenced the upcoming years in his career (**19**; **Figure 4, 5**). The large terraces, extending eaves and winter gardens in the student projects remained as essential elements in the houses that would be built for the Republican elite in Ankara; the close relationship between the water and the house in student projects would reemerge in the design for the summer residence in Florya in İstanbul. The following sections look closer to this architectural hybridization of Germany and Turkey in constructing the residential symbols for the new Republic.

### **A House for Official Festivities and A House for Femininity (Ankara, 1933-1936)**

Seyfi Arkan's first important commission in Turkey was the *Foreign Minister's Residence* in Ankara (1933-1934, **Figure 6**). This house soon became a residential icon of the new Republic and its photographs frequently appeared in propaganda journals such as *La Turquie Kemaliste* (**20**). Just like Atatürk's own residence at Çankaya designed by Clemens Holzmeister, the Foreign Minister's Residence was not only a private domestic space for a statesman, but also a place for official festivities and a stage for the international appearance of Turkey's new look. It was meant to reveal to the foreign diplomats the modernizing and



**Figure 6.** Seyfi Arkan, Residence for the Foreign Minister, Ankara, 1933-1934 (*Arkitekt* (1935) 11-12; 311).



**Figure 7.** Seyfi Arkan, Residence for the Foreign Minister, Plans (*Arkitekt* (1935)11-12; 312, 316).

Turkey. The influence of some of Poelzig's buildings such as the Festival Theater for Salzburg is legible in a project Arkan published in *Arkitekt* under the title "Movie House." Arkan's other institutional projects from the period such as the Municipality Bank, Competition for İstanbul Port Passenger Hall, Ankara National Assembly, The Technician's School, or Akhisar Tütüncüler Bank, explore similar themes of *modern monumentality*, which was the concern of only a few German architects at the time. Poelzig was one of them, with his buildings that dramatically captured a monumental expressionism.

"İstanbul tiyatro ve konservatuarına ait uluslararası proje müsabakası," (1935) *Arkitekt* (1) 1-33. Arkan's project p. 27; "Sümerbank Proje Müsabakası," (1935) *Arkitekt* (2) 68-85; "İstanbul Limanı Yolcu Salonu Proje Müsabakası," (1937) *Arkitekt* (2) 41-56; "Belediyeler Bankası Proje Müsabakası – Ankara," (1935) *Arkitekt*, (10) 287-295; "Meslek Okulu Projesi," (1936) *Arkitekt*, (2) 43-44; "Akhisar Tütüncüler Bankası" (1935) *Arkitekt* (4) 112-113.

**19.** These projects were published in *Arkitekt* just after Arkan returned to Turkey. The German titles on the drawings

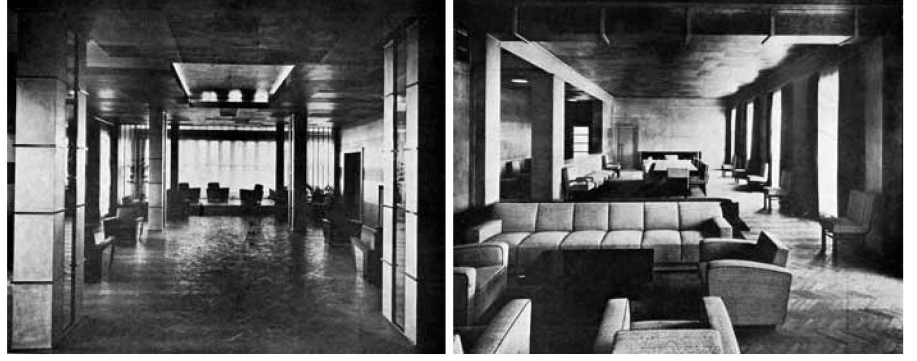
Westernizing aspirations of the new Republic, and to erase the "Oriental appearance" usually attributed to the Ottoman Empire. It blurred the distinctions between the private and the public by turning a domestic space into a carefully constructed stage for the public eye.

Arkan was given full responsibility in designing the building, choosing all the furniture and guiding the garden design. The final design is significantly similar to the "Waterfront House" that the architect designed in Germany, while he was still a student of Poelzig. In addition to the general massing and façade treatment, both designs have strikingly large terraces and wide extending eaves. Arkan differentiated the spaces of living from the spaces of protocol in the Foreign Minister's Residence (**Figure 7**). Providing separate entrances for each, he placed the family spaces on the second floor, while laying out the halls for official gatherings on the entrance floor (**Figure 8, 9**). This floor was composed of a private office, a large dining hall that could easily fit twelve to fourteen people around a table, an open and a closed smoking room (named as *fumuar*, rather than *sigara odası* or *nargile odası*), a dancing room, and a winter garden. Arkan's conception of the plan differed from Holzmeister's Presidential Mansion in one important aspect: Instead of using reinforced concrete as just another construction material, Arkan's house explored the use of the free plan as an expression of the new structural techniques



**Figure 8.** Seyfi Arkan, Residence for the Foreign Minister, Dancing Hall (*Arkitekt* (1935) 11-12; 314).

**Figure 9.** Seyfi Arkan, Residence for the Foreign Minister, Main Hall (*Arkitekt* (1935) 11-12; 315).



**Figure 10.** Atatürk Dancing (Mango, 1999, Fig. 30).

indicate that they were designed in Germany, most likely in Poelzig's studio. Seyfettin Nasih, (1933) "Deniz Kenarında bir Malikane," *Arkitekt*, (4) 111-113; Seyfettin Nasih (1934) "Ev Projesi," *Arkitekt* (1) 6-8.

**20.** *La Turquie Kemaliste*, n: 3 (October 1934); 2; *La Turquie Kemaliste*, n: 31 (June 1939); *La Turquie Kemaliste*, n: 42 (April 1941) Pages not indicated.

**21.** "O zaman, herkes, daha nasıl oturup kalkacağını, nasıl gezineceğini, nasıl dans edeceğini, gözlerini, ellerini, başını nasıl idare edeceğini hiç bilmezdi. Duvar kenarında küme küme hareketsiz hanımlara, kapı eşiklerinde manken gibi dimdik duran beylere ve büfe başlarında, hiç konuşmaksızın, mütemadiyen içip takıştıran toy ve mahçup gençlere rastgelinirdi." Karaosmanoğlu (1972, 78).

**22.** "- What's in here? What're they doin? ... There is a ball, a ball! ... - Why are they wandering around at this time of the night? Are they looking for a place to stay, like me? ... Whose is this big mansion? - .... Oh, God. This is a hotel, hotel. In your terms, it is an *la Franca han*." "Burada ne var ki? Ne idirler? ... 'Balo var, balo' ... 'Bu gecenin yarısında hep dolaşır dururlar. Onlar da benim gibi garip mi, nedir? Yatacak yer mi ararlar? ... Bu koca konak kimin?' .... 'Tövbe yarabbi, tövbe yarabbi. Burası otel, otel bel. Hani, senin anlıyacağım alafraanga han'" (Karaosmanoğlu, 1972, 89).

made possible by reinforced concrete. The entrance floor was composed of spaces without fixed and solid walls in between; the living, dining, dancing and smoking rooms flow into each other as parts of a single volume, rather than as rooms with contained and defined boundaries.

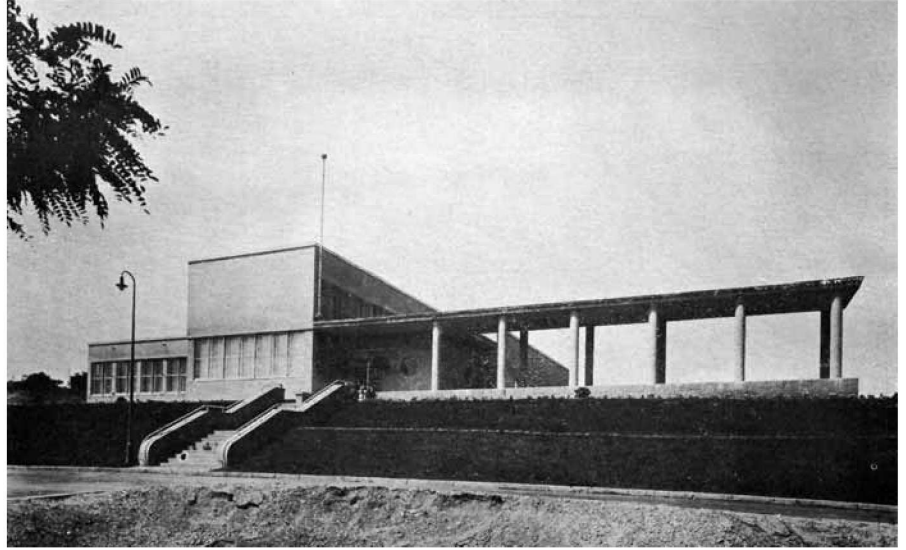
It is possible to observe in Arkan's houses some of the principal mechanisms through which the Kemalist cultural program aspired to disseminate symbols of modernization and Westernization to the nation. For instance, the emphasis on the dancing room in the Foreign Minister's Residence was not incidental. Republican balls where women and men danced intimately with Western clothes to Western music were one of the primary signs of modernization according to Atatürk (**Figure 10**). These republican balls initiated in the Ankara Palas Hotel were famous stages to illustrate the shining achievements of the revolutionized population in incorporating Western style dresses and entertainment habits into their lives. In one of these balls, after being irritated to hear that the women hesitated to dance with the Turkish officers, Mustafa Kemal is recalled to have said loudly: "I am ordering you. Spread out in the room! March! March! Dance! (Lord Kinross, 1966, 637)." The balls soon became a topic of satire for the writer Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, who in his novel *Ankara* depicted the period.

In those times [when the republican balls were first organized], nobody knew how to sit or stand, how to walk or dance, how to guide their eyes, hands or heads. One could see groups of unmoving women at the edges of the walls, straight standing men like manquins at the thresholds of the doors, and inexperienced shy young men who constantly tossed and drank without saying a word at the bar (**21**).

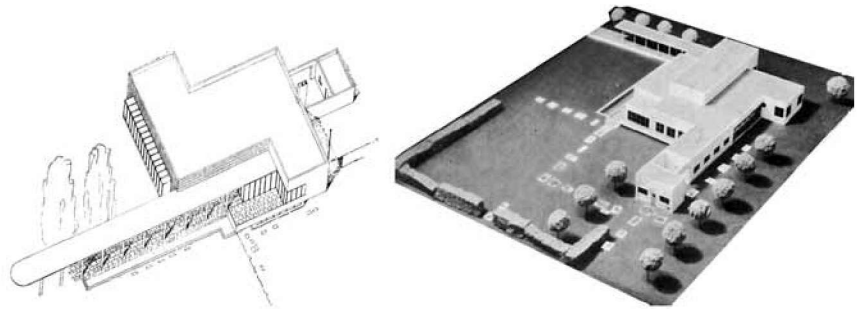
Karaosmanoğlu also described groups of peasants right outside the ballroom, watching the Westernized and modernized men and women make their brief appearances at the entrance steps of the vestibule in their much-awaited fashionable party dresses from Paris (**22**). Meanwhile, the new modern and elite families of Ankara going to the ball comment on the peasants:

Little by little, they will also learn and get used to it. The requirements of this new life will become reasonable, clear and uncomplicated for them as well (**23**).

Karaosmanoğlu, though a committed follower of Atatürk, criticized the Kemalist officials for losing the spirit of the Independence War and deteriorating into another sort of aristocracy (**24**). Nevertheless, this fictional anecdote of a republican ball captures a more fundamental feature of the Kemalist cultural program than the gradual transformation



**Figure 11.** Seyfi Arkan, Residence for Makbule Atadan, Ankara, 1935-1936 (*Arkitekt* (1936) 7; 179).



**Figure 12.** Seyfi Arkan, Residence for Makbule Atadan, First Version, 1935 (*Arkitekt* (1935) 4; 114).

**Figure 13.** Seyfi Arkan, Residence for Makbule Atadan, Second Version, 1935 (*Arkitekt* (1935) 6; 168).

**23.** "...Yavaş yavaş onlar da öğrenecek, onlar da alışacak. Bu yeni hayatın icapları onlarca da anlaşılır, açık ve basit şeyler haline gelir" (Karaosmanoğlu, 1972, 89).

**24.** The writer's ideas, including the journal he edited (*Kadro*), was found unsafe for the Party and the Party soon sent him abroad as a diplomat despite his reluctance. Karaosmanoğlu (1955).

**25.** The government's modernization program is suspect for assuming the public as "objects of a project" rather than "subjects of their history." The dancing hall in the Foreign Minister's Residence was yet another architectural trope that represented and simultaneously constructed the new life of this "project." For a collection of essays focusing on these criticisms in English, see Bozdoğan and Kasaba (1997). The expression "objects of a project" was proposed by Reşat Kasaba (1997, 24). For more discussion on the relation between architecture and top-down modernization, also see: Bozdoğan (2001).

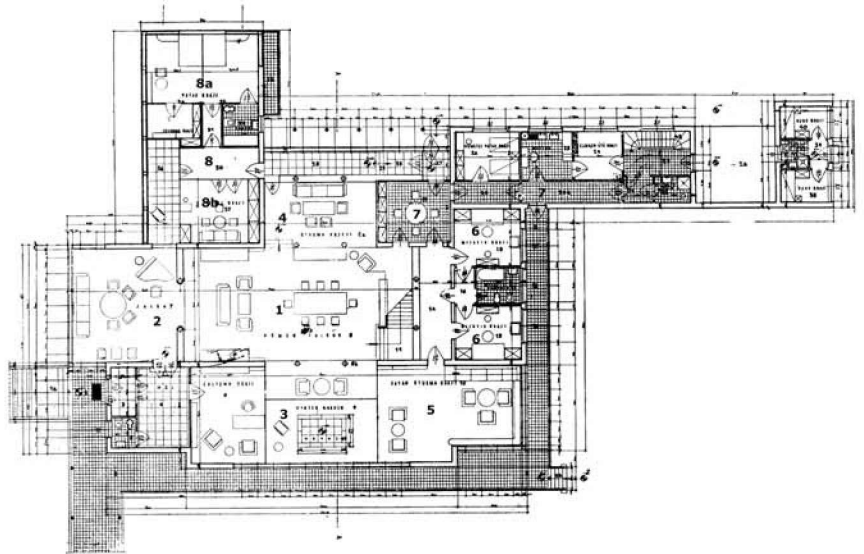
**26.** For more information on the relation between Atatürk and his sister, see biographies on Atatürk, such as: Mango (1999); Aydemir (1966).

**27.** Arkan, Seyfi (1935) "Villa Projesi," *Arkitekt*, (4) 114-115; Arkan, Seyfi (1935) "Villa Projesi," *Arkitekt*, (6) 167-169; Arkan, Seyfi (1936) "Çankaya'da bir Villa," *Arkitekt*, (7) 179-186.

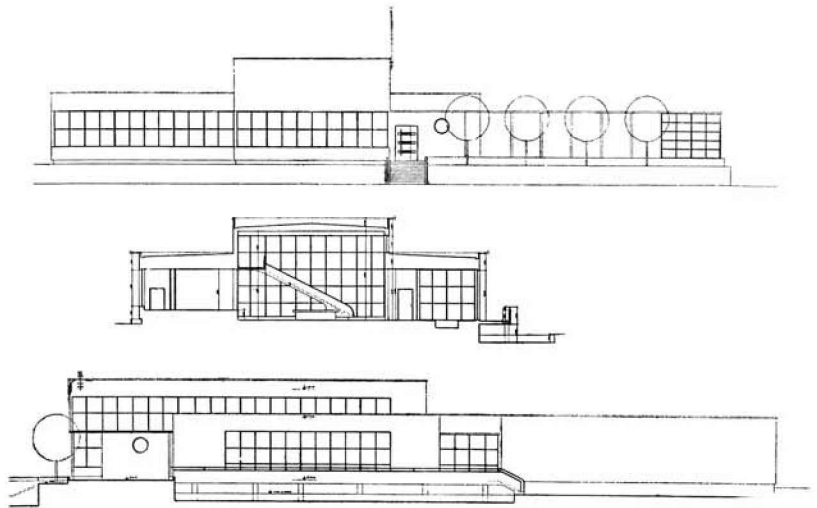
of its followers into a new elite. It rather confirms that despite its campaigns to be a movement of the masses, the Kemalist Revolution was carried out by a relatively small group of people, who implemented Turkey's program of modernization and Westernization through top-down political measures (25).

The second house that Arkan designed for the state was for Atatürk's sister (1935-1936) (Figure 11). Just as in the Foreign Minister's Residence, the architect was given full authority in this building's design and interior furnishing. In his will, Atatürk specified that his sister Makbule Atadan could keep the house until her death, and afterwards the residence became the Mansion for Prime Minister and Guests (*Misafir ve Başvekil Köşkü*). Makbule Atadan was fairly close to his brother, living with him and their mother in Dolmabahçe Palace when he visited İstanbul. When Mustafa Kemal tried to implement a multi-party system of democracy, and asked his friends to found a new political party to compete against his own, Makbule Atadan was one of the first to be made a member of this rival but staged party (26).

Arkan's student project "A Small House at the Sea" designed in Germany with Poelzig anticipates several features of this house. The colonnade connecting the main body of the house with the guest's pavilion, the treatment of the service court, and the placement of the house on a platform raised above a high retaining wall are elements that appear also in the student project. Arkan published three versions of Makbule Atadan's Residence in the professional journal *Arkitekt* (27). The first



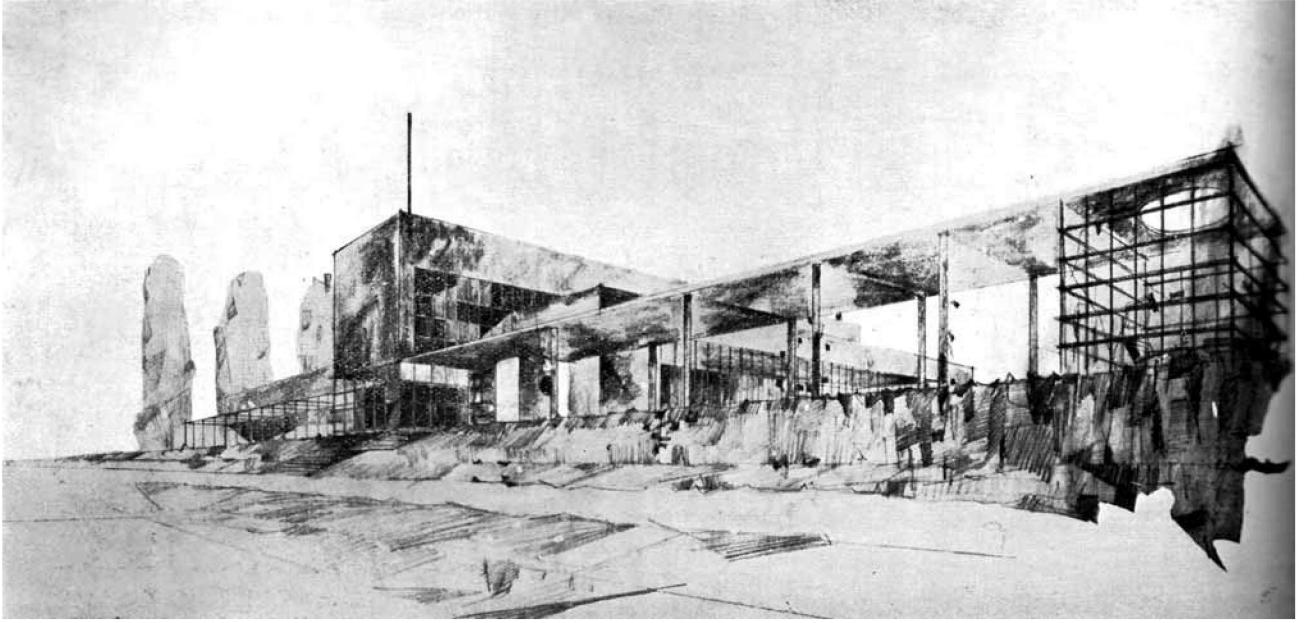
**Figure 14.** Seyfi Arkan, Residence for Makbule Atadan, Built Version, Plan (*Arkitekt* (1936) 7; 180).



**Figure 15.** Seyfi Arkan, Residence for Makbule Atadan, Built Version, Sections (*Arkitekt* (1935) 6; 167).

version was considerably different, (**Figure 12**), although the entrance colonnade and service court in the final version already existed here. The second (**Figure 13**) and third (**Figure 14, 15**) versions were almost the same, except for the fact that the third and the built version had smaller dimensions. The colonnade that remained in all three versions provided a monumental expression, while the glass pavilion that appeared in all three projects was never built (**Figure 16**). Like the previous two houses, *Makbule Atadan's Residence* equally provided spaces for the social gatherings of the bureaucratic elite. In this case however, the subject of display was the living environment of a "civilized" Turkish woman.

The seemingly liberating and yet equally paternalistic attitude of the Kemalist cultural program towards women is given an architectural expression in this house. Women rights were one of the main paths to Western civilization in the eyes of the Kemalist reformists. The constitution granted the Turkish women the right to vote and be elected as early as 1934, which was even earlier than many of their European contemporaries. The pages of propaganda journals were filled with

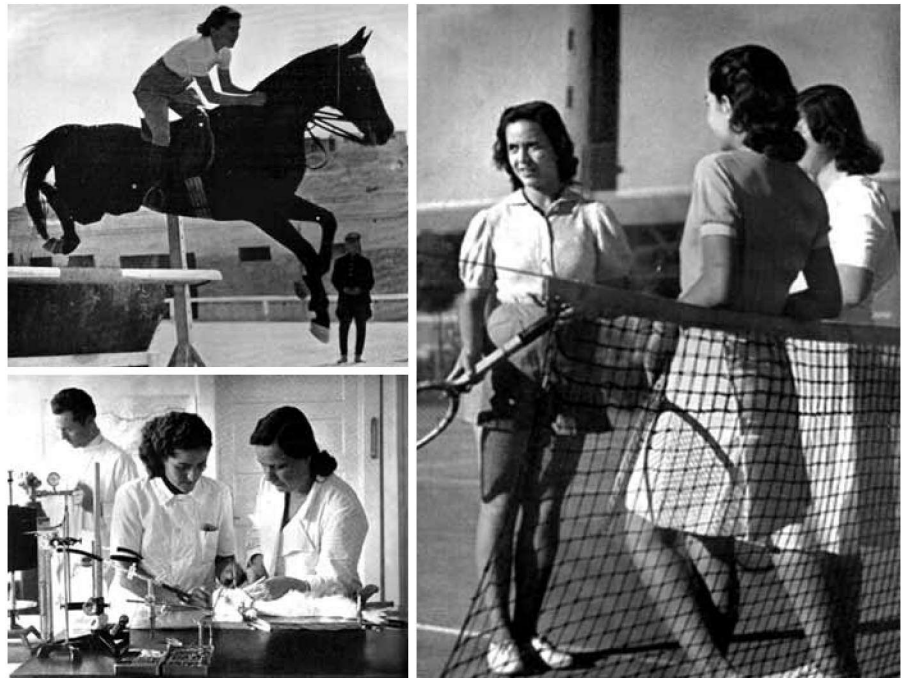


**Figure 16.** Seyfi Arkan, Residence for Makhbule Atadan, Exterior Perspective (*Arkitekt* (1936) 7; 186).

**28.** For more discussion on the relation between architecture and women in the Kemalist agenda see: Bozdoğan (2001); Baydar (2002).

photographs portraying the new Turkish women in their unveiled Western clothes, attending schools, working as scientists and artists in laboratories and studios, doing sports *à la West* (**Figure 17**). However, for many Kemalist reformists, the women's role was as ambiguous as the place of the masses. Domesticity is an integral part of this discussion, especially with regard to women connected to the official elite (**28**). For example, Mihri Pektaş, the woman deputy of the early Republican period, described women's role as follows:

As I look back into the past as one peeping from a sun-lit garden into the dim and silent halls of a deserted house peopled by the pale ghosts of those resigned women, I realize with a sudden wonder how completely and



**Figure 17.** Portrayal of the New Women (Series in *La Turquie Kemaliste*).