

A MONUMENTAL DESIGN OF THE AUSTRIAN ARCHITECT, CLEMENS HOLZMEISTER: MILITARY ACADEMY BUILDING

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Buildings reflect not only the sense of architecture of the period they were erected, but also the political, social, and economical features thereof, with which they interacted. In view of the architecture of the Early Republican Period, it provides significant data, shedding light on the historical readings thereon, thanks to its features involving consistency and change.

Post-Reform Era (*Tanzimat*) experiences were particularly drawn upon in the establishment of Turkish Republic. However, in spite of the absolute rejection of the Ottoman Empire during the first years of the Republican Era, the Republic's structure which even imitated the Ottoman Empire in a sense of continuity should not be disregarded. Buildings in Capitol Ankara from the 1st National Architecture Period (1908-1927) are among the prominent tokens of such continuity. This sense of architecture, which undertook critical duties in the course of forming a national awareness throughout the foundation stage, gave way to the Movement of International Architecture in 1930's. These architectural examples which came to the fore in Europe, and applied in USA, consist of cubical forms with a rational functionalist sense, free from ornamentation.

Capitol Ankara attained a contemporary plan by the mediation of German urban planner, Hermann Jansen, following various planning experiences. Nearly all of the structures built in the capitol throughout this period were designed and applied by architects coming from German-speaking countries, namely in particular E.Egli, B.Taut, C.Holzmeister. Military Academy Building, as being the subject matter of this study, on the other hand, was created by Clemens Holzmeister, who also made the designs of numerous public administration buildings, including Atatürk's Çankaya Mansion, and 3rd Turkish Grand National Assembly.

While being initially called by such names as *Ecole Militaire*, *Mekteb-i Hassa*, the school provided education at its building in Maçka until 1846, it was then moved to the Military Academy building in Pangaltı where it resumed providing education until 1936. Having been burned down in 1855, Military Academy Building of today was built in place. This building was used from the foundation of the Republic until the Military Academy was moved to Ankara. This famous building, where Atatürk also studied is being used for military purposes nowadays, hosting the Military Museum within a section thereof.

It was mentioned within a writ, being kept in the Republican Archive of the Prime Ministry, which was issued by the Minister of National Defense, Abdülhalik Renda, to the Prime Ministry as of 22.07.1930, that land expropriation works had been initiated at the skirts of Dikmen upon the request of Turkish General Staff for the construction of the Military Academy and Hospital buildings, projects of which had been designed by Holzmeister. In response to this writ, Ministerial Cabinet decreed only two days later for the construction of the Military Academy. While it had firstly been designed for 1000 students, it was then asked for extending the capacity of the building up to 1400 students. Although it was respectively suggested to annex extra floors to the building, Holzmeister solved this problem by way of having two blocks annexed adjacent to the main building at the east and west of the yard. It is known that, expropriation efforts were going on throughout the construction of the building. It also indicates the importance attached to the issue with the intent of completing the building as soon as possible.

Following the completion of the building as of 1935, it is seen that nearly all units of the school were thereafter located inside it. It is suggested that, both the hospital building, which was then used as the barrack, and the command building located at the west of the school were completed in the same year. New blocks were annexed to the southeast and southwest parts of the building, starting from the beginning of 1960's, the structuring within the vicinity of the main building was completed with the blocks hosting the lecture halls, which were built in 1972. Starting from 1980's, new buildings in the form of large blocks were built far from the main building, and thereupon the school was turned out to be a real campus.

Curiously enough, a sculpture, named “Atatürk and Military Collegian”, which negatively affected the architectural texture, was erected onto the surface of the tower, located at the entrance axis, in 1981 for the memory of Atatürk’s 100th birthday. Modifications made in some of the corridors, study rooms, and classrooms in 1990’s with the intent of extension and renovations, Military Academy Building attained its outlook of today.

Having played a major role in Ankara’s attaining the outlook of a contemporary capitol, Military Academy Campus is situated onto a quite high spot at the skirts of Dikmen. Being a structure in the form of a quite large block, Military Academy’s plan and frontal design was made with a symmetric conception. While entrance front of the structure is consistent with the general characteristic of Holzmeister’s architecture, it bears traces of 19th century architecture even if just a pinch. The multi-purpose hall and the dining hall, which are located at the east and west of the main block with same size, but also with lower height, bring along a stratification extending to the highest spot of the tower at the central axis.

The structure was shaped as extending from east to west, surrounded by a rectangular yard, and with three floors over a semi-basement floor. Plan layout of the structure is quite simple. The main entrance, which was designed in an emphasized tone, is situated at the center of the northern wing of the structure, facing to Ankara. The structure is entered through the gates, situated at the right and left of the semi-open entrance hall behind the four square columns within the axis. The gates at the south of the hall open to the yard. The corridors situated at the center of the long wings, as well as the corridors situated at the side of the short corners facing to the yard surround the structure all around. Vertical connections between the floors are maintained by means of the wide and spacious stairs at the four corners. One rectangular block with two-floor of height was joined from outside of both eastern and western (shorter) wings of the structure. Among these blocks, the eastern one was functioned as the multi-purpose hall, and the western one as the dining hall.

There are three-floor blocks situated inside the yard in connection with the shorter wings, similar to those situated outside. Inside these blocks, you may see quite complex functions assigned at the wings. For instance, museum and dining hall at the east, and students’ casino at the west. In view of the general distribution of functions throughout the building, while the long-wing at the north is allocated for the study rooms, the classrooms are situated at the south wing. In the shorter wings, there are bureaus, and places allocated for the social activities of the students. Students’ barracks are situated mostly at the various spots of the upper floors.

The main front of the Military Academy, facing north, was formed more meticulously than the other fronts. It should also be noted that, looking at this structure of Holzmeister’s from outside, it displays not the impression of a yard-type structure, but the features seen in the other public structures. The tower in the middle of the northern front, the entrance arrangement with columns, as well as the front at the both sides of the entrance being pierced with vertical slits create such an impression. Similar features other than the tower and entrance are seen also at the other fronts, which are formed simpler than the fore front. Interior fronts of the yard are arranged more simply, just like at all other military posts of the 19th century.

Differences in the arrangement of the floors being seen at the entrance front of the structure resemble the rules of frontal arrangement being seen in the structures of the 19th century. The middle section, where the tower and the entrance is situated, creates along an emphasized effect, although it is neither protruded, nor indented. This effect is brought along by the entrance with open front between the columns, stone framed square windows at the fore front of the tower, and most of all by the gaps created at both sides of the tower at top floor level. Another significant element of this front is that the windows of the first floor are surrounded by horizontal stone belts from top and bottom. The vertical effect created by these belts balances the vertical effect of the tower. Furthermore, the vertical slits dividing the side sections into two bring along a positive effect by piercing the front, thanks to their dimensions and fractions. Ground and second floors of the front were coated by edelputz plaster, which was widely used on the structures of that time. Windows of these two floors are separated from those of the semi-basement and first floors with their rectangular forms. The semi-floor, which was coated with bossage Ankara stone up to the subbasement level, is like the base of the structure with its small windows. The single-floor salon and the mess-hall annexed to the eastern and western wings of the structure are the elements of this front, which remain in the background with their lower heights.

The emphasis similar to that at the entrance section is not seen also at any element of the other three fronts of the structure. The yard fronts are simpler than the outer fronts. The rectangular yard was tried to be animated by the blocks annexed to the eastern and western wings, and by the reflection of the entrance section overflowing to the yard.

The Military Academy Building is a contemporary interpretation of the military structure tradition introduced during the Westernization Period of the Ottoman Empire in Ankara of the Early Republican Period. While the Ottoman Empire had been interacting the most with France throughout the Westernization Period, this suggests that, yard plan scheme of Ecole Militer of Paris was imitated at the newly built military schools. Many military structures built in this period reveal the adoption of this plan scheme, which addressed to the new requirements. The Military Academy Building in Ankara carries on the military structure of Ottoman Westernization Period within the frame of the architectural concept of its time, particularly with its yard plan arrangement.

Holzmeister applied the yard plan scheme at Salzkammergut Bad Ischl, and at Kurtmittelhaus, other than the Military Academy and the Ministry of National Defense. The yard plan of the Ministry of National Defense that Holzmeister had designed at such an earlier date as 1927 is seen to become even more developed at the Military Academy, which was completed in 1935.

The building, which bears the features of both the international architecture concept, and those of Holzmeister's unique architecture, is a monumental structure of the capitol drawing attention with its architectural identity since the day it was erected. While new structures were annexed to Ankara Military Academy Campus, which is consisted of numerous structures, unlike the Military School in İstanbul, sufficient respect and elaboration was paid by way of seeking solutions with size and distance not to bring harm to its architectural identity. However, at such a structure, which is recognized as a cultural asset, the sculpture erected onto the surface of the tower, as well as the figures applied with high relief technique are thought-provoking with their outlook ruining the architectural identity of the structure.

NOTES:

1. A study similar to this was verbally introduced in the Symposium "An Architect at the Cornerstones of the History: Clemens Holzmeister", organized in 2003 at the Faculty of Architecture of İstanbul Technical University, but was not published.



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