

Turkish Influence in European Architecture - the Tea-House at Eleja in Latvia

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Garden pavilions became common in European gardens since the 15th century Renaissance.

Since the 1730-ies pavilions of oriental inspiration were built in European gardens. The major inspiration was Chinese, but the Ottoman or Turkish inspiration was also present, though less known and often later considered Chinese or Indian.

The tea house at Eleja was originally built with the palace and park 1806-10, but then with a classical portico according to a painting (*Janelis* p. 150). The situation was as a *point de vue* in the main axis of the palace park.

It was rebuilt and changed 1863 (according to I. M. Janelis' book *Manors Gardens and Parks of Latvia*, Riga 2010, p. 151).

The huge cantilevered Roof, the wooden gallery and the donkeyback arches are characteristics of Turkish Kiosk architecture.

The gallery on the front sides of the house had wooden pillars which are not preserved. They are now reconstructed according to traces on the upper beams.

The rather well preserved painted decorations in the portico ceilings are classical with no obvious hint to Ottoman decoration style; though this decoration style would not have seemed out of place in Turkey, which was also influenced by Europe.

A pavilion in Turkish style, but of a different much lighter pavilion type, was until abt. 25 years ago standing in the park at **Mežotne** (illustrated in *Janelis* p. 143) – an estate closely connected to the Medem family and with a palace of exact the same architecture as Eleja, there well preserved.

I will now present some true Turkish examples:

The roof forms of the kiosk architecture has been interpreted to be derivate from the nomadic felt form.

“Kiosk” in Turkish means a covered gallery in a square form covered with a roof in the form of a tent, the traveller Cornelius de Bruyn reported in the 17th century.

Typology of the *Kiosk*

The seaside kiosk of Sultan Selim III at Bebek, on the European shores of Bosphorus. In this kiosk the Sultan and other Ottoman officials of high ranks gave audience to representatives of foreign states. 1819.

Baghdad kiosk Topkapi

Sofa kiosk do.

The two living words common today- inheritance from the “Turquerie” fashion – are *kiosk* and *sofa*. ‘Turquerie’ is the term given to the European fantasy of Ottoman culture as a parallel to “Chinoiserie”. Part of a more general Orientalism which presided in Western Europe from the 16th to the 19th centuries, ‘turquerie’ came to prominence in the 18th century when the threat of Turkish invasion was replaced by a desire for Turkish goods.

Ingres: the Turkish Bath, 1862

It began in the late 15th century with import of textiles and plants, and included both the use of "Turkish" styles in the decorative arts, the adoption of Turkish costume at times, and interest in art depicting the Ottoman Empire itself. Venice, the traditional trading partner of the Ottomans, was the earliest centre, with France becoming prominent in the 18th century.

It was a fascination of the exotic and relatively unknown culture of Turkey, which was the centre of the Ottoman Empire, and at the beginning of the period the only power to pose a serious military threat to Europe.

There is something unique about how Europe developed interest in exoticism as greater emphasis was put on empire building, and colonies in other continents. There was a growing fashion for Turkish in Europe as the Europeans began to see Ottomans not as worthy rivals that they had to contend with and imitate militarily, politically, or diplomatically, but rather as having quaint and strange fashions that could be consumed and copied. Consuming these exotic fashions would show an elite place in society as well as a display of open-mindedness and interest in the world.

This fashionability was brought by the presence of Europeans in the Ottoman Court and the acts of bringing back their products to Europe. The increased mercantile relationships between the Ottoman Empire and the Europeans aided this process. The continuation of these trading systems helped to spread the new fashions quickly in Europe.

The architect Thomas Hope, by Sir William Beechey, 1798. *National Portrait Gallery*

The fashion became more popular through increased diplomatic relationships between the Ottomans and the European nations, exemplified by the Franco-Ottoman alliance in 1715. Ambassadors and traders often returned home with tales of exotic places and souvenirs of their adventures.

The import of plant species from Turkey was in the 16th Century important; including the now so common lilacs and tulips.

The "Turqueries" of the 18th and 19th centuries were not merely a subjective fantasy or subservient to an alleged European-wide fad, but instead constituted a formal strategy in order to construct a narrative as a means to negotiate and produce meanings and identities, the significance of the **pavilions** erected in the gardens was contingent on travel writings and trips abroad of their creators. Each generation had its own particular method for adapting and emulating the Orient within the framework of the shifting sands of knowledge, aesthetic tastes and political conditions.

The Lustschloss “**Tschifflick**” from 1715-16 is the first known example of the Turkish fashion in European architecture, built by Stanislaus Leszczyński former Polish king, in Zweibrücken where he had his exile from 1714.

Tschifflick means "maison de plaisance" in Turkish.

His choice of Turkish style can have been chosen for political reasons as the Ottoman sultan had supported him against Russia. He is also portrayed in Turkish attire.

The palace complex was designed by the Swedish architect Jonas Erikson Sundahl.

When 20 years later Stanislaus became father in law of the French king, he built two Turkish pavilions in the park of his palace in **Luneville**, which became a model for later inspiration in European courts.

“Mosque” Steinfurt 1787

Turkish pavilion at Haga by Stockholm 1787

Coffee drinking is more a Turkish tradition than tea drinking.

An Ottoman embassy was sent to Louis XIII in 1607, and from Mehmed IV to Louis XIV in 1669 in the person of ambassador **Mütefferika Süleyman Ağa**, who created a sensation at the French court, and triggered a fashion for things Turkish. The Orient came to have a strong influence in French literature, as about 50% of French travel guides in the 17th century were dedicated to the Ottoman Empire. In Paris, Suleiman set up in a palace where he offered coffee to Parisian society, with servants dressed in Ottoman style, and starting the fashion for coffee-drinking.

Turkish coffee house interior

Fashionable coffee-shops emerged such as the famous *Café Procope*, the first coffee-shop of Paris, in 1689. In the French high society wearing turbans and caftans became fashionable, as well as lying on rugs and cushions.

Madame de Pompadour portrayed as a Turkish lady in 1747, Charles André van Loo.

The movement was reflected in the art of the period. Music, paintings, architecture, and artifacts were frequently inspired by the Turkish and Ottoman styles and methods. Paintings in particular portrayed the Ottomans with bright colours and sharp contrasts, suggesting their interesting peculiarity and exotic nature.

Rudolf, Crown Prince of Austria had his working room (!), decorated in the Turkish style in 1881. It is partially preserved at the Hofmobiliendepot in Vienna.

A German smoking room from late 19th Century.

The Turkish inspiration continued into the 19th Century, but during the latter half of the 19th Century general orientalism developed into “Japonism”, and the Turkish style mixed with Moorish became more and more limited to equipping the smoking rooms in the residences of

gentlemen. This was common as long as this type of room was considered necessary; maybe up to World War 2, but no longer.

The tea-house at Eleja is a rare survivor of the “Turquerie” fashion in Europe, and it is of great importance that it has now been restored, also as a reminder of old cultural connections between East and West.