

# The Art Nouveau Influence on the Residential Buildings of Raimondo D'Aronco

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## Abstract

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are known as the Westernization Period of Ottoman architecture. As in all the various types of structures built in this period, the Western influence is also seen in residential architecture. During this period, the Neo-Baroque, Neo-Gothic, Neo-Classical, Orientalism, Eclecticism, Art Nouveau, Swiss Chalet and English Victorian styles, as well as other European-based architectural movements exerted a definitive effect on Ottoman architecture, producing a rich diversity of styles as a result. One of the styles that was generally implemented by foreign architects was Art Nouveau. The most powerful representative of Art Nouveau in Ottoman architecture was Raimondo D'Aronco. The aim of this article is to discuss the influence on residential architecture of the Art Nouveau style that came to dominate Ottoman architecture from 1893, as seen in the designs of Raimondo D'Aronco.

## Introduction

The Art Nouveau Movement (1893–1914) sought to revitalize and assign a new value to handicrafts, an element that had suffered diminished attention with the advent of the Industrial Age. The movement's slogan was *"Art for everyone/Art in everything,"* which signified promoting applied arts as the main principle of design. This democratic art movement impacted both Europe and America, striving to capture the relationship between art, craft and industry with a contemporary approach [1], [2, 90]. Art Nouveau artists took on the task of overcoming the deficiencies of style that had emerged with the rapidly increasing onslaught of machine-produced works, breaking their ties with the past, promoting a novel and new art form that represented the free spirit of the individuals of a new era. This thinking was best reflected on the facade of the Secession Building, a major structure of the times, and in the motto, *"To every age its art, to every art its freedom"* (Der Zeit Ihre Kunst. Der Kunst Ihre Freiheit) [3, 34].

This intellectual movement called Art Nouveau found space to spread, helped by the facility provided by new

modes of communication. The style came to position itself in every area of art and architecture, interior design, painting, furniture, fabrics, graphics, industrial arts and other mediums, entering the realm of the Ottoman population as a result of the Ottoman "Westernization" process [4]. In the period known as the Tulip Era (1703–1730), the wide interest in European culture led to the introduction of the Baroque and Rococo styles to Ottoman architecture and instigated the beginning of the use of these styles in religious and public buildings as well as in civic buildings such as houses and palaces [5], [6, 78].

The imprint of Western influence continued throughout the 19th century. The Palace opened its doors to Western artists in this period particularly after the Era of Reforms (1839), when the concepts of Western architecture had begun to dominate Ottoman architecture [7, 63]. With the proclamation of the Imperial Edict of Reform (*Tanzimat Fermani*), the principle of equality between Muslims and non-Muslim Ottoman citizens was adopted, which made it possible for non-Muslim architects to start working in the market freely without having to face any legal restrictions. Among the leading clients of the non-Muslim Ottoman or foreign architects educated in Europe were the Ottoman

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elite and the Levantines who were living in Ottoman society.

During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909), the power of traditionalism completely faded, and architectural plans and decorative elements in new buildings began to reflect the characteristics of the Neo-Baroque, Neo-Gothic, Neo-Classic, Orientalism, Eclecticism and Art Nouveau styles [8]. One of the architectural styles imported from the west in this period was Art Nouveau. Art Nouveau was, in particular, the architectural style most admired during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. In this period, important procurers of Art Nouveau industrial products were the Western aristocracy and the higher bourgeoisie, among whom the style was keenly popular [9]. The furniture produced by the French Art Nouveau designer Emile Galle was especially regarded as objects of prestige in the Ottoman intelligentsia. Daily items of use reflecting this new imported style were sold in the deluxe shops of the capital, Istanbul. These goods proved to be collectively effective in promoting an affinity for Art Nouveau in the population [10, 32]. The new style was known in Ottoman society as *Tarz-ı Cedid* (the New Style) and represented the contemporary trend prevailing in the capital.

Art Nouveau originally entered the Ottoman Empire via imported daily items and eventually found its reflections in architecture. In this period, Art Nouveau was implemented by minority architects and their foreign counterparts in all building types [11]. The striking dominance of Art Nouveau began to be seen in the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Most of the buildings in Ottoman architecture in which the new style was used were residential structures [12]. During this period, notables of the state and the non-Muslim affluents began to build shoreside mansions (*yali*), pavilions (*köşk, kasır*), embassy buildings, shore palaces and summer houses along both banks of the Bosphorus. The most prominent representative of Art Nouveau in the Ottoman realm was Raimondo D'Aronco, the “palace architect” of Abdülhamid II. It was thanks to D'Aronco that the Art Nouveau style came to influence Istanbul's architectural traditions, and it was also through him that a new Ottoman/Istanbul Art Nouveau with a “local” character was born [13].

The aim of this article is to discuss the influence on residential architecture of the Art Nouveau style that came to dominate Ottoman architecture from 1893, as seen in the designs of Raimondo D'Aronco. Toward this aim, some of the kiosks, shoreside homes (*yali*) and summerhouses designed by the architect have been selected and assessed in terms of their plans, structural systems and decorative features in an effort to identify how they bear the influence of Art Nouveau. As visual material, the author has used photographs that she has taken as well as images from printed sources, together with plans and drawings of the architect.

## I. Material and Method

European architectural styles started to influence Ottoman architecture from the beginning of the 18th century, impacting plan types, facade arrangements as well as interior decoration. As a result of this Westernization movement, traditional Ottoman architecture began to exhibit foreign elements from this time onwards.

In particular, with the era of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909), Ottoman architecture was impacted by the force of architectural movements originating in Europe that brought the Neo-Baroque, Neo-Gothic, Neo-Classic, Orientalism, Eclecticism, Art Nouveau, Swiss Chalet, and the English Victorian styles to the fore. The most influential of these movements in Ottoman society, however, was Art Nouveau. The most powerful representative of Art Nouveau in the Ottoman world was Raimondo D'Aronco, the architect of Abdülhamid II. Thanks to the works of D'Aronco, the Art Nouveau style exerted an influence on traditional wooden architecture in Istanbul, and it was also through D'Aronco that a new Ottoman/Istanbul Art Nouveau carrying the local spirit was born in Istanbul.

## II. Raimondo D'Aronco

Born in 1857 in Gemona del Friuli, Raimondo Tommaso D'Aronco died in San Remo in 1932. The Italian architect practised in Turkey over the period 1893–1909. He was from a family that worked in construction [14]. In 1887, D'Aronco attended architecture and ornamentation courses at the Art Academy of Venice and, as soon as he graduated, started working in his first position at the Massa Carra Institute in 1881–1882. From 1883 to 1885, he worked at the Palermo Technical Institute and, in 1885, at Messina University [15].

In 1893, the architect from Gemona del Friuli was invited to participate in the conceptualization of the exhibitions that were going to be on view at the Ottoman Agricultural and Industrial National Exhibition, thus beginning his contacts in Turkey [16]. When he came to Turkey in 1893 at the age of 36, he had already become a very well-known architect in Italy. D'Aronco stayed in Turkey until 1909, the year that Abdülhamid II was dethroned.

D'Aronco took part in the restoration of major buildings, particularly belonging to the Palace and to the mosques under the auspices of the Religious Directorate that had been damaged in the Istanbul earthquake of 1894. The architect used this opportunity to learn about Ottoman structures [17, 34], [18, 54]. D'Aronco always made it known that he was influenced in these Ottoman restorations by the French restoration theoretician Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, for whom he had great admiration [17, 34].

D'Aronco, the “Palace architect,” blended stylistic elements of Turkish architecture with Art Nouveau.

Approaching his first buildings in Istanbul with a revivalist and historicist viewpoint and using the elements of Islamic-Ottoman art, the architect later turned toward Art Nouveau after 1900 [19]. D'Aronco was also influenced by the Austrian school [20, 67]. The elements of Islamic-Ottoman ornamentation meshed with D'Aronco's eclectic taste, creating a unique interpretation of Art Nouveau [21].

#### A. D'Aronco's Mansion (*Kiosk/köşk*) Designs

D'Aronco gifted Istanbul with many striking structures during the era of Abdülhamit II (1876–1909). His most well-known building is Casa Botter. He designed apartment buildings in the European tradition that functioned as both a residence and a commercial entity (hotel), as well as kiosks, shoreside houses (*yali*) and summerhouses that exemplified the Ottoman residential fabric. D'Aronco also used this style in residential projects. His designs in these houses however, were not limited to ornamentation but also involved spatial arrangements. The architect made use of his experience working on the 19th-century Ottoman shoreside houses (*yali*) and mansions (*köşk*) along the Bosphorus and in his residential designs [17, 82]. He noticed that the Ottoman *yali* and *köşk* (kiosk) plan concept consisted characteristically of a "sofa" and a room that formed the central nucleus of the structure and connected with the other rooms either latitudinally or longitudinally. The stairs were usually at one end of the sofa or in between the rooms, in which case this part of the house was called a stair *sofa*.

D'Aronco preserved this traditional scheme and distribution in his residential buildings but offered a reinterpretation of the spaces in the Ottoman house. There is actually a large similarity between the European "hall" and the Turkish "sofa." The "hall" was particularly an integral part of 19th-century architecture in England and the United States [17, 84]. In his residential designs, D'Aronco uses the "interior *sofa*" plan, which is one of the most popular layouts used in Turkish houses, also making use of the "interior *sofa* with stairs," a variation of this traditional plan. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, houses with an interior *sofa* had half of the *sofa* devoted to stairs at one end [22, 246]. Sometimes the section of the room where the staircase stood had a door. In shoreside houses, the facade of the house where the stairs stood looked into the garden. Sedad Hakkı Eldem calls this plan, where the stairs are at the end of the inner part of the *sofa*, "interior *sofa* with stairs" [23]. The *sofa* ends in a monumental imperial staircase.

D'Aronco also uses another important exterior element that shapes the facades of the traditional Turkish House – the bay window. The bay window, in D'Aronco's interpretation, is used as an element that provides dynamism to the facade and adds a picturesque appearance [17, 86].

Besides making use of traditional residential elements, the architect additionally uses new features that have become popular trends in Europe. In a kiosk (*köşk*) to be used as a *harem* in Beylerbeyi, D'Aronco designed a veranda with *riwaq* on the lower floor of the front facade, placing a windowed corridor with curved walls right above the veranda on the upper floor, also making use of new

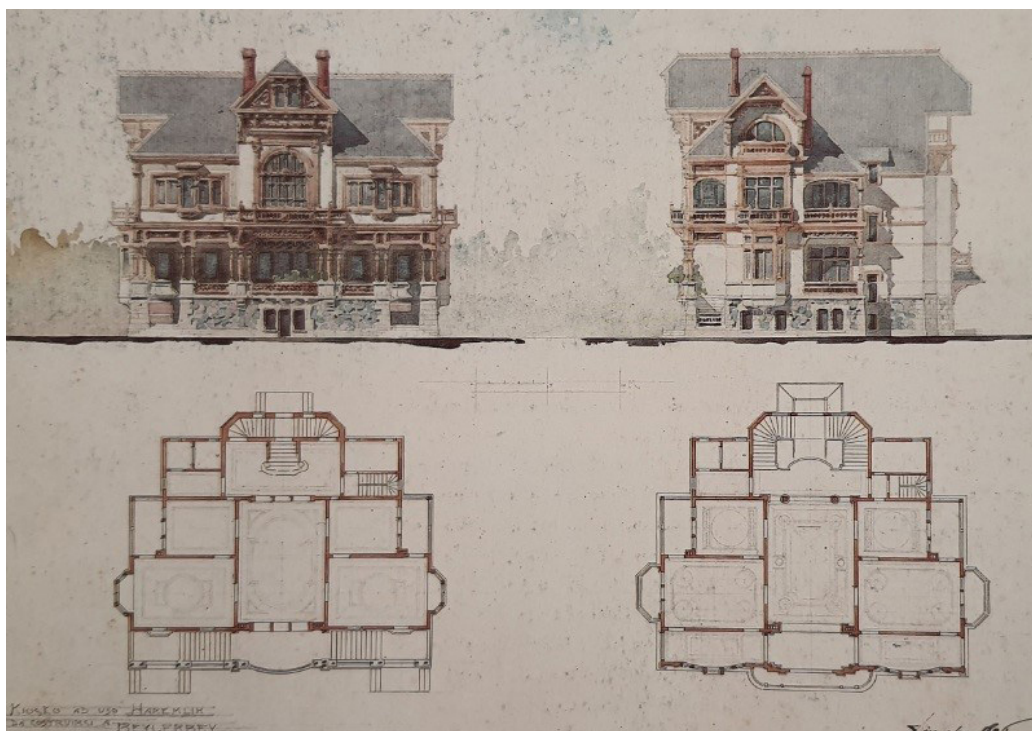


Fig. 1. The kiosk (*köşk*) used as a *harem* at Beylerbeyi [10].

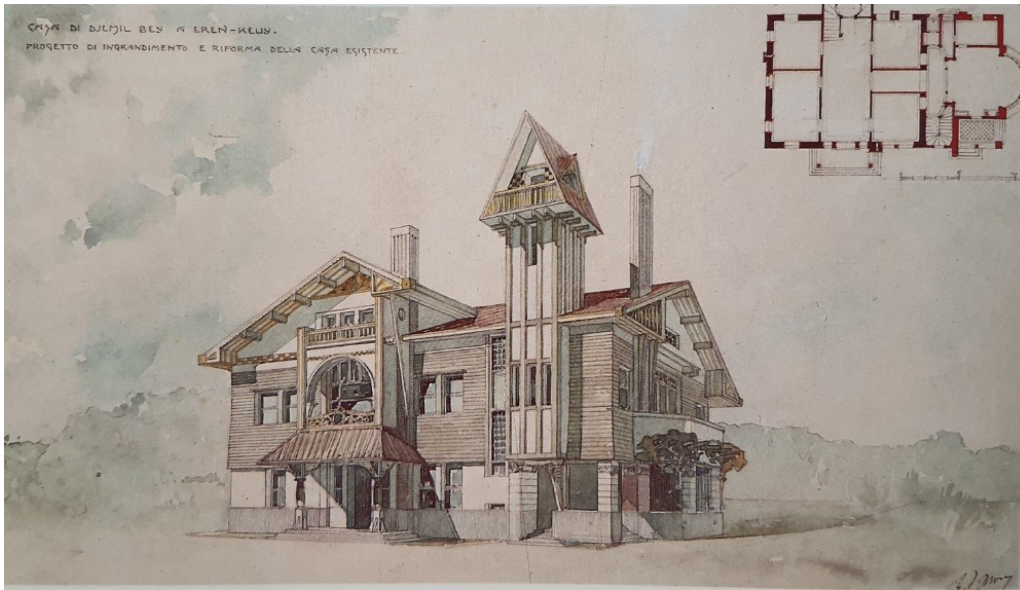


Fig. 2. The expansion and renovation project for the Cemil Bey Residence [10].

European elements such as a belvedere at the back of the house facing the Bosphorus (Fig. 1). In *cottage* or *chalet* types of houses, D'Aronco makes use of a *sofa* (hall) that serves the function of a parlour, which is the reflection of the western influence. The parlour (*sofa* – hall), which is entered from three points, is accessed through the veranda with its *riwaq*.

Another foreign echo in the building is the design in which two of the rooms around the *sofa* project outward in triangular form. The facade of the kiosk features on its central axis a steep gabled roof on the attic story. Similarly, the existence of an attic story is also an innovative element that was not encountered in the Turkish house. The chimneys that provide a visually plastic effect have been kept high so as to be seen from the outside; this feature is again a new articulation of vernacular architecture.

The foreign influence can also be seen in the architect's expansion and renovation in 1904 of Cemil Bey Kiosk in Erenköy. This time, he adds a tower adjacent to the building, which has a wide, steep gabled roof and a balcony (Fig. 2). The top floor of the tower, which is a popular element in Victorian-style houses, is in the form of a *cihannuma* kiosk. The tower standing in one corner of the house offers an asymmetrical flavour to the building's facade, again signalling the foreign influence in the traditional Ottoman house.

Another example of D'Aronco's *Cottage-Chalet-Victorian* style in residential architecture is the New Cemil Bey Residence that he completed in Erenköy in 1905. The architect uses an L-plan in this structure. This plan is a foreign element in Turkish architecture and offers access to the building through an entrance hall. D'Aronco designed this section of the building in the form of a tower in order

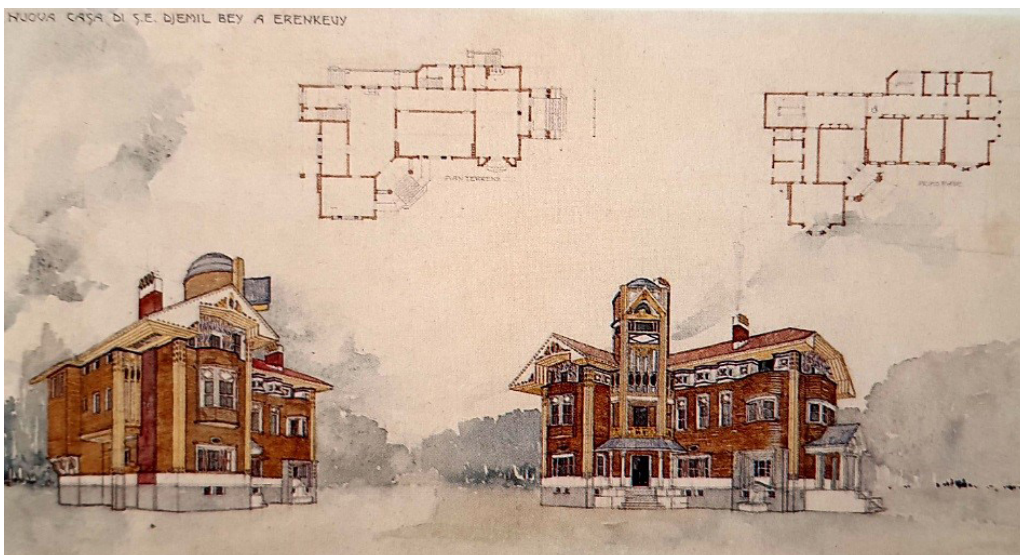


Fig. 3. Erenköy New Cemil Bey Residence [10].

to render the structure in *Cottage-Chalet-Victorian* style. There is a veranda with a *riwaq* in front of the entrance hall (Fig. 3). The entrance hall leads to a corridor. Both the short and the long sides have been designed with a corridor. All of the spaces have been placed around this corridor. As part of the spatial arrangement, the ground floor displays stairs at the corner on the short side of the L, along with a parlour and study, while there is a large living room and dining room on the long arm of the L (Fig. 3). The wet areas are on this arm looking toward the other end of the corridor and the back of the building. On the first floor of the house, there are three rooms, again designed with triangular projections in the *Cottage-Chalet-Victorian* style. In this wide-eaved structure with its hipped roof, there are also wide-eaved steep gabled roofs above each of the triangularly projected rooms, producing a *chalet*-style effect.

#### B. Synthesis of the Traditional Ottoman House and the Western Residence

In the residential structures of Raimondo D'Aronco, besides the purely *Cottage-Chalet-Victorian*-styled examples, there are also designs of houses that reflect features of both Ottoman houses and Western influence.

The architect of the Marie Botter Kiosk was D'Aronco, and it is one of the kiosks that was contracted to different architects by Jean Botter, the Palace's official tailor, for himself and his daughters [24]. In the collection of D'Aronco's projects preserved at the Civici Musei di Udine, there are 38 original drawings under the heading "Case Botter a Fanaraki" [25]. Demolished in 1981, this kiosk was a three-story wooden structure of masonry raised over a basement. Imperial stairs are situated at the back end of the *sofa* (hall) in the middle (Fig. 4). The building is

entered through a glass-paned veranda. Rooms have been placed along the two wings of the *sofa* (hall); the larger room looking to the front of the house is a parlour and has a trapezoidal projection. This creates asymmetry in the plan.

In front of the top floor rooms can be seen the western element of a terrace reaching from one end of the facade to the other. The central hall (*sofa*) on the third floor has been converted into an attic room. The northwest room on this floor, along with its tower, has been designed as a *cihannuma* [26]. The *sofa* (hall) in the kiosk is covered with a wide-eaved steep gabled roof. The chimneys of the building have been kept high so as to be visible from the front of the house, which is a popular feature of the time.

The house carries the characteristics of the summerhouses of Istanbul of those years, and D'Aronco displays here how well he was able to use local elements together with elements of Western architecture. The glass-paned veranda in front, the *avant-corps* jutting out from one of the rooms along the *sofa* (hall), the asymmetry in the plan and the facade, the *cihannuma* tower, and the wide eaved steep gabled roof are all Western archetypes (Fig. 4).

#### C. Italian Embassy Summer Building in Tarabya

Another building carrying Raimondo D'Aronco's signature is the Italian Embassy building on the Tarabya coast, a structure that also blends the features of the Ottoman house with Western elements. Built in 1905–1906 by D'Aronco on order of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the structure was erected in place of the embassy's previous building.

Consisting of four stories, including the attic floor, the building was built on sloping land and characterized by an arrangement of stories leading downward, connected by stairs and a series of terraces and hanging gardens

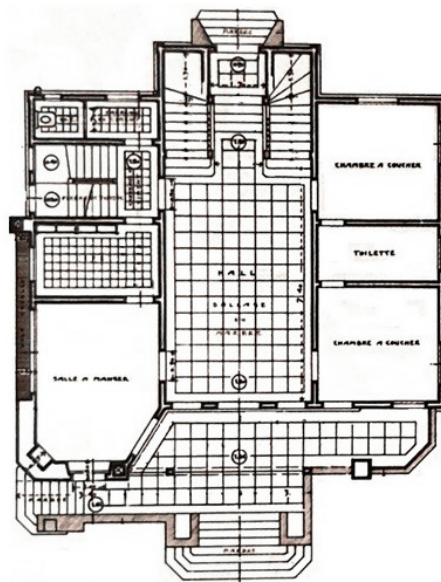


Fig. 4. Right: Plan of the Marie Botter kiosk in Fenerbahçe [17], [18]. Left: Marie Botter kiosk [24].

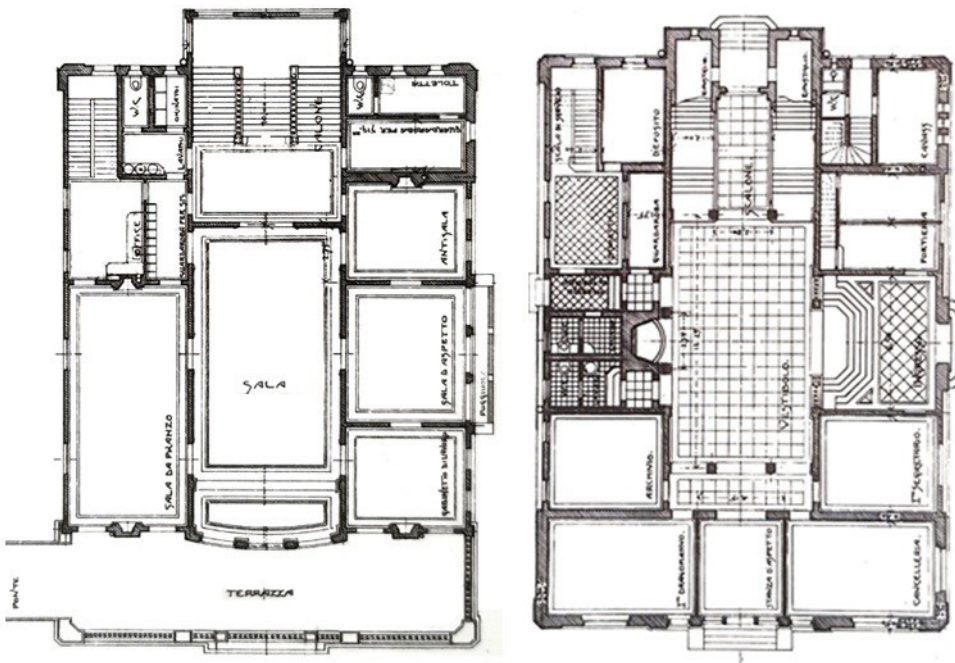


Fig. 5. Right: Italian Embassy summer building, ground floor, Tarabya [17], [18]. Left: Italian Embassy summer building, first floor plan, Tarabya [17], [18].

that showed how the design had been aptly suited to the topography of the area [17, 94]. Here, D'Aronco mixes together Turkish, Italian and English garden traditions. A mixed construction system has been used in the structure. The ground floor is of masonry while the upper floors display infilled brick arches in a wooden framework [25].

The plan is situated on a north-south axis. The ground floor is covered in stone, and the structure consists of a central hall (*sofa*) with four columns – the hall of honour, around which the other spaces are arranged in the Tuscan style (Figs. 5 Right and 6) [27, 120]. The vestibule (hall), resembling an interior courtyard, brings to mind the four-columned atrium designed by the Late Renaissance architect Palladio [18, 98, 280]. The structure is thus reminiscent of Renaissance palaces [17, 74]. On this floor can be seen a central hall (*sofa*) and, surrounding it, an archive, a study, offices, and wet areas (Fig. 5 Right). The entrance hall (vestibule) leads to the ground floor hall (*sofa*) by four pentagonal steps, and on the north end is the

stairway landing of the imperial stairs projecting outward as well as service areas (Figs. 5 and 6).

The four-columned hall (*sofa*) on the ground floor rises upward to the first-floor plan of the structure in the form of an atrium (Fig. 5). The hall (*sofa*) ceiling has been designed in rectangular coffers. On this floor, there is a balustraded balcony looking toward the front at the end of the hall (*sofa*). The *sofa*, the main planimetric element of the traditional Ottoman house, is the fundamental element in the plan of this floor. On this floor, D'Aronco uses the “*sofa* with interior stairs” type of plan that was used so profusely in the nineteenth century, particularly in summerhouses. The plan of this floor, however, is asymmetrical, and the central *sofa* (hall) that occupies two floors has a living room situated perpendicularly on one side (Fig. 5, Left). The other wing of the hall (*sofa*) contains three rooms, side by side, along the wall. The wet areas have again been placed on the north side of the house. The stair landing on this floor is quite bright because of the windows in the wall.



Fig. 6. Left: The imperial staircase on the north end of the ground floor hall (*sofa*) and the Tuscan columns in the hall (*sofa*) [10]. Right: The stairs leading up the second-floor hall (*sofa*) [14].



Fig. 7. Left: The two-story hall (*sofa*) between the second and third floors [10]. Right: Italian Embassy summer building in Tarabya [photo by the author].

The second-floor hall (*sofa*) also has four columns, but this time the columns appear with Ionic capitals (Figs. 6 and 7 Left). This hall (*sofa*) on the second floor has been designed as a double-story space between the second and third floors (Figs. 6 and 7 Left). The ceiling of the hall (*sofa*) on this floor again exhibits rectangular coffers as on the first floor.

The facade of the structure carries features from both Ottoman tradition and foreign influence. The projections on all the upper floors above the ground floor are a picturesque adaptation to the view of the Bosphorus, an inevitable Ottoman reference (Fig. 7 Right). The mutules underneath the projections are a reference to local tradition. The most striking element of the building, which has a wide-eaved gable roof, is the supporting buttresses of wood on the side facades that hold up the wide eaves. These are called “eli böğründe” and are a direct reference to the massing of the Ottoman house.

There are, however, also Western influences on the facade that draw attention. One of the most prominent of these is the Late Renaissance-style entrance portal clad with smoothly cut stones (Fig. 7 Right). The head of a Medusa is situated on the keystone of the door’s arch. At the end of the first-floor hall (*sofa*), the balustrades of the balcony overlooking the front of the building and the terrace on the side of the structure are influenced by the Late Renaissance (Fig. 7 Right). The arched loggia at the

centre of the top floor is in the Art Nouveau style (Fig. 7 Right). Above the arch are garlands on either side and a royal standard with a large star overhead [17]. On the gable of the front facade is a decorative element composed of curvilinear rays. The balustraded balcony on the right side of the fourth floor provides a symmetrical effect that is characteristic of the period. As for the facades, the interior decoration of the building also reflects the influence of antiquity. A slight impact of Art Nouveau is, however, also felt in decoration. The floral bands and motifs on the ceilings of the first-floor hall (*sofa*) and living rooms, as well as the branches seen on the ellipse-shaped stairs leading up to the fourth floor, situated to the side, and on the bannisters of these stairs, are all characteristically Art Nouveau [25]. The structure is visibly a synthesis of the art of Antiquity, the Italian Renaissance, Art Nouveau and Ottoman styles.

#### D. Nazime Sultan’s Shoreside Residence

Nazime Sultan’s shoreside residence (*yali*) is another building that combines the influence of Western and Ottoman trends in architecture. Although there is no definitive indication of the date of its construction, the building is believed to have been erected by Raimondo D’Aronco in 1901–1902 [25]. Scholars Diana Barillari and Ezio Godoli indicate that the reconstruction of the

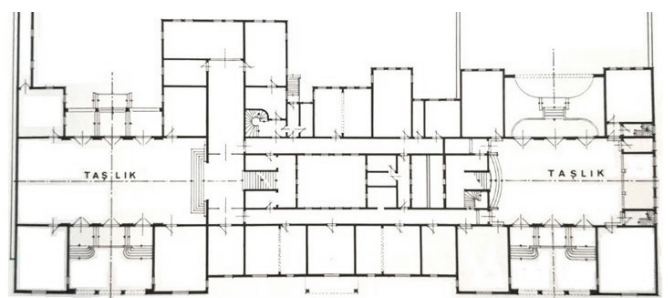
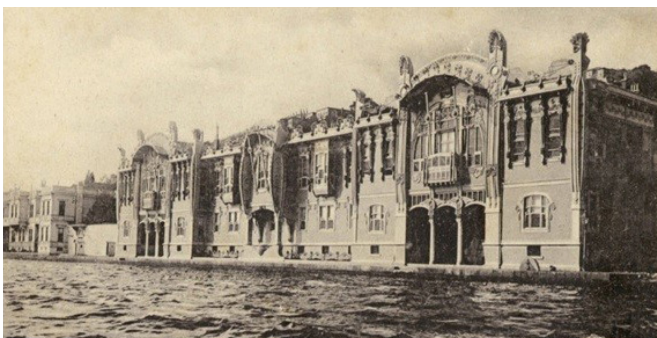


Fig. 8. Left: Nazime Sultan’s shoreside residence [1]. Right: Nazime Sultan’s shoreside residence. Ground floor plan [22, 246].

shoreside residence took place in 1902 and was a D'Aronco project [18, 88].

The building has a two-story wooden framework with a narrow pier. It has *harem* and *selamlık* sections of equal size that have been joined together in a symmetrical layout. In this form, the building resembles the model of structure that had been developed predominantly for sultans' palaces toward the end of the nineteenth century [25]. Here D'Aronco departs from the concept of the classic Ottoman shoreside house by not emphasizing the central axis of the house, instead accentuating the entrances to the *harem* and *selamlık* sections (Fig. 8) [25]. Thus, the shoreside house (*yalı*) has an axially symmetrical volume, and the *harem* and *selamlık* sections occupy a wide space covered with stone (Fig. 8). The upper floor is accessed by stairs that have been placed in the centre of the house. The upper floor layout comprises rooms placed around a central *sofa*. The entrances from the sea and land sides of the house are situated across from each other (Fig. 8). The *harem* and *selamlık* on the two wings have been designed such that their entrances are in the form of a high portal. These sections, with their rounded arches at the ends, are built in the Art Nouveau style, and form an open portico with two columns that are tied together with low arches over the stone-covered floor (Fig. 8). On the upper floor of the portico, inside the low arch, is an arched window, again in the Art Nouveau style. The *avant-corps* at the two wings offer the structure a significantly picturesque effect.

The entire facade has been arranged in the Art Nouveau style. The windows of the ground floor have low rounded arches, and the upper floor windows are composed of pairs of long and narrow windows decorated with braids of roses. Over the portico can be seen rose-like motifs hanging downwards, a decorative element that D'Aronco admired.

## Conclusions

Raimondo D'Aronco, as one of the architects who left a significant mark on nineteenth-century Ottoman architecture, adopted a multicultural approach to Ottoman themes, giving his own personal interpretation

of Art Nouveau in the 1900s. D'Aronco's insatiable urge to experiment can be intensely felt in the buildings of Istanbul.

Art Nouveau found its niche in civil works rather than in religious buildings in Ottoman architecture. D'Aronco's vision differentiated the style from its counterparts in Europe in terms of structural characteristics, plan, and decorative elements. This gifted the capital, Istanbul, with a unique style that could be called "Ottoman or Istanbul Art Nouveau". D'Aronco, considered a pioneer in the modern Liberty Style in Italian architecture, brought the most innovative features to the *genius loci* of his designs [25, 118], blending both the vernacular and the traditional with Art Nouveau.

In his residential designs, D'Aronco used the major external architectural elements of the Turkish house to shape his facades, such as the *cumba* (*şahnişin* or oriel window) as well as wooden buttresses called *eliböğüründe* that supported the *fürüş* and eaves under the projections. Oriel windows in his buildings turn into elements designed to provide dynamics to the facade, adding a picturesque quality to the structure. The architect references local traditions in his houses, decorating the facades with Art Nouveau and local elements, creating a sculptural effect.

The character of D'Aronco's Art Nouveau endeavours in the buildings of Istanbul was not only reflected in facades but was also integrated with local architecture and construction traditions and materials. D'Aronco produced the most unique examples of Art Nouveau architecture in Istanbul, remaining open to local traditions and localizing Art Nouveau without compromising any of the characteristics of the historical and cultural elements of Ottoman identity. D'Aronco's integration of Art Nouveau with local tradition was founded on a belief in the value of environmental input and *genius loci* that ranged from Western Eclecticism to a reinterpretation of Ottoman forms, creating diversity in style. The stylistic language of D'Aronco's Art Nouveau exudes a local flavour but also appears to be the adaptation of a synthesis that explores new tastes as well. It was in this way that, thanks to D'Aronco, a new but "local" Ottoman/Istanbul Art Nouveau was created.

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