

OTTOMAN RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE 18th AND 19th CENTURIES AND THE ROMANIAN PROVINCES. FROM COSMOPOLITANISM TO NATIONALISM

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What do Kastoria, Siatista, Thessaloniki, Gjirokastra, Ohrid, Sozopol, Nessebar, Plovdiv, Bucharest, Ploiești, Istanbul, and so on, have in common? Apart from being cities in different Balkan countries, they share a common Ottoman influence, especially when it comes to architecture. In Greece the manors are called archontika, αρχοντικά, and considered to be representative for the Macedonian architectural style, in Romania, they are simply called merchant homes and sometimes considered Oriental in style, in Bulgaria they are seen as Bulgarian architectural heritage.

The manors still preserved in one form or another throughout the Balkans, have been mostly built in the 18th, 19th centuries and beginning of the 20th centuries. The majority of the owners were merchants or members of the local economic and political elite. Whether we call them Balkan or Ottoman architectural heritage, these houses have witnessed an interesting process – their meaning and symbolism have shifted from representatives of local identity (especially in the cases of Bulgaria and Greece) to national, and, to some extent, Ottoman. Their affiliations to various architectural styles depict what was going on in the Balkans at a certain point. For example, some archontika in Kastoria follow the stylistic traits of Art Nouveau and even Art Deco.

Keywords: Ottoman architecture, merchant house, 18th century merchants, Bucharest, Ploiești, acculturation, boyars, Wallachia, Moldavia, Phanariots.

Regardless if we label them as examples of vernacular or Ottoman architecture, these houses were built with various materials that reflect the commercial ties between the various Balkan regions and between the peninsula and the rest of Europe. Painted by local painters, decorated with panels of either precious or local type of wood, with ceramic tiles from Vienna, with Murano windowpanes, the manors were, in some cases, built by people trying to escape from Ottoman persecution in remote places, but still managing to procure the needed and desired materials. Having this in mind, one question arises. Could we speak of the architectural unity as a fashion trend initiated and then, spread across the Balkans as a mark of social class? Also, why would people opposing the Ottoman regime choose to construct their homes using Ottoman elements?

Another issue to be taken into consideration are the ways of implementing certain elements of Ottoman culture. For instance, the style of the manors built by

the Ottomans, adopted by non-Muslim people, had also various symbolic and religious meanings associated with the spatial distribution and the decorative motifs employed. How much the owners were aware of the associated meaning? To what extent can the Romanian Principalities be included in this architectural unity of the Balkans?

The subject of the Ottoman influence in residential architecture or Ottoman heritage in the Romanian principalities has not retained the attention of Romanian researchers as clothing, customs, cuisine, or commercial activities have. This is in part due to the issue of not having as many examples left standing as Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey, or Bosnia have. I would also add that the manors still preserved today are a mixture of architectural elements and styles and considered examples of Romanian old architecture.

Carmen Popescu's study¹ only has in mind the Orientalization of Ottoman architecture in modern Europe, Romania included, by appropriating and integrating Ottoman architectural elements in the national architectural styles that were created in the Balkans at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. In addition, art historian Carmen Popescu is only concerned with the symbolical implications of constructing the Oriental discourse specifically in the second half of the 19th century and does not approach the subject of the remaining examples of Ottoman heritage. Tchavdar Marinov's extensive study on the continuous shifts of meaning regarding the presence of Ottoman heritage² in the Romanian principalities uses Carmen Popescu's research as a point of reference, and adds that there is an Ottoman component in 18th century Wallachian and Moldavian architecture without going into too much detail. Both Maurice Cerasi and Machiel Kiel³ draw the border of Ottoman architectural influence in the Balkans south of the Danube, naming only the province of Dobrudja as part of the common architectural heritage. There are Romanian researchers who have spoken about the "Oriental" elements in old Romanian architecture, with some references to Istanbul as the source, but only limiting their scope to a somewhat superficial gaze.⁴

As I have already mentioned, Romania was left with only a few known examples of houses with an Ottoman component: a few houses in the former

¹ C. Popescu, "pour le Balkanique, atteindre le rêve occidental passe par le phantasme oriental": "Le paradoxe de l'orientalisme balkanique: entre géopolitique et quêtes identitaires. Lecture à travers le cas roumain", in Nabila Oulebsir et Mercedes Volait (dir.), *L'Orientalisme architectural entre imaginaires et savoirs*, Paris, Picard, 2009, accessed on February 3, 2017 [http:// inha.revues.org/4910](http://inha.revues.org/4910).

² T. Marinov, "The 'Balkan House': Interpretations and Symbolic Appropriations of the Ottoman-Era Vernacular Architecture in the Balkans", in Roumen Daskalov, Tchavdar Marinov, Diana Mishkova, and Alexander Vezekov (eds.), *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*. Vol. 4: *Concepts, Approaches, and (Self-)Representations*, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2017, p. 440–593.

³ M. Kiel, *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans: a legacy in stone*, Variorum, Great Britain, 1990.

⁴ C. Popa, "Elemente de morfologie otomană în arta monumentală din Țara Românească", *Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice*, 1992, n° 2; M. Ispir, "Case de țîrgoveți bucureștene și arhitectura "de loisir" în pragul secolului al XIX-lea", *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor, seria Monumente Istorice*, 1980, n° 2.

Armenian district of Bucharest (most notably Melik house), Hagi Prodan's house in Ploiești, Manuc's inn, the Bellu manor in Urlați, Brancoveanu-Mavrocordat manor in Tătărani, Nicolau manor in Brazi, and so on. Moreover, these examples are the ones that have been studied so far, because a full and comprehensive study of the full extent of Ottoman-Turkish style houses present in the two Romanian countries has never been undertaken in a systematic manner. In addition, many are actually a combination of traditional vernacular architecture with various Ottoman/Balkan influences and later added Western elements. Some were inventoried and declared architectural monuments, protected by the specific legislation and restored. Others were westernized and some were opened for visitation as public museums: Melik house, the Bellu manor in Urlați, and Hagi Prodan house are the most known examples.

As Michal Wasiucionek⁵ has already stated, Ottoman influence in residential and ecclesiastic architecture in the Danubian Principalities can be dated as far as the 16th and 17th centuries, before the Phanariot regime. Moreover, there is this notion of contested heritage, Ottoman culture being the target of a systematic rejection discourse during the transitional period towards modernization. Moreover, there is also a continuous play between being and not being Ottoman that can be observed in other cultural sectors: art, literature, art collections, and so on. Some of the manors that have survived to this day are an eclectic mix of vernacular Romanian, Ottoman and Western architecture. This in turn, means that some of the Oriental elements were kept and mixed with the new influences (Golescu, Bellu, Cantacuzino manors). In addition, when looking at the Neo Romanian style created at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th we can observe that Romania follows the path of other Balkan countries by integrating a series of Ottoman/Oriental elements into a style that is supposedly traditional, specific, and inspired by local and true Romanian heritage.

Merchant homes or Ottoman houses?

Maurice Cerasi owes the creation of the typical Ottoman-Turkish house during the 18th century to the development of the middle and upper class townspeople in the urban economical and lifestyle framework.⁶ This, in turn, meant that members of the Slavic, Macedonian, Greek, Armenian, and so on, have adopted a similar lifestyle that also included building their houses following the same *Zeitgeist*.

The names of the cities mentioned in the introduction now belong to different countries that have appropriated or denied the Ottoman past, but were Ottoman cities where people of various ethnic and religious background used to inhabit or

⁵ M. Wasiucionek, *Silks and Stones. Fountains, Painted Kaftans, and Ottomans in Early Modern Danubian Principalities*, <http://luxfass.nec.ro/publications/working-papers>.

⁶ M. Cerasi, "The Formation of Ottoman house types: A comparative study in interaction with neighboring countries", *Muqarnas*, no. 15 /1998, p. 116.

transit, part of an extensive commercial network. The urban elite, in which merchants witnessed along the 17th and 18th centuries a significant growth in both numbers and importance, is one of the key factors in understanding the syncretic process that led to the creation of Ottoman-Turkish house. This type of house not only has numerous variations that were dependent on various factors, they also demand an interdisciplinary approach. The Ottoman-Turkish house can contribute to a better understanding of the commercial networks and the types of products and their respective place of origin that were traded across the Balkans and how they impacted the daily life and lifestyle choices to a certain extent.

Maurice Cerasi not only delineates the different the areas and the variety of architectural forms ascribed to each of those areas, but also asks an important question: ‘How much of architectural history’s distinction between ‘cultured’ and ‘vernacular’ architecture is valid?’.⁷ This question is significant in the case of the Romanian countries since, as I mentioned before, the remainder of the 18th century and beginning of 19th century architecture, has a vernacular dominant. Moreover, Cerasi considers that, with the exception of the houses built and used in the Danube Delta, and Dobrogea I would add, the river is the northern limit of the map for the Ottoman-Turkish house type. Therefore, the main question to be asked is – since there are various Ottoman elements that were present in 18th century architecture (and not only) in the Romanian countries, could we speak of a liminality of the Romanian house type in the Ottoman world as it was discussed by John Plemmenos ?⁸

The previous research into the subject of the Ottoman architecture influence in the Romanian countries has adopted the misconception that the Ottoman Empire was a monolithic, homogenous construction, and that the culture it produced was unitary all across its provinces. While there are many and diverse elements that are common among the urban and local members of the elite (and sometimes even in the rural communities) that can speak of an adherence to a certain cultural framework and lifestyle, there are, also, many differences. For instance, the Ottoman influence is stronger and noticeable in clothing, cuisine, administration, customs, etc. In the subject of architecture, since we cannot speak of a replicated model of the Ottoman-Turkish house across the empire, there are these elements that somewhat constitute a permanence: the *sachnasi*, the *çıkma* bow windows, tile roofing, shallow trilobed arches, a certain spatial distribution, stylized floral motifs either painted on wood panels or made with white plaster, and so on.

In the matter of concepts, terms, and methodologies that can be employed in analyzing Ottoman architecture, Machiel Kiel emphasizes that Ottoman architecture is not a monolith, as previous research has been seduced into concluding, having many local variations and still being relatively unknown.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ J. Plemmenos, “Music as a Marker of Liminality in 18th-Century Balkans: Re-Evaluating Phanariot Musical Activity in the Romanian Principalities”, in *300 de ani de românie (1713–2013)*, editors Nicolae Gheorghiuță, Costin Moisil, Daniel Suceava, Bucharest, 2013, p. 15.

“The role of the Balkans has undeniably been a great one, as much of what was genuine Ottoman was born and matured there. The emergence of the various independent Balkan states of modern times has had catastrophic consequences for the works of Ottoman art as it resulted in the wholesale destruction of monuments of architecture”⁹

The research published by Machiel Kiel and his photographic archive can show the extent and the various types of Ottoman architecture found in the Balkans, while outlining the ugly side of westernization and nationalism: the demolished heritage. Where Romania is concerned, most of the residential architecture was either demolished or rebuilt and rebranded in 19th century neoclassical or eclectic style. The houses that have retained most of the Ottoman features have done so by either being declared monuments of old architecture or being passed down in the family and nationalized by the Communist Party.

Stating that Ottoman architecture includes Seljuk, Byzantine and Slavic components, but processed and integrated in a style that became Ottoman, Machiel Kiel concludes that the variants observed in Rumelian Ottoman architecture is mostly due to the ethnic background of the owner and his/her taste in Ottoman art. Another significant aspect that needs to be taken into account is the Islamic Ayyubid contribution to Ottoman architecture, and the extent of the Ottoman-Turkish house phenomenon is not limited to the European part of the empire. I wholeheartedly concur that, for a better grasp on the subject of civil architecture of the Balkans, information on the owner, the builder, and the motive for its construction are more than necessary. Therefore, one of the premises for studying and discussing civil architecture in the Balkans and in the two Romanian countries is one that deals with the merchant house as products of an acculturation process.¹⁰ Moreover, this type of architecture and its influence go well beyond the merchant class.

“The eighteenth century gave full expression to the mercantile expression that allowed the exchange and consumption of all kinds of goods for all social classes. Its ideology centered on the enforcement of a very specific way of life, tendentially hedonistic for the rich, and even the moderately poor.”¹¹ The many ethnic groups present in the Ottoman cities were active participants in this type of material culture: Bulgarians, Armenians, Greeks, Albanians, Serbians, Turkish, Romanians, etc. shared in this Ottoman way of life, thereby giving the impression of a unity across the Balkans, across the empire. The cities I have mentioned in the abstract participate in one way or another in this way of life, mostly because goods and people moved between them creating networks, exchanging ideas and sharing a common way of life. What is truly interesting to observe is that it’s not only about a simple rapport between metropolis, i.e. Istanbul, and the rest of the empire, but a

⁹ M. Kiel, *op. cit.*, p. 1–2.

¹⁰ R. Coman, “Acculturation through migration in the Romanian countries: Ottoman products and social change”, *Journal of Ottoman Heritage Studies (OMAD)*, 6/16, November 2019, Turkey, p. 487–495.

¹¹ M. Cerasi, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

phenomenon created as a result of the trade networks and the links between various cities and different merchants travelling within the empire and in Central Europe.

Some authors speak of the existence of an Ottoman merchant class that was significantly influenced by the contact with Western markets and products.¹² To some extent, we can observe that European demand for cotton cloth gave a boost to weaving in cities such as Edirne, Salonica and Shkoder as well as a number of smaller Balkan towns such as Verria, Ellassona and Trnovo (in Thessaly), and to the east at Ankara, Bursa, Tokat, Antakya, Diyarbekir, going as far as Aleppo, and Baghdad, especially in the beginning of the 18th century. Because, by the end of the century, the Ottoman Empire was mainly exporting raw materials.

Founding and developing various craft associations, somewhat similar to the European equivalent of guilds, that continued to use traditional methods of crafting and to work side by side in the same streets, had a major contribution to the creation of the Ottoman-Turkish house and to urban development. The Ottoman authorities encouraged this type of settlements because it was easier to collect taxes or requisition supplies when needed. Moreover, it led to a certain cohesion among the merchants and producers and to a dialogue that went beyond the professional and commercial relationship.

Halil Inalchik and Donald Qataert state that ‘the social life of craftsmen wove together multiple identities: association with other craftsmen working in the same market-place, membership in a militia, religious fraternity or parish, residence in a particular quarter along with relatives of the same ethnic background.’¹³ In Rumelia merchants were acting as intermediaries for village products sold in towns, regional fairs, and distant ports or markets which specialized in international trade. Due to the prosperous commerce and the exchanges between the various regions of the empire, there was an increase in housing demands.

During my field researches in Greece, especially in the province of Western Macedonia, I learned of the existence of the stone masons’ guild, Ζουπανιώτες μάστορες, Zupani masters, named after the village of Zupani, the former name of Pentalofos, situated in the Voio Mountains. The number of builder’s villages that sent out craftsmen all over the Balkans to build houses for the growing and wealthier commercial class, and political one as well. These Zupani masters are said to have worked all over the Balkans, in Istanbul, Bucharest, Yassy, Aleppo, Damascus, etc. The same master builder equals a similarity in style, structure, elements and an active contribution the creation of the Ottoman-Turkish house. There are also documents that attest to the presence of local builders and craftsmen that sometimes worked alongside the travelling teams or created their own. To my mind, a research aimed at identifying and following the routes of these master builders, their ethnic background and dynamic from a transnational point of view would contribute to a great extent to the study of civil Balkan architecture.

¹² Ed. H. İnalcık, D. Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 2, Cambridge, 1997, p. 698–704.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Repeating the question of whether there is such a thing as „Ottoman architecture”, Artan Tülay states that an Ottoman identity generated its final shape during the Mimar Sinan’s age, and suggests that this type of identity was replicated within the members of the administration and, further on, in the provinces.¹⁴ This hypothesis can be valid in the case of Balkan architecture up to a certain point. According to Artan Tülay, this is a phenomenon largely overlooked by historians and architectural studies, while emphasizing an interesting aspect that of a distorted perception about the 17th and 18th centuries Ottoman Empire, viewed as period of decay and breakdown, also noted by Surayia Faroqhi and to which I concur. Artan Tülay reiterates the important artistic achievements of the so-called Tulip Age and Ottoman Baroque and I agree that the use of Ottoman Baroque is a misnomer. The appearance of local provincial elites that replaced the imperial patronage with one less imbued with absolutism.

Many researchers have reached the conclusion that the chosen structure for most of these houses, a fort-like cubicle, in some regions surrounded by a stone wall high enclosure, can be seen as a sign of the instability and insecurity in a peninsula marked by wars, foreign invasion, bands of outlaws¹⁵. That well may be the case, but we cannot rule out previous influences from local architecture or stylistic choices, or a question of privacy. Moreover, the cubic structure is that of Küle type of housing, the tower houses of the Balkans. The connection between these Küle type and those light timbered structures that have been preferred in the 18th century is not the scope of this article. However, it is important to note that Küle and the light timbered structure houses tend to coexist and to be used alternatively.

Manos Biris in his *Neoclassical Architecture in Greece* states that the houses from Macedonia to Thrace and Peloponese have a common origin in the Byzantine house (sic!), but they share forms and elements that can be found throughout the entire Balkan region. Professor Biris names among the definitive traits of these houses: a two or three-story structure, with stone ground floor and upper timber and brick floor, sachnasia, hayat type of balcony, built in an L or U shape, with a fortress-like character. The windows were larger on the upper stories, where family sitting rooms and reception rooms were and balconies were oriented towards the garden.¹⁶ Most of the literature written about the residential architecture in Greece built in the 18th and in the beginning of the 19th stands on the hypotheses that the origin point of this house is the Byzantine Empire in order to make for a more believable Greek National Style. The paradigm began to shift with works as the ones published by Charalambos Bouras that even owes the spread of the Ottoman house to the activity of merchants.

¹⁴ A. Tülay, “Questions of Ottoman Identity and Architectural History”, in Dana Arnold, Elvan A. Ergut and Belgin T. Özkaya (eds.), *Rethinking Architectural Historiography*, London; New York, NY, Routledge, 2006, p. 85.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ M. Biris, *Neoclassical Architecture in Greece*, Melissa Publishing House, 2004, p. 48.

To answer the question asked at the beginning of the present study section, these type of houses are mostly discussed as merchant house, but taking into account the social role of the owner, I can safely state that it went beyond the commercial class and it was also used by local political and/or military elite. There are numerous examples of monasteries including Ottoman elements in their architecture seen in Greece, Bosnia, Romania, and so on.

The main focus for a study of Ottoman influence in Romanian architecture: the capital cities

Aside from the obvious example of Dobrudja, that is also used by Maurice Cerasi, as a Romanian region within the range of the Ottoman house, Tchavdar Marinov is among the few scholars that has confirmed the existence of Ottoman influence in 17th and 18th centuries architecture present in Wallachia and Moldavia.¹⁷ Mentioning the 19th centuries tendency to eliminate the Ottoman influence, and offering as example only the Melik house (apparently built by a boyar) and Manuc Inn (that borrows the caravanseraï type of architecture), Tchavdar's approach toward the definitive integration of the Romanian countries in the core area of the Ottoman house is fragmentary. If we are to take for granted the album made by J. Rey with views from the city of Yassy¹⁸, in some of the views at the outskirts of the city, the houses have a certain resemblance to the ones of Sozopol. Additionally, there are documented ties (commercial and cultural) with Sliven (see Anton Pann whose house was recently reopened for public visits).

A somewhat interesting case is that of the Hagi Prodan house in Ploiești, that has been declared a monument since the beginning of the 20th century, and over used as an example of a middle class merchant house, opened for public visitation with an array of objects that were actually part of Nicolae Simache Oriental collection. In Hagi Prodan House we have a sort of a reenactment based on educated guess and a somewhat romanticized view of Ploiești society at the beginning of the 19th century. This can only lead to expanding the area of the Balkan influence in the Romanian countries to include most of the cities that have an active and attested merchant activity. Another issue to be taken into account is that this type of architecture also spread among members of the local political aristocracy, the boyars, mostly during the Phanariot period, and is the better known example to use local building traditions.

In a short study, Constantin Rezachevici¹⁹ mentions the use of Ottoman architecture in Bucharest during the Phanariot regime, especially the sachansi/

¹⁷ T. Marinov, *The 'Balkan House'*, p. 456–457.

¹⁸ Album de douze vues de la ville de Jassi, exécutées par J. Rey et dédiée à son Altesse le Prince Régnant de la Moldavie par P. Müller, lithographe, 1845.

¹⁹ C. Rezachevici, *Bucureștii Evului Mediu până la 1821*, in *București 1459–2009. 550 de ani de la prima atestare documentară*, Bucharest, 2009, p. 46–47.

hayat. This builds upon Franz Sulzer's account of Bucharest in the 18th century.²⁰ Nicolae Stoicescu,²¹ focused mostly on the period before 1700, states that only 19 civil monuments remained standing in 1961 in Bucharest, 6 of which were merchant homes. Their numbers today are more or less known.

When it comes to how the Balkan cities and villages, there is the common misconception that they had no urban coherence or planning whatsoever and that the house owners built their home and shops with a significant disregard for their neighbours or street and city configuration. Of course, there are 18th century documents that attest to complaints regarding houses that were built and obscured the neighbour's view, or they were too close or violated some administrative rule. But there are, at least in the second half of the 18th century, various edicts issued by the Phanariot rulers concerning certain urban codes to be followed by anyone who would build a house.

Since it was the capital city, Bucharest had, according to Ștefan Ionescu, an obvious urban character, with boyar and merchant houses built around the Princely Court with hayat and sachansia, and small merchant homes and craftsmen beyond.²² The Kuçuk-Kainarca peace treaty with its economic implications had important consequences for the urban development of Bucharest, with merchants moving in from South of the Danube river, foreign legations and consulates opening in Bucharest and Yassy, and merchants building their homes towards the city limits to avoid paying rent for the land they built upon. Therefore, it was no surprise that there is an affluence of Greek, Turkish, Armenian, Bulgarian, Aromanian, Albanian, Jew, German, French, and even Venetian merchants and craftsmen setting shop in Bucharest or Yassy and even settling in various parts of the cities and creating whole districts. Add natural disasters, epidemics, and wars and you get a continuous changing of the urban layout and houses being rebuilt and remodeled. However, the prosperous commercial ties with the Balkans and Central Europe and the presence in Bucharest of two major permanent fairs, and multiple ones that were organized seasonally, led to an increase in population, not only in numbers, but, also, in ethnic background. What is important to note is that foreigners coming in from the south were not always allowed to settle and own houses, as we can see in the time of Alexandru Moruzzi, towards the end of the 18th century.²³

There is a significant urban turn in the second half of the 18th century, merchants and craftsmen move from the Mogoșoaia street, that was directly linked with the commercial road for Brașov, to the city outskirts, making room for various

²⁰ F. Sulzer, *Geschichte des transalpinischen Daciens, das ist der Walachey, Moldau und Bessarabiens. Im Zusammenhange mit der Geschichte des übrigen Daciens als ein Versuch einer allgemeinen dacischen Geschichte mit kritischer Freyheit entworfen*, vol. I–III, Vienna, 1781.

²¹ N. Stoicescu, *Repertoriul bibliografic al monumentelor feudale din București*, Bucharest, 1961.

²² Ș. Ionescu, *Bucureștii în vremea fanarioților*, Cluj, 1974, p. 5–6.

²³ V.A. Urechia, *Istoria românilorului cursu făcutu la Facultatea de Litere din Bucuresci*, vol. V (1174–1786), Bucharest, 1891, p. 258–259.

boyar residences. Moreover, the homes that had Ottoman elements belonged to the wealthy merchants, and also to some of the boyars and were mostly found in the area surrounding the Princely court. Following the Ottoman administrative organization for merchants and craftsmen into *ruset* or *isnaf*, in the main cities of the Romanian countries there are documents attesting their existence from the end of the 17th century, a practice generalized in the second half of the 18th century. At the end of the 18th century there are 51 guilds attested and documented.²⁴ Additionally, some crafts were introduced in the Romanian countries as a consequence of the demand for certain products that were far too expensive because they were imported from the faraway regions of the Ottoman Empire (e.g. the Aleppo, Damascus).

Previous research has shown the number of merchants present in the Romanian countries, their ethnic background, and also some of their correspondence.²⁵ There has been a focus in Romanian historiography on the commerce of Bucharest and Yassy, as their role of capital cities had a significant impact on the number of merchants present as well as the number of fairs and shops. As a consequence, the 18th century merchant houses and boyar courts with a evident Ottoman component that were the subject of a few studies and books so far, are located in the two capital cities, with the fortunate exception of Hagi Prodan house in Ploiești and Bellu Manor in Urlați, both in the administrative unit of Prahova, that had two major commercial roads connecting Bucharest with Brașov.

In this present study I will discuss a few lesser-known examples, while focusing on the types of sources that can be used in their analysis. There are historians that have mentioned the presence of certain Ottoman elements in their description of Bucharest from the Phanariot period. For instance, Ștefan Ionescu states that in 18th century Bucharest house with two stories, made from stone with a cross shaped plan were built. According to the historian, they had fortified enclosures, towers guarded by mercenary Albanians, and the main building was surrounded by smaller ones for other domestic uses (kitchens, staff quarters, barns, cellars, etc).²⁶

18th century sources such as plans, foreign traveler's accounts, and descriptions in first person literature or engravings made by travelling artist sustain the existence of gardens on the properties of the boyars and wealthy merchants from Wallachia and Moldavia. On the issue of structure, Ionescu describes a vast reception hall in the main house, where the boyar and his family lived, from which one could enter the private apartments. The boyar's apartment included the

²⁴ Ș. Ionescu, *Bucureștii în vremea fanarioților*, p. 47.

²⁵ G. Lazăr, *Catastife de negustori din Țara Românească (secolele XVIII–XIX)*, Iași, 2016; V. Duiculescu, *Bresle, negustori și meseriași în Țara Românească (1830–1848)*, Bucharest, 1973; N. Iorga, *Scrisori de boieri și negustori olteni și munteni către casa de negoț sibiiană Hagi Pop, publicate cu note genealogice asupra mai multor familii*, Bucharest, 1906; L. Cotovanu, "Gestionari epiroți ai cămărilor domnești. Cazul negustorilor Igumenos de la Ioannina și al familiei lor extinse (sf. sec. XVI – înc. sec. XVIII)", in A. Timotin (ed.), *Dinamici sociale și transferuri culturale în Sud-Estul european (sec. XVI–XIX)*, Bucharest, 2019, p. 147–197, etc.

²⁶ Ș. Ionescu, *Bucureștii în vremea fanarioților*, p. 69–70.

bedroom, a room for his secretary, rooms for servants such as the ones responsible with making coffee and preparing the hookah.²⁷

This description concurs to a certain point to descriptions used in sale documents. In august 1776. Radu Văcărescu sold his house for 5000 thalers, a sum that was considerably large, and the property included:

“the garden with all its surrounding buildings, with the stable, the barn, the lower house, the small house, with a good gate, with a courtyard well, with the courtyard towards the fence, with the upper houses, all with beds, with sofas covered with embroidered bedspreads, with doors for all the rooms, with glass windows for all the houses, with locks for all doors. The cellars with sofas, and beds, and doors; also, a small house behind the garden with the surrounding terrain and well.” [n. tr.]²⁸

This type of structure is consistent with the findings of Ugur Tanyeli²⁹ that emphasize a structure divided in spaces with various functionalities: kenif (the toilet), hammam (the bathhouse), matbah (kitchen – situated outside the living quarters), kilar (pantry), and ahur (stable). According to Tanyeli, the kitchen in the Ottoman world became a more consistent presence in households mostly in the 18th century. In the matter of interior structure, sources mention the presence and importance of the raised platforms (sedir), that featured sofas (minder), garnished with pillows (yastik). These elements are always associated with members of either the middle class (merchants and some workers in the local administration), or members of the aristocracy and wealthy merchants.

Ștefan Ionescu mentions the presence of sofas, and window curtains in bright colours, with oriental carpets that depicted the sultan or other pasha’s (a statement that is not backed by any other form of evidence), hookahs, pipes, daggers and pistols. Ionescu also adds that the beds were not in use for sleeping arrangements, but sofas were, and they were covered with oriental bedspreads also used for eating.³⁰ This is of course an academic opinion, but, as so many other historians before and after him, do not go into the much-needed detail nor provide too much sources to argue these opinions. As we can observe from Radu Văcărescu’s description of his house, the word bed is used, but the understanding and a clear delineation between the term bed and the term sofa has not yet been made.

I have mentioned before the attempts made to inventory the 18th and 19th century merchant houses still in existence in the second half of the 20th century Bucharest. The one published by Nicolae Stoicescu mentions only these examples: the parochial house of Răzvan church (sic!), the one on Mircea Vodă street at no 51, another one on Șerban Vodă no 33, followed by the one on Popa Rusu no 21

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ SANIC, Fond Achiziții Noi, d. CXXVIII, f.21.

²⁹ U. Tanyeli, “Norms of Domestic Comfort and Luxury in Ottoman Metropolises sixteenth to eighteenth centuries”, in *The illuminated table, the prosperous house : food and shelter in Ottoman material culture*, ed. by Suraiya Faroqhi & Christoph K. Neumann. Würzburg, 2003, p. 305–319.

³⁰ Ș. Ionescu, *Bucureștii în vremea fanarioților*, p. 69–70.

(which is actually a metoh), the last two being the houses on Orzari no 63 and Călărași Avenue no 97.³¹ Although not all these house were built by merchants, they do have certain elements in common: a structure with a cellar and the rooms used for sleeping, eating and receiving guest placed above it, a front porch called *cerdac* (a word with Turkish roots) or *prispă*, the presence of a projected balcony, small and slightly arched windows, and especially the presence of trilobed arches on the *cerdac* section of the houses. What is important to note is that not all these elements can be found in all of the houses built by merchants or boyars, they can vary depending on the taste or financial possibilities of the owner as it's possible to observe from the fig. no 1, 2, and 3. We can observe from the house plans a structure centered around a main hall or hallway, sometimes built upon the vernacular type of house typical to peasant houses (fig. no 2), the presence of a hayat type of structure often named in Romanian *geamlâc* (a sort of window covered *cerdac*) placed in the upper level in the case of Colintineanu house (fig. 3).

According to Nicolae Stoicescu, a two storied structure is consistent to a wealthier owner, giving the example of the parochial house of Răzvan church (although the parochial house is the priest living quarters) said to have been built and inhabited by merchants. The 1961 structure had four rooms centered around a reception hall, a staircase to access the upper floor, the main room featuring a recessed apse in the style of a *sachnasi* or hayat.³² Mentioning the question asked by Cerasi on the relation between the Ottoman house and vernacular architecture, a conclusion on how merchant houses in Bucharest looked like based on Stoicescu's selection would take into account the significant vernacular dominant, a reworking of peasant architecture in an urban setting. Since not much is known about the owners of the builders of these houses, some questions remain unanswered.

Literary sources have been used by historians in an attempt to reconstruct the history of old residential architecture of Bucharest. Travel literature written by foreign envoys or travelers in the Romanian countries is the most known example. Another example is the novel *Ciocoii vechi și noi* (*The old and new upstarts*) by Nicolae Filimon for his evocative description of the houses built on the Podul Mogoșoaiei (Mogoșoaia Bridge) by the grand boyar Dimitrie Ghica in the 18th century rented by the Phanariot ruler, Ioan Caragea. Although a text written some 30 years after the events in question, it has been quoted without questioning its subjectivity and distance in time. In Filimon's description the palace architecture was vague and difficult to determine, but it featured a Turkish (not Ottoman) balcony in the shape of a kiosk, furnished with sofas and crates with red velvet tapestry, used by Caragea for his coffee and tobacco ritual.³³ Filimon goes on to mostly focus on the court structure, naming the people in the administration, including the ones that had living quarters inside the palace, describing clothes and

³¹ N. Stoicescu, *op. cit.*, p. 75–80.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ N. Filimon, *Ciocoii vechi și noi. Sau ce naște din piscă șoareci mănâncă*, Bucharest, 1910, p. 31–32.

customs, and especially court protocol. Mentioning the importance of the garden, and outlining the idea of a gated and heavily guarded structure, the writer gives the right amount of Ottoman feeling accentuated by the presence of Arabian and Misir (Egyptian) horses. Corroborating this particular description with other types of sources can validate some of the information, although the photographs made by Ludwig Angerer in 1856 and Franz Duschek in 1874 show a phanariot cubic type of structure under a Neo-classical façade. In Angerer's panorama, some of the other annexes and smaller houses are visible, while the new structures built on remnants of Ghica palace attest to the alterations made in the 19th century.

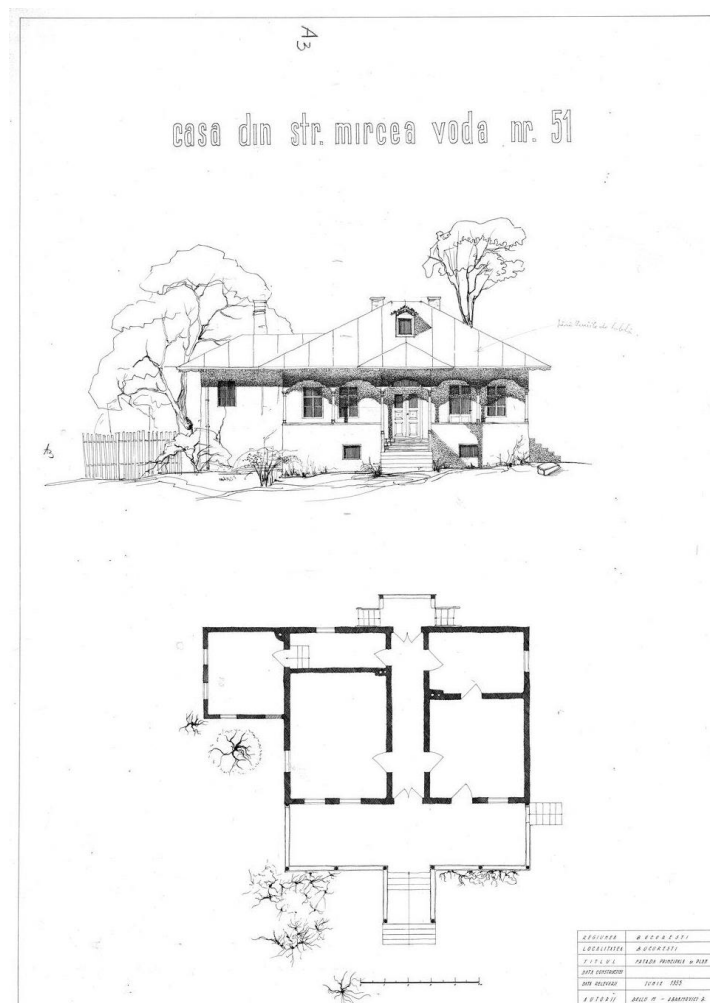


Fig. 1. House from Mircea Vodă Street n° 51; image source: University of Architecture and Urbanism 'Ion Mincu' Bucharest, Department of History and Theory of Architecture and Heritage Conservation, Surveys Archive, Rv.475.03 Façade, Plan for the ground floor.

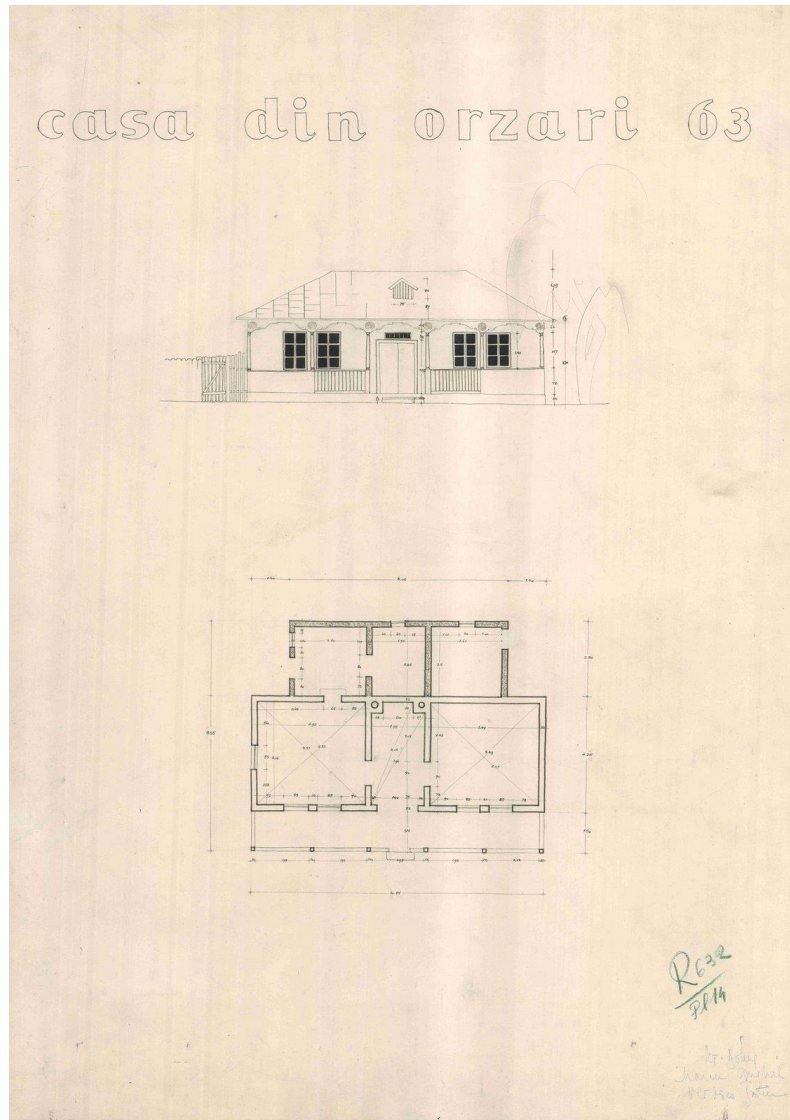


Fig. 2. House from Orzari Street n° 63; image source: University of Architecture and Urbanism 'Ion Mincu' Bucharest, Department of History and Theory of Architecture and Heritage Conservation, Surveys Archive, Planşa Rv.470.16, Main facade, Plan for the ground floor.

Since many of the Balkan type house in Bucharest were either demolished or reworked into a more western style and modern shape, any analysis into their existence must make use of an array of sources starting with city plans, and continuing with every available visual documents. 19th century photographers Carol Popp de Szathmary or Ludwig Angerer, have documented the urban layout of Bucharest with a set of panoramas. A very interesting example of a Balkan house owned by a Greek origin family, the Hristopol house, can be seen in one of Carol Popp de Szathmary panoramas (fig. no 4). The Hristopol House features the *geamlâc* and the trilobed arches, with a small tower on the right, with a wooden staircase. The *geamlâc* was a somewhat popular structure found in houses that could be seen both in the city center and the periphery. A photography taken by Alfons Ebner from the Bucharest Municipality Museum Photography Collection of a house on Moșilor Avenue n° 88 features a *geamlâc* present in the inner courtyard. Therefore, we can conclude that the orientation of the projected balcony or apse is consistent with other Balkan examples, and it may build upon the idea of privacy as it was outlined in Ottoman society.



Fig. 4. Hristopol House, fragment from a Carol Popp de Szathmary Dealul Spirii panorama; image source: Biblioteca Academiei Române, Cabinetul de Stampe și fotografii.

Written documents describing Bucharest houses can only go so far, as well as plans or maps. In terms of visual sources, aside from mid-19th and 20th century photography, there are the ever so quoted engravings made by foreign artist travellers who reached the Romanian countries at one point or another. I have mentioned before the album made by J. Rey (fig. no 5) about Iași, published in 1845 and dedicated to Mihail Sturdza, and the subjectivity of the engravings depicting the city of Yassy. The general atmosphere conveyed by the album is one that of a visualization of the written accounts of foreign travellers: the mixture of Oriental with a superficial Western layer, many churches and shabby looking houses on the outskirts of the city. The *vue* in fig. 5 really drew my attention since in the right corner there is a particular structure: a house with a projected balcony, supported with wooden beams, that has so many Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish, Bosnian counterparts. Since these drawings date back to the end of the first half of the 19th century, one would expect a few more of them, but what is interesting to note about this particular album is that the city's architecture is a hotchpotch of Western, Byzantine, and vernacular. While it may well have a grain of reality to it, it does not eliminate the subjectivity of this type of product. Another aspect to be taken into account is that this Balkan type of houses is represented on the outskirts of the city, in a context where the term of *mahala* begins to be considered pejorative and associated with the slum part of a city.



Fig. 5. View of the city of Yassy; image source: Album de douze vues de la ville de Jassi, exécutées par J. Rey et dédiée À son Altesse le Prince Régnant de la Moldavie par P. Müller, lithographe, 1845.

The same type of gaze hasn't, of course, eluded Bucharest. When it comes to the Oriental/Phanariot aspect of Bucharest, the two most quoted images by historians are the ones made by two French artists: Michel Doussault and Dieudonné Auguste Lancelot (figs. 6 and 7). As engravings, they were reproduced over and over again for the Western public as an authentic view of Bucharest. While the presence of projected balconies is attested in multiple sources, there are no other sources so far to corroborate on the type of balconies from fig. 7. Moreover, they rather come at odds with the panoramas I mentioned earlier, although there isn't a significant distance in time between them. Fig. 8 is a panorama made by Ludwig Angerer in 1856 from Spirii Hill, thereby proving itself a more reliable document than the previous engraving that excel at being generic. Another aspect that needs to be outlined and taken into account is that both Bucharest and Yassy regarding Phanariot type of houses is that they begin to undergo certain alterations, specifically, a change in their facades to make them look more European. An eloquent example is the so-called merchant house Voina in Bucharest on Șerban-Vodă, no. 33.

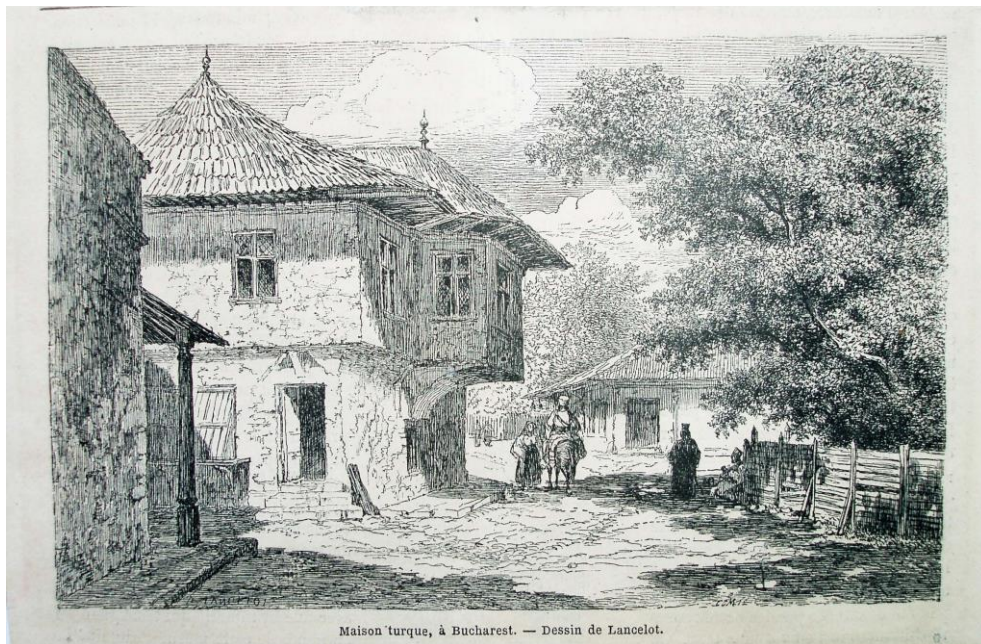


Fig. 6. Maison turque a Bucarest, after a drawing made by Lancelot; image source: Bucharest Municipality Museum collection of Prints and Engraving.



Fig. 7. Street in Bucharest, after a drawing made by M. Doussault, image source: Bucharest Municipality Museum collection of Prints and Engraving.



Fig. 8. View from Dealul Spirii, Ludwig Angerer; image source: Bucharest Municipality Museum collection of Photography.

These houses often changed hands since they were included in dowries or inheritances, or simply sold to cover other expenses as is the case with the houses sold in 1825 by Velica, wife of Hagi Tudorache Gabrovalău, hints to a Bulgarian descent, to Hristea Emanuil Papazoglu, a southerner from the Hapsburg regions that may well have a name that hints to an Aromanian descent. The sum was a hefty one, 5650 guldens, determined by the central position (the Old Court area).³⁵

Working under the assumption of a liminality of Ottoman influence in the civil architecture of the Romanian countries, I would surmise that the data is still insufficient to be able to answer it with certainty. The undeniable fact is that this type of architecture is present and backed by different forms of sources, while the extent can cover merchants, boyars and some ecclesiastic architecture. The forms of this influence are diverse, something that is congruent with other Balkan provinces. Moreover, there are questions that can only be answered with a more in-depth analysis and a case-by-case investigation such as: who were the master builders, what is the origin of the building materials, what do these houses add to the known connections between the Romanian countries and the other Balkan countries, with what regional style can we compare these houses to, do ethnically diverse owners equal a diversity in architectural forms, and so on. I intend to answer these questions in the research already initiated regarding 18th century architecture in Bucharest.

Ottoman architecture – a participant in the creation of a National style

The allure of the Ottoman-Turkish house for research is given by its exotic feeling, but recently by its symbolical approaches and interpretations. Reading Tchavdar Marinov study I had an Evrika reaction because, finally, not only there is a study that speaks about the breadth of the phenomenon, but also how it was perceived, judged and written about. While you may take the Ottoman out of the Balkans, you cannot take the Nationalism out of it, and the way certain aspects of Ottoman culture were either systematically rejected, others were appropriated in a national discourse. Romania falls in both these categories, having an evident ambivalent and ambiguous attitude to what was part of Ottoman material culture. Therefore, it comes as no surprise to witness the use of some Oriental motifs and elements in an architectural style that was meant to convey the essence of Romanian identity: the Neo Romanian style.

Carmen Popescu makes a good point when concluding that oriental elements present in National architecture are to be read as layers of perception: ‘d’ un cote, l’appel à une esthétique orientalisante, induite par la mode qu’impose l’Europe occidentale et, de l’autre, l’emploi d’éléments orientaux, assimilés et présentés comme partie constituante de l’héritage national.’³⁶ However, there are many nuances to this statements determined by the de-Orientalisation of the Oriental

³⁵ Ed. F. Georgescu, *Documente privind istoria oraşului Bucureşti*, Bucharest, 1960, p. 235–236.

³⁶ C. Popescu, “Le paradoxe de l’orientalisme balkanique...”, p. 2.

elements associated with a Western filtered perception of what the Orient was, and a nationalization of those elements by white-washing the Ottoman out of them and just labelling them as completely traditional and authentic. Another aspect that stands out in Carmen Popescu study is that Western imports can only be ascribed to the 19th century, a premise that has already proven its fallacies. In my doctoral thesis I have dealt with the use of Oriental and Ottoman elements in the creation and conception of Romania national pavilions at the Universal Exhibitions in Paris, and outlined with the use of multiple sources that an analysis of the discourse about the Orient is not a straightforward delineation between East and West, there are many areas where they overlap and converse. In addition, I agreed with the uses of Maria Todorova concept of balkanism and added the one coined by Milica Bakić-Hayden of nesting orientalism. And these instances are valid in the case of a Nationalization of Oriental and Ottoman architectural elements.³⁷

Although the two architects Ion Mincu (1852–1912) and Ion Socolescu (1856–1924), seen as the fathers of a Neo Romanian style, attempt to elaborate a theory of the Romanian national style in the pages of the revue *Analele Arhitecturii și ale artelor cu care se leagă* (Annales of Architecture and the arts to which they are connected: 1890–1893), we cannot speak of the Neo Romanian style as an cohesive and unitary one among the works of the architects that have claimed it: Ion and Toma T. Socolescu, Ion Mincu, Cristofi Cerchez, Nicolae Ghika-Budești, Petre Antonescu, Paul Smărăndescu, and so on. Another important distinction to make is that, while it reclaimed itself as being a revisitation of the Brâncoveanu style, some creations signed by Mincu and Socolescu have a rather Moorish feeling to them. For example, the house built for historian George Ionescu-Gion bearing Ion Socolescu's signature speaks to an exoticised view of what was Oriental (fig. 9).

While there are researchers who consider Ion Mincu's point of origin for the formulation of the Neo Romanian style to be the restauration work on the Stavropoleos Monastery in Bucharest, the project for the Bufetul dela Șosea (The Roadside restaurant) in 1889 (figs. 10 and 11) and the houses Lahovary and Robescu are the concrete articulation of what he viewed as Romanian in terms of National architecture. The common elements between these early projects are: the use of polychrome ceramic, of trilobed arches, projected balconies (fig. no 10), and the presence of the *cerdac* structure. In Mincu's own words the polychrome ceramic "is present in the nature of the Romanian people, and for that and for durability reasons, I have appealed to faïence. I hope that ceramic alludes to a Romanian atmosphere". [n.tr.]³⁸ Indeed, the variety of ceramic pottery in Romania is significant, but alas, with the exception of recipients displayed on wooden shelves called *blidar*, it isn't so specific to exterior wall decoration as Mincu suggested. To my mind, the feeling conveyed by the use of polychrome ceramic in

³⁷ R. Coman, *Orientul și spațiul românesc: între model cultural și reprezentare (1856–1881)*, PhD thesis, University of Bucharest, Faculty of History, 2015.

³⁸ N. Petrașcu, *Ioan Mincu*, Bucharest, 1928, p. 10.

exterior decoration in the Neo Romanian style projects is that similar to the use of ceramic tiles in Ottoman and Middle Eastern architecture.

As I mentioned in the abstract of this study, the Ottoman house has been nationally appropriated in cases such as Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, as the most obvious examples. Romania has seen a discourse that alternated between accepting its Ottoman heritage and rejecting it as way to impose the necessary delineation for a national construct. Therefore, the 18th century Balkan house that were built in the cities of both the Romanian countries have either been called merchant houses, either recognized for their Oriental legacy, or integrated within the taxonomy of Romanian vernacular architecture.

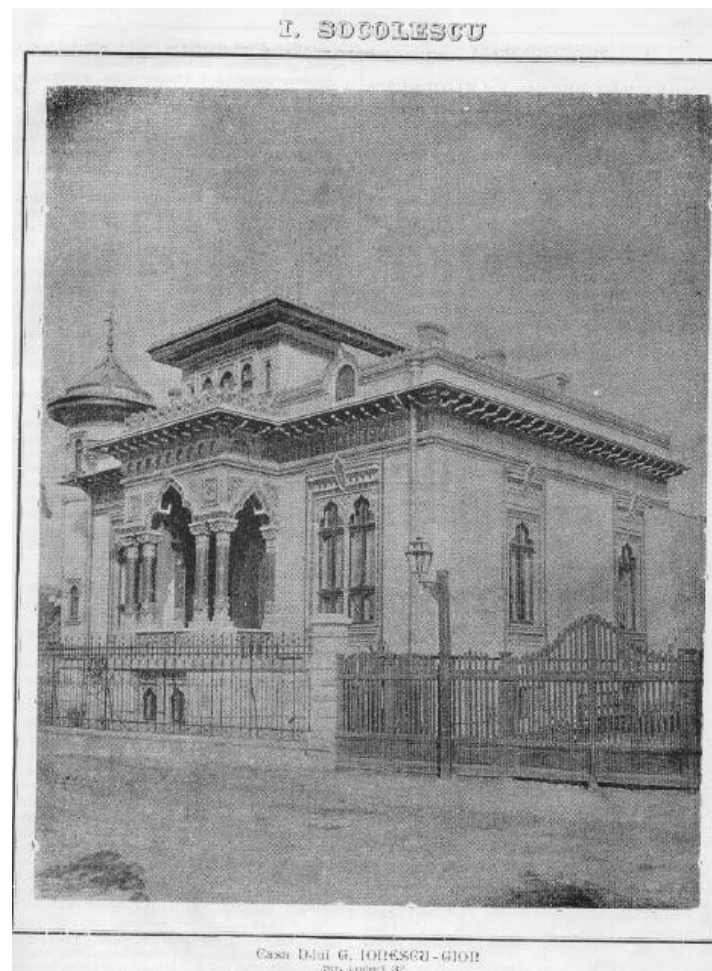


Fig. 9. Gheorghe Ionescu-Gion house;
image source: *Arhitectura*, n° 1, 1941, p. 60.



Fig. 10. Bufetul de la Șosea (1889–1892), lateral view; image source : <http://monumenteistoricedinromania.blogspot.com>.



Fig. 11. Bufetul de la Șosea (1889–1892); image source: University of Architecture and Urbanism 'Ion Mincu' Bucharest, Department of History and Theory of Architecture and Heritage Conservation, Surveys Archive, Rv.364.03 Perspective.

Having owed the existence of Ottoman identity in Balkan architecture, Artan Tülay adds that omnipresent public buildings as «Ottoman», at least in Turkey residential architecture comes to be contraposed to this as «Turkish»³⁹ outlining that residential architecture was also a component in the articulation of national style, similar to the other Balkan states. Artan Tülay suggests that there are two diametrically opposed attitudes toward 17th and 18th centuries Ottoman and architecture: it is either neglected due to a so called ‘decline’ of the empire, or it is rejected by the national discourses in the emerging Balkan states.⁴⁰ To this I would add a third dimension, the national appropriation and integration of Ottoman elements in the creation of a national style, a process that does not elude Turkey. Architectural historian Doğan Kuban not only advocates but ethnicizes, Turkifys Ottoman vernacular architecture, by imposing the name of Turkish house and establishing its origins in Anatolia.

Following the same vein, architect Sedad Hakkı Eldem considers that:

“The Ottoman house existed for a time as the result of a refined domestic culture suspended between Europe and Asia. It crossed frontiers and enlarged its scope in company with a powerful and culturally healthy nation. ... After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, housing in the old Ottoman land manifested a variety of interpretations of the Turkish vernacular type, as a part of their Ottoman heritage. The tendencies in these new countries was to accept, to absorb and even to identify themselves with this heritage”.⁴¹

Sedad Hakkı Eldem not only the most well-known architect of modern Turkey, as well as a recognized exponent of modernism, but also part of an influential family as Osman Hamdi Bey’s nephew, and has studied extensively the phenomenon of Ottoman residential architecture. Sedad considered the rediscovery of traditional architecture has a key role to play in the configuration of a national identity in Turkey.⁴² To that extent, he began to document the existing examples, to use definitive elements in his own creations, and most importantly, to maintain an active correspondence with architects from the former provinces, including Romania. According to Serena Acciai, Sedad Eldem although aware of the transnational character of the Ottoman house, chooses to use the term Turkish as not to provoke negative reactions to what would allude to the imperial past, to replace the cosmopolitan with a more modern identity and to reduce and replace the work of Western architects that were westernizing the face of Istanbul.⁴³ I would also add

³⁹ A. Tülay, “Questions of Ottoman Identity...”, p. 86.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁴¹ S. H. Eldhem, *Türk Evi: Osmanlı Dönemi - Turkish Houses: Ottoman Period*, Istanbul, vol. I, 1984, p. 21.

⁴² S. Acciai, “The Ottoman-Turkish House According to Architect Sedad Hakkı Eldem A Refined Domestic Culture Suspended Between Europe and Asia”, *ABE Journal (Architecture Beyond Europe)*, no 11, 2017, accessed on 20/10/2018: <https://journals.openedition.org/abe/3676>

⁴³ *Ibid.*

that this type of approach regarding the Ottoman house also owes a great deal to his uncle's legacy of articulating a national identity.

A generation elder that Sedadd Eldem, Paul Smărăndescu (1881–1945), an architect that mostly employed the Neo Romanian style in tandem with an Art Deco aesthetic in his projects, with elements of the Ottoman heritage reinterpreted in a modern manner. His own house built in 1914 on Lutheran Street in Bucharest (later demolished), was an important example by merging early nineteenth-century bow windows with a gazebo-like structure. This element becomes an innovative interpretation of the *sacnasiu* present in 18th and beginning of the 19th century examples of house built in Bucharest. The vegetal decorative motifs added to the façade recall both the Brâncoveanu style, a style that has included Ottoman elements in its configuration, and emanates a Mediterranean feeling while having a tower-like structure with the middle window featuring a trilobed arch. This interpretation of a projected balcony can be seen in works signed by Petre Antonescu, such as the palace for Bucharest City Hall, and some early projects for apartment buildings, making it quite a successful element and an adaptation that witnessed its origin removed and renamed into an element of vernacular architecture. Moreover, a notable presence among the Neo Romanian style adepts are architects of Aromanian descent: Arghir Culina, Gheorghe Simotta, Cristofi Cerchez that made Ottoman elements part of their projects. The project that comes closest to what residential architecture looked in 18th century Wallachia is the house built by Cristofi Cerchez for Eliza and Sofia Candiano-Popescu in 1932.

In lieu of a conclusion, I would state that the subject of the Ottoman architecture and influence in the Balkans has been researched in a fragmentary manner, many times contaminated by a nationalistic discourse, which has a complexity determined by many factors, in search for methods and concepts that would facilitate a better understanding. Some questions can be answered after a case-by-case inquiry, others may wield no answer whatsoever. In the text of this study and the literature concerning the subject there is also a need for a clarification and delineation between terms such as *sachnasi*, *hayat*, *sachnasi*, or *geamlâc*, because they are used alternatively without differentiation, if there is one. But one thing is certain, the subject of the Ottoman house is a multifaceted one, which will require interdisciplinary and transnational approach.

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