



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
FIRENZE

FLORE

Repository istituzionale dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze

The study case of re-constructing the Cambel's Yali at Bosphorus

Questa è la Versione finale referata (Post print/Accepted manuscript) della seguente pubblicazione:

Original Citation:

The study case of re-constructing the Cambel's Yali at Bosphorus / F. Collotti; S. Acciai. - STAMPA. - (2014), pp. 465-471.

Availability:

This version is available at: 2158/919969 since:

Publisher:

IL POLIGRAFO

Terms of use:

Open Access

La pubblicazione è resa disponibile sotto le norme e i termini della licenza di deposito, secondo quanto stabilito dalla Policy per l'accesso aperto dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze (<https://www.sba.unifi.it/upload/policy-oa-2016-1.pdf>)

Publisher copyright claim:

(Article begins on next page)



CITIES IN TRANSFORMATION RESEARCH & DESIGN

Ideas, Methods, Techniques, Tools, Case Studies

edited by Marco Bovati, Michele Caja, Giancarlo Floridi, Martina Landsberger

EAAE Transactions on Architectural Education no 57

ILPOLIGRAFO

VOLUME I

Reconstructing the Cambel's Yali at Bosphorus

Francesco Collotti, Serena Acciai
Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italy

Foreword, Istanbul and Sedad Hakki Eldem, the Past as Building Material

"Istanbul, the city where geography provokes history", wrote Brodskij.

"Town that is built up upon herself "and that lives as she always has lived, not by substitution but by addition". Town where the ancient is truly a source of design, "whose karma is in being a crossroads of civilization", that Bridge that Pamuk too sees in his Istanbul¹.

In this port which is in reality a mosaic of ports, in this city made up of many cities that in the end are only one, there exist characteristics which distinguish the architecture: above all the constant presence of water, even as a horizon which runs through the constructed fabric, and then the legacy of the ancient city, that is the erosion of classicism as a principle of architecture.

Sedad Hakki Eldem, architect of Istanbul, who worked *for and with* Istanbul for all his long life, realized in the metropolis on the Bosphorus his greatest architecture. Fragments of constructed city which are integrated as contributions of Modern into that genealogy of architectures that lead to the evolution of the city in time.

This research, and the here presented pilot-project, have their starting point in the PhD Research developed in our Doctorate School by Serena Acciai, focusing the case history of Sedad Hakki Eldem, architect of the Turkish Modern².

Aristocratic architect, descendent of a wealthy Ottoman family, Eldem was educated between Munich and the Academy of Fine Arts of Istanbul and early in his career began to design the great architecture of the city, beginning with the Topkapı Palace. Eldem read his city as an Ottoman but also and above all through the surveys, drawings, and engravings of Western scholars³.

Particularly important are Müller-Wiener, German archeologist who discovers by surveying all of Sultanahmet, thus bringing the past to life⁴, and I. Melling, German architect who in the 19th century arrived in Istanbul for a brief stay and remained eighteen years to sketch views of the Bosphorus.

Melling worked as Imperial Architect, not only engraving many detailed drawings of the Sultan's palaces, Ottoman society, and representing some views

¹ O. Pamuk, *Istanbul*. Torino: Einaudi, 2008.

² S. Acciai, *Byzance - Costantinople - Istanbul: per Fragments of Generous Ideas. The Case Study of Sedad Hakki Eldem* (Doctorate School in Architecture, design and history of the Arts at the University of Florence), results partially published in S. Acciai, "Ultima fermata Costantinopoli / Last stop Costantinople". *Firenze - architettura*, 1/2011, 136-143.

³ E. Eldem, B. Tanju, U. Tanyeli, *Sedad Hakki Eldem, I: Early Years*. Istanbul: Garanti, 2008; Id., *Sedad Hakki Eldem, II: Retrospektif*. Istanbul: Garanti, 2009; S. Bozdogan, *Sedad Eldem: Architect in Turkey*. Singapore: Concept Media, 1987.

⁴ W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbul*. Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1977.

Constantinople and its environs, but also the architect who was committed to build pavillions, furniture and palaces on the Bosphorus shores for the Sultan's sister.

On the surveys plans of the archaeologists Sedad Hakki Eldem traces his proposals or Istanbul.

Following the Melling's engravings Eldem starts his research/survey/project of the Bosphorus' shores⁵.

Eldem was intimately involved in the architectural and urban experience of the city and her memory. He worked for Istanbul through those elements which Aldo Rossi defined constitutive of the architecture of a city – *monuments and houses* – and today his works remain scattered throughout the city as exemplifications of the image of the epoch and society which Eldem wanted in a way to capture and make available to the masses.

The Experience of Ottoman House

Starting from the experience of Istanbul and extending the research to a human settlement at geographic scale, Eldem wrote about the Byzantine influence and wondered what contaminations and suggestions the Ottomans might have found before becoming Turks, seeking and investigating as always the typology of the Turkish House.

The Ottoman town is by him described as *fragments of imaginations*.

You could catch glimpses of the houses over their high garden walls, and discovering views of a courtyard through open gates. The inhabitants of these houses would generally ask you in, and show you highly-decorated rooms, or take you to sofa-halls, laid with solid beams scrubbed white as ivory over generations.⁶

Eldem continually wonders about the work on the building type of the Turkish House. TURKISH HOUSE? A "Western construction"? An open question... as is the nature of the term "Turkish" employed by the Europeans to indicate the cultural and religious ethnicities of the heterogeneous population of the Ottoman Empire.

The typical Ottoman house has specific characteristics that give it its peculiar place in the universal history of home types. Its origins and its relationship to the house types of the neighboring areas make a fascinating case study for the understanding both of the cultural phenomena of the Ottoman universe and of the processes involved in making architecture in general, Ottoman or not.⁷

The experience of architecture oscillates constantly between the generality of type and the specificity of site. We have to critic the concept of *context* and

⁵ S.H. Eldem, *Istanbul Anıları (Reminiscences of Istanbul)*. Istanbul: Istanbul Alarko Eğitim Tesisleri, 1979.

⁶ S.H. Eldem, *Türk Evi Plan Tipleri*. Istanbul: Istanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, 1954; Id., *Türk Evi, Osmanlı Dönemi, Turkish Houses Ottoman Period I, II, III*. Istanbul: Taç Vakfı yayını 1984-1986-1987.

⁷ M.M. Cerasi, "The formation of Ottoman house types: a comparative study in interaction with neighboring cultures". In *Muqarnas XV: An Annual on the visual culture of the Islamic world*, ed. Gülru Necipoglu. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998.

mannered environmentalism. The traits of type and the constituents of the site should remain inseparable. Composed, in other words re-composed.

According to Maurice Cerasi the open question is that

the Ottoman house was a syncretic product of a multiethnic society from the seventeenth century onwards, with the imperial court acting as a powerful catalyst [...] the relationship of house type to urban structure and urban culture is obviously very important in Ottoman towns no less than in other cultures.⁸

The Ottoman house: a border wall defining a garden, the wall is so sized and shaped to resist against earthquake, the timber structure of the house, fragile and flexible at the same time, covers only a part of the garden: a light wooden-frame construction with brick or earth infill is set on the stone walls.

"The houses seemed to be set on retaining walls or on the ground, any sense of permanency was rare": this is a concept of settlement connected to "the institutional and psychological context of Ottoman society".

A garden courtyard (more garden than courtyard) is the center of the family life.

"Organization and volume composition resembled the Far Eastern pavilion systems".

Functional spaces are at the ground floor level or in outbuildings in the garden.

The upper floor is a cluster of square or rectangular rooms/oda, unmarked by functional specialization but defined by elements such sequence of windows, niches and walled cupboards, fireplace, symmetrical ceiling decoration with central focal point, perimeter seating.

The ottoman house is what in french language is called *savoir vivre*.

First of all it is a way of life, is a lifestyle, is a way for pleasant life.

The Yalı Architecture between East and West

In the general and long-lasting experience of Istanbul as Byzantine and – later – Ottoman town, the human settlement and the creation of a landscape along the shores of the Bosphorus is a unique and extraordinary artifact.

The yalı architecture (system of building and sequence of gardens, walls and terraces) is at the same time type and site specific principle of settlement on the Bosphorus. The recent chaotic development of the channel shores is forgetting the ancient principles which ruled for centuries the Istanbul's extension eastwards, creating a pleasure's and representative space's system (palaces, mansions, gardens, terraces) integrated to the pre-existing small villages.

The yalı architecture in the Bosphorus is a settlement's principle, continuing, organizing and in work setting an original greek byzantine landscape marked by small objects, water streaming downhill, systems of terraces probably erected by peasants.

* *Ibid.*

* *Ibid.*

The yalı architecture, figure between Ottoman tradition and European architecture is a particular experience in the controversial westernization of Istanbul.

The history of settlement along the shores of the Bosphorus in the Ottoman period is rather exceptional in comparison with standard aspects of Ottoman urban culture. In the major centers of the Empire, the residential fabric was organized in rather introverted districts or mahalles, with limited architectural display of social status. Instead, the topography of the Bosphorus would be exploited by local and foreign elites of the eighteenth century to construct a veritable showcase of social representation and urban rituals, generating something comparable to a broad boulevard in a baroque European city.¹⁰

The huge work on the yalis proposed by Sedat Hakki Eldem consists not only in built examples but also in few important contributions of scientific literature, where he involves his student's classes in reconstructing the often lost landscape of the Bosphorus.

Sedat Hakki Eldem investigates the origins and the characteristics of the ancient and old buildings which might be read/reread in a modern light. Do the great buildings of the past remain in Istanbul as sorts of footprints in the successive design of the city? Does that manner of constructing the waterfront, the Emperors' Palaces, remain in the history of the identity of the buildings on the Bosphorus?

It is certain that with his endeavors (the systematic classification of the architecture of the Bosphorus and the establishment of survey and design seminars for students of the Academy of Fine Arts of Istanbul, among others)¹¹ and with his designs for the new yalı on the Bosphorus, Eldem contributed in a decisive manner to the memory and the acknowledgement of the highly particular value of this architectural heritage.

In fact it is not a coincidence that the first representations of Turkish houses in European publications coincide with the blossoming of exoticism and the discovery of the different as a central point in the self-definition of the Enlightenment, and it was precisely the publication of the work of travelers and artists such as Allow and Bartlett and the already above mentioned Melling that dictated the first panoramic views of the yalı, those grand wood dwellings along the Bosphorus.

That Eldem took as an initial source of inspiration for his work a copy of the *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore* of Melling indicates the importance of Western representations in the formation of the concept of the Turkish House and the importance of intertextual references.

¹⁰ P. Girardelli, *Landscape in context. Urban and rural dimension of a coastal estate on the Bosphorus*, lecture at 14th Annual Mediterranean Studies Congress (Ionian University, Corfu, Greece, 25-28 May 2011).

¹¹ S.H. Eldem, *Le yalı de Koçoğlu a Bebek sur le Bosphore*. Istanbul: Vehbi Koc Vakfı, 1975; Id., *The yalis of the Bosphorus - Anatolian side*. Istanbul: Vehbi Koc Vakfı, 1993; Id., *The yalis of the Bosphorus - European side*. Istanbul: Vehbi Koc Vakfı, 1993.

It all begins with the Amcazâde Hüseyin Yalısı, structure dating to 1689 which can be defined the archetype of this building¹². The building which can now be seen on the Bosphorus, near Anadoluhisarı, is only a fragment of the original and elaborate plan of the summer estate of the Köprülü family, organized according to the usual disposition in *selamlik* and *haremlük*, here however placed far apart from one another.

All that remains of this constellation of architectural elements is the building with a central plan which rotates about a fire while all around the *divanhane*, a great room made up of low seats placed under the windows that repeatedly open onto the sea, unfolds.

"All comes from the Orient" wrote Luciano Semerani ["and the sensual, magic, and illusionary essence of ancient architecture is hidden"]¹³, but in this building on the Bosphorus all is still manifest; in fact it remains throughout the centuries as an incunabulum of Ottoman architectural art. From the archetype to the realization of a modern interpretation of these residences on the Bosphorus – Eldem in the 60s finds himself with the opportunity to design new *yalı* on the Bosphorus for that new, illuminated clientele, industrialists and businessmen who were the natural evolution of the Ottoman elite and who had renewed the practice of the dwellings on the water, that manner of living on the water's edge treating the Bosphorus almost as a "theater of life", comparable in this to the Grand Canal of Venice.

Although these commissions engaged Eldem for individual buildings, at a certain point their number became so great that the context could no longer be confined to the site of each *yalı*; it inevitably became a more choral question, or rather the image of the skyline of the Bosphorus through a reconstruction of fragments of the two banks wherein the *yalı* were the principal element.

The Case History of Yalı Cambel

In the main stream of researches supported by the Department of History of the BU Bogaziçi University (Özyar, Girardelli), the Department of Architecture *drawing/survey history design of the University of Florence* (Collotti with Acciai) is developing the pilot project for the refurbishment of the garden at Halet in Arnavtkoi, on the European side of the Bosphorus.

The most striking feature of the Cambel *yalı* is that it develops the original type of coastal settlement in its ambivalent, urban and rural dimension.

On the top, strawberry fields of the typical Bosphorus sort *cilek*.

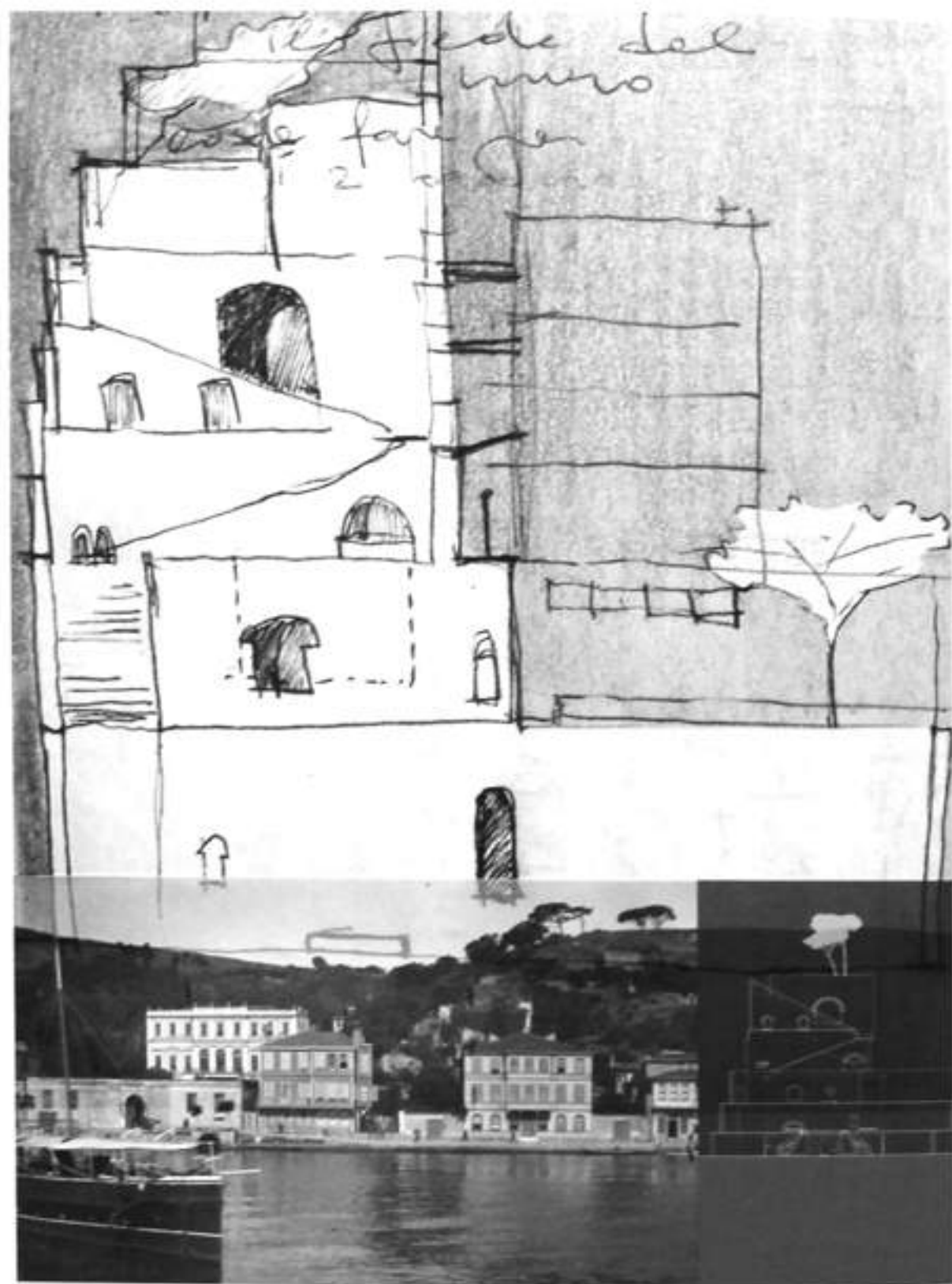
For similar estates, access to the shore was essential for both infrastructural and prestige reasons. Equally important was the inclusion in the property of a large portion of land, to be exploited for both social and productive, agricultural purposes.¹⁴

Part of the reasearch is the survey of the garden, of the walls's sequence and trying hypothesis about the water's system flushing downhill. As in the

¹² S. Unver, S.H. Eldem, *Amcazâde Hüseyin Paşa Yalısı*. Istanbul, 1970.

¹³ L. Semerani, ed., *La casa. Forma e ragioni dell'abitare*. Milano: Skira, 2008.

¹⁴ P. Girardelli, *Landscape in context*, cit.



1. S. Acciai, Sketch of the elevation in gold
2. Cambel's yali at Arnavtkoi, beginning of XX century (source DAI Istanbul)
3. F. Collotti, S. Acciai, Survey / interpretation, 2011

byzantine tradition a water reservoir was provided on the top of the property, maybe connected with a water-vaine streaming on the flanks of the Bosphorus topography.

First of all we needed trimming the overgrown small plants and cutting not autochthone trees.

Focus of the project is the compatible reuse of this place as studies center of the Boğaziçi University, refurbishing the sequence of terraces as *mesire* (collective garden surrounded by walls).

Conservation of the heritage by means of the project: construction is, according to us, not far from re-construction.

Conservation, maintenance and the compatible reuse of the living heritage and of the cultural landscape is the mission, therefore this project consists in:

- rediscovering the way of the water;
- conservation and restoration of the terraces;
- maintenance of the complex system of retaining walls and draining net;
- disveiling the original topography as spectacular *point de vue* toward the surrounding landscape;
- re-construction of the underground system of baths and spaces, especially of the *serdab* the Persian declination of the Turkish bath;
- replanting of the original autochthone trees.

In this way we are re-discovering this garden maybe once belonging to the Sultan's gardener.

And all this learning from the past used as building material

- according to the nature, never against;
- listening to the topography;
- seeking the way of the water.