



Raimondo D’Aronco and the Karakoy Camii: the Case of the Lost Mosque

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Abstract: Raimondo D’Aronco was one of the greatest architects to have worked in the Ottoman Empire between the late 19th and the early 20th century. In 1903 he was given the task to design a small mosque in Karakoy, near Galata, which had soon become part of the city’s landscape. During Menderes era, in 1958, in order to expand the road network, it was decided to relocate the mosque in Kinaliada, one of the Princes’ Islands in the Marmara Sea. The pieces of the mosque were loaded onto a ship, which ended up losing its load in the sea. About fifty years after its disappearance, the “lost mosque” is about to be rebuilt. A project had started in 2012, but it seems now to have come to a halt. The case of the Karakoy Mosque, also known as *kaybolan cami* (the lost mosque), continues to divide both experts and public opinion.

Keywords: D’Aronco, Art Nouveau, Ottoman Empire, Karakoy

RAIMONDO D’ARONCO: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Raimondo Tommaso D’Aronco was born on 31 August 1857 in Gemona del Friuli, Italy. He was raised by an authoritarian father, who was the owner of a construction company. In 1871, when the young D’Aronco was only 14 years old, he was sent by his father to Graz, Austria, with the purpose to learn the construction business. He subsequently went back to Gemona in 1884 and there he worked in his father’s company until he had to leave for Turin in order to do his military service (Barillari, Di Donato, 2010: 328). Later on, in 1877 he moved to Venice to complete his education at the Venice Academy. There, he had the opportunity to become a student of Giacomo Franco. After completing his studies, he started to teach Architecture and Decoration at Palermo Technical Vocational School.

Raimondo D’Aronco participated and won the first place in numerous exhibitions: Venice Fine Arts in 1887, Turin’s 1st Architecture Exhibition in 1890, Palermo National Exhibitions in 1891 and, finally, Turin’s Architecture



Exhibition in 1892 and 1893. These achievements laid the foundation for his career in Istanbul. In fact, his first contact with the Ottoman Empire was going to be the 1894 Ottoman National Exhibition. Head of the Exhibition Committee was Selim Pasha, the Minister of Agriculture, Mines and Forests. Selim Pasha had shown to the Sultan Abdul Hamid II several designs from exhibitions held in Europe, among which the Sultan chose the one from the Architecture Exhibition held in Turin in 1890. As a result, in 1893 he managed to invite Raimondo D’Aronco to Istanbul through the Italian Ambassador in Istanbul, Luigi Avogadro di Collobiano¹, and the president of the Albertina Academy, Ernesto Balbo Bertone di Sambuy (Adıgüzel, 2019: 162).

Before D’Aronco's appointment, Alexandre Vallaury² and Octave Courtois-Suffit, who were among the most important architects at the time, were working on the designing of the Ottoman National Exhibition. Sultan Abdul Hamid II signed an agreement with the Italian architect ensuring a payment of 20.000 francs per year³. The exhibition was to be held in Sisli, near Darulaceze. The few designs survived to the present day exhibit a distinctive neo-baroque influence. The exchange of letters written by D’Aronco and Selim Pasha with regard to the exhibition designs are preserved at the Prime Minister's Ottoman Archives⁴.



Image 1

“A postcard by Sébah & Joaillier showing Karakoy Square in late Ottoman era. The Karakoy Mosque is visible behind the Austrian Wiener Bankverein building (today’s Ziraat Bank).

Fabrizio Casaretto Collection.

¹ Gazzetta Ufficiale, 27 October 1917, no. 254, 4459

² Alexandre Vallaury, whose real name was Alessandro Valeri, was a Levantine of Italian descent born in Istanbul. He was one of the most important architects of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. After receiving his education in Paris, he became one of the founders and first teachers of the Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi, the first Ottoman Fine Arts School.

³ Le Moniteur Oriental, 4 August 1893

⁴ Le Moniteur Oriental, 1893: BOA, İ.DUİT, 136/13-5



On July 10, 1894 a terrible earthquake hit Istanbul. This event marked the end of D'Aronco's exhibition project, but on the other hand it also paved the way to the architect for several works and restorations. As a restorer, he took charge of the restoration of the Büyük and Küçük Mabeyn, the state apartments within Yıldız Palace, the restoration of the half dome and the şadirvan (fountain for ritual ablution) of Mahmud I in Hagia Sophia and the restoration and the strengthening works of the Grand Bazaar (Barillari, Di Donato, 2010: 332). Through these fundamental experiences D'Aronco became more familiar with the Ottoman, Byzantine and Levantine artistic legacy and this deeply affected his works in Istanbul. Being at the direct service of Sultan Abdul Hamid II as chief palace architect, D'Aronco contributed to shaping the architectural language of the Hamidian era (Girardelli, 2011: 77). Among his most important works are the Mekteb-i Tibbiye-i Sahane (Imperial Medicine College), which D'Aronco built together with the architect Alexandre Vallaury, the annex of the Chalet Pavillion within the complex of Yıldız Palace, built in occasion of the 1898 official visit of Wilhelm II to Turkey, Casa Botter, a residence building on İstiklal Avenue, designed for the sultan's tailor M.Jean Botter, the Karakoy Mosque in Galata, the mausoleum for the religious leader Sheikh Zafir Efendi and the summer residence for Italian Embassy in Tarabya.

Raimondo D'Aronco left Istanbul in 1909 due to the changing political conditions, which eventually led to the deposition of Abdul Hamid II. He continued his career in Italy, having numerous posts in public offices, such as the Naples Fine Arts Institute. He finally moved to San Remo, where he died on May 3, 1932.

D'Aronco's early works exhibit the influence of European eclecticism and revivalism, as well as clear references to Viollet-le-Duc (Batur, 1992: 147). It is important to notice that Eclecticism was already widespread within the Ottoman architecture of the time. Nevertheless, D'Aronco managed to create a distinctive style, result of his personal interpretation of the Islamic-Ottoman architecture. He greatly contributed to the development of Art Nouveau/ Jugendstil⁵ in this geographical area, making his mark in the late 19th century and 20th century Ottoman architecture.

⁵ Jugendstil was an artistic movement partaking of the Art Nouveau trends, which revolutionized modern design and craft in Germany at the turn of the 20th century. The term Jugendstil, "youth style," comes from the art magazine Die Jugend, founded by the German artist Georg Hirth. In the beginning the Jugendstil style combined floral decorations, arabesques and nature-inspired lines, finally branching out into abstraction and functionalism. The Jugendstil movement emphasized the importance of establishing workshops, where designers could work with industrialist for mass production.



THE HISTORY OF KARAKOY MOSQUE

In 1903 D’Aronco was given the task to design a *mescit* (small mosque) near Galata, in the Southern side of today's Karakoy Square, between Halil Aga and Kemankesh Streets, in order to replace a pre-existing building. The original mosque had been built by Merzinfonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha in the 17th century. It was a *fevkani* or multi-storey mosque, in which the upper floor housed the prayer room, whereas the stores on the lower floors served the Merzinfonlu Foundation, the association which the mosque was linked to. Left to decay, it was finally decided to demolish the upper floor and its reconstruction was then entrusted to Raimondo D’Aronco by the Sultan Abdul Hamid II himself. The end of the works allegedly dates back to 1908, nevertheless some photographs of the time may suggest that the construction continued until 1910. D’Aronco’s project of the little mosque was awarded at the Sempione Fair held in Milan in 1906. The original designs, currently preserved in the archives of the Udine Civic Museum, display rich decorative details with Viennese Secession references (Ahunbay, 2012: 127). However, the actual mosque turned out to be more plain.

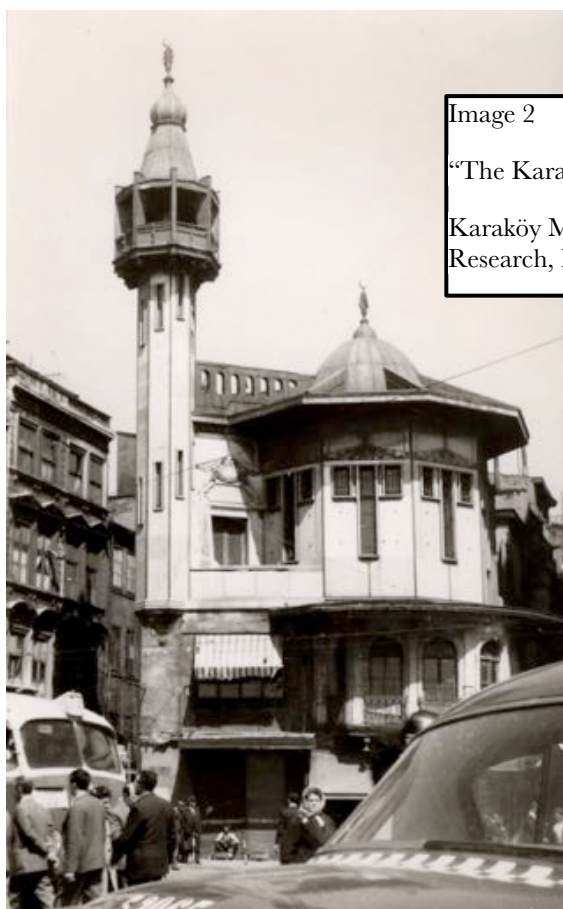


Image 2

“The Karakoy Mosque in the 1950s.”

Karaköy Mosque designed by d'Aronco. SALT Research, Harika-Kemali Söylemezoğlu Archive



The lower storeys, that bore the mark of the pre-existent structure, had a different style. The edge of the second-storey was outlined by a wide overhang, that constituted the base on which the third-storey designed by D'Aronco was raised. The building had a small, nine sided prayer room, enclosed with an high dome. The coating of the walls in marble slabs was enlivened by elements such as «[...] studding, closures and cover plates in gilded bronze.» (Barillari, Godoli, 1996: 104). On each of the facades facing the square were T-shaped openings, constituted by three sections. Marble decorations showing typical Art Nouveau floral motifs framed the upper section of the windows. The minaret, which was the distinctive mark of the small mosque, had an octagonal plan and stood on the Northwestern side of the building. The main body ended in a cone-shaped spire and had long, narrow openings at different heights, which contributed to the dynamism of the structure. The minaret balcon was constituted by a polygonal element with large openings. The classic *muqarnas* which would decorate the inferior section under the balcony seemed to be replaced by supporting elements similar to corbels.

The modest size and the characteristics of the area where the mosque stood highlight the skill and the originality of the architect, who managed to make perfect use of the space, realising an elegant, plain structure in which geometry and liveliness were perfectly blended together. The building appeared in several postcards printed out in the early 20th century, confirming the fact that it had become an important part of the city's landscape.

MENDERES ERA, THE NEW ISTANBUL MASTER PLAN AND THE DISMANTLING OF THE KARAKOY MOSQUE

The fate of the Karakoy Mosque was sealed by some crucial events that took place in Republican era. With the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, the capital had been set in Ankara. Nevertheless, Istanbul still played a leading role. In fact, after the Second World War, the economic recovery and the industrialization, together with a significant internal migration, had led to an important demographic increase in the city. As far as urban planning is concerned, Istanbul seemed not to have changed much since the late Ottoman era (Kuban, 1993: 389). At the same time, a new concept of road system and rational urban planning was standing out, also due to the greater spread of cars. The development of a master plan according to these modern needs was a priority for the political agenda of the government, represented by the Democrat Party (DP)⁶. The Prime Minister was Adnan Menderes (1899 – 1961). The years

⁶ The Democrat Party (DP), founded in 1946, was the first non-CHP party to win from the beginning of the multi-party period in Republican era. Adnan Menderes, who was one of the founders of the party, became Prime Minister in 1950. In 1960 the DP government was overthrown by a military *coupé d'état*. The same year, the Prime Minister Menderes and two other cabinet members were executed.



of his leadership had an incredible impact on the urban texture of large Turkish urban centers and especially Istanbul, which was at that point becoming a crucial pool of votes as well. At an early stage the development of the project for a new Istanbul master plan had been entrusted to the French urban planner and architect Henri Prost (1874 - 1959) between 1936 and 1951 (Akbulut, 1994: 285-287). After the appointment of a local commission, the Italian Luigi Piccinato, professor at the faculty of Architecture in Venice, took charge in the development of the project in an advisory capacity between 1956 and 1958 (Bilses, 2015: 525). The two urban planners certainly had a huge role in deeply changing the face of the city, nevertheless their visions did not lack of a certain sensitivity for the historical roots of the territory. In this way, it is interesting to notice that Piccinato believed it was essential for Istanbul to preserve its historical identity in order to define itself as a “modern” city⁷.



Image 3

“Karakoy Square in 1958 just one month before the dismantling of the mosque.”

Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Paşa Mosque in Karaköy. SALT Research, Ülgen Family

⁷ Milliyet Newspaper. “Şehircilik uzmanı ‘Tarihi yerleri muhafaza şart’ dedi”, 27th September 1966



However, the real turning point in Istanbul reconstruction program was the involvement of the Prime Minister Menderes himself, through the introduction of new zoning and expropriation laws in 1956, which earned him the name of “mimar Menderes” (Menderes the architect. İğüs, İsmailoğlu, 2016: 133) and the post of honorary mayor of Istanbul in 1957⁸. As part of this program, allegedly more than 7.289 structures were demolished, including many of historical value (Kuban, 1993: 391). During a press conference in 1956 Menderes highlighted the urge of a rearrangement of the port area of Karakoy, considered the neuralgic heart of the city traffic (Altun, 2003: 38). The extensive campaign of expropriation and demolition in the area, which caused the loss of numerous historical buildings, had two main purposes: the expansion of road networks and the opening of a square, in order to reduce congestion on the Karakoy bridge. Regarding this last work, in 1957 the press reported that a public tender open only to Turkish architects for the design of the square would soon be launched⁹. The project took shape the next year, in 1958: the square would rise in the area between the Karakoy Palace, work of the Levantine architect Giulio Mongeri, and the entrance of the Tunel station, the subway funicular line of the city. As part of the works, the buildings located on the plot next to the Ziraat Bank¹⁰, where also D’Aronco’s mosque stood, would be demolished to make room to a stop for the *dolmuş* (share taxis) heading to Taksim and Besiktas¹¹.

Direct references to the Karakoy Mosque seem to be incredibly few in the press of the time¹². Finally, on Tercuman newspaper of 6th September 1958 for the first time a short caption explains that the mosque was going to be removed for expropriation and moved elsewhere, “without however being damaged”¹³. It is interesting to notice that the urban planner Piccinato, in an interview released in 1958, had wished that all the mosques in Istanbul would be restored within the month of Ramadan¹⁴. The mosques he was referring to, however, were probably only the monumental ones. In 1957 the architect and writer Zeki Sayar, commenting on the impact of the program on the city’s urban structure, stated that Istanbul «was about to look like a bombed town [...]» (Sayar, 1957: 49). Even though he did not mention the Karakoy Mosque, Sayar strongly condemned the demolition, the dismantling and the eventual relocation of

⁸ Hürriyet Newspaper. “Adnan Menderes İstanbul’un fahri Belediye Başkanı oldu”, 2th June 1957.

⁹ Milliyet Newspaper. 11th January 1957

¹⁰ The building, whose architect is unknown, was built for the Austrian Wiener Bankverein after 1906. After hosting the Banque Francaise de Pays d’Orient and the Regie Company, it became the headquarters of the Turkish Ziraat Bank in Karakoy.

¹¹ Milliyet Newspaper. “Karaköy Meydanı planı belli oldu”, 05th October 1958

¹² As part of Karakoy’s landscape, the mosque is visible on several articles regarding the reconstruction plan (see for example Tercüman, 2th September 1958; Hürriyet, 7th May 1958; Milliyet, 22th May 1958). Nevertheless, the mosque is not mentioned.

¹³ Tercuman Newspaper, 6th September 1958

¹⁴ Milliyet Newspaper. “Ramazana kadar bütün camiler restore edilecek”, 27th September 1958

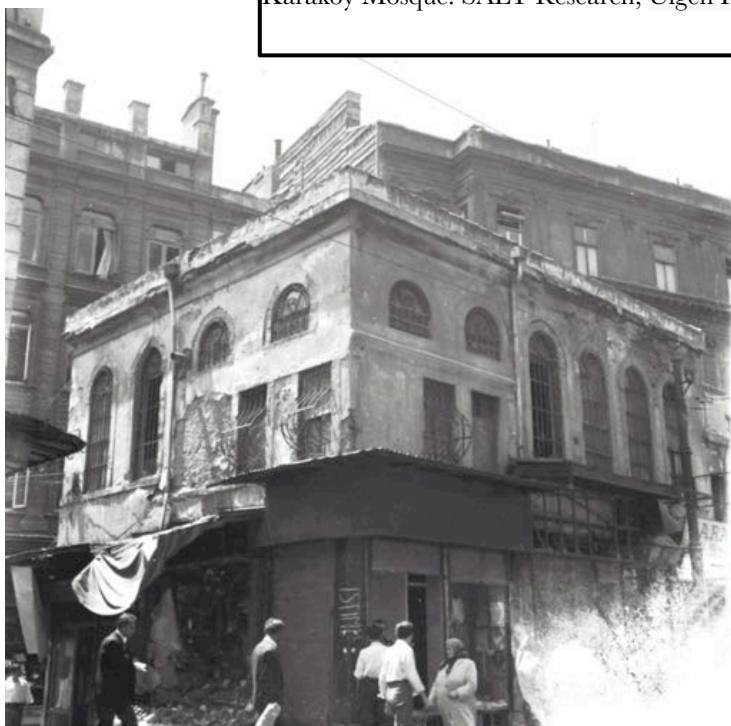


historical buildings. For what concerns the management of the works, the writer warned about the fact that such a «[...] ‘hurry’ will certainly lead to many mistakes that could never be fixed» (Sayar, 1957: 49). A declaration by Adnan Menderes about this topic, reported in the newspaper *Dunya* in 1961, is of particular interest: «A meticulous work has been done in order not to sacrifice historical places. The mosques which has been demolished were already ruined and had no historical value»¹⁵. After this, the mosque seemed to have disappeared into thin air not only from the Golden Horn, but from the press as well.

Image 4

“A photograph showing the remains of the lower-storey of the mosque after the dismantling and carry of the upper prayer room.”

Karakoy Mosque. SALT Research, Ülgen Family



¹⁵ “Bir kuyumcu tütüzlüğü ile tarihi değerler olan yerlerin feda edilmemesine gayret edildi. Yıkılan camiler, harap ve zaten tarihi değeri olmayan camilerdi.” *Dünya Newspaper*, 16th May 1961



In 1990s an inquiry conducted by the Art Historian Afife Batur, reopened the discussion and contributed to uncover the truth about the “kaybolan cami” (lost mosque) of Raimondo D’Aronco. Batur managed to recover an important dossier regarding the demolition order of the Karakoy Mosque, preserved in the archives of the Directorate General of the Foundations of Istanbul. According to this source, the furnishings of the mosque would have been devolved to other religious buildings: the *minber* and *mihrab* to the Atik Ibrahim Pasha mosque in Mercan, the minor furnishings, such as chandeliers and rugs, to the Office for sacred furnishings of the Directorate General of Foundations in Istanbul. However, there is no evidence about this latest information¹⁶. Regarding the relocation of the mosque, it is important to mention the testimony provided by the archaeologist Alpaslan Koyunlu, who at the time was working for the Historical Works Office of the Municipality of Istanbul. According to Koyunlu, following political pressure, a report allowing the confiscation of the mosque had been obtained. This report justified this decision declaring that the building had no historical value. Reportedly, once he learned about the demolition order, Koyunlu would have arranged its relocation, deciding to number the individual blocks that constituted the building and drawing up the plans, elevations and sections of the mosque¹⁷. In 2003, the Directorate General of Foundations in Istanbul provided an official response relating to the whole issue, stating that the numbered blocks had been loaded onto a barge bound for Kinaliada, one of the Princes’ Islands in the Marmara Sea, but that it had accidentally lost the entire load during transportation¹⁸. This version seems to be confirmed a few years later, with some differences, in 2005, when the witness of Nazif Ilter, *muhtar* (village chief) of the island of Kinaliada at the time of the event, was reported in several articles. Ilter would have asked for permission to use the blocks for the construction of a mosque on the island by contacting the Directorate General of Foundations in Istanbul. Once he arrived on the island, he would have noticed only the next day that he had lost the load, except for a couple of blocks¹⁹. In 2013 various newspapers also reported the witness of an inhabitant of Kinaliada called Reshat Pala. According to Pala most of the marbles belonging to the

¹⁶ According to a news reported in 2003, some officials of the Directorate General Of Foundations, during an investigation, found out that the Venice chandeliers belonging to the Karakoy mosque had been stolen, whereas the *mihrab* had been placed in the Yahya Kethüda mosque in Kasımpaşa, Istanbul. Hurriyet Newspaper, “Kayıp Karaköy Camii’nin mihrabı da ortaya çıktı,” <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/kayip-karakoy-camiinin-mihrabi-da-ortaya-cikti-124854> (accessed April 4, 2020)

Nevertheless, in 2012, the AGS Mimarlık company, in charge for the reconstruction of the mosque, stated that the *mihrab* in Kasımpaşa does not belong to the Karakoy Mosque. Sözcü Newspaper, Karaköy Camii yeniden inşa edilecek, <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2012/gunun-icinden/karakoy-camii-yeniden-insa-edilecek-146011/> (accessed May 3, 2020)

¹⁷ Hürriyet Newspaper. Karaköy Camisi’nin sadece kayıp iki taşını bulabildik, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/karakoy-camisi-nin-sadece-kayip-iki-tasini-bulabildik-38535314> (accessed April 4, 2020)

¹⁸ *Ibidem*

¹⁹ Sabah. “Karaköy Camisi yarım asır sonra hayata dönüyor”, 22th June 2006



Karakoy Mosque reached the island in pieces and just a few of them could be used in the foundation and walls of the Kinaliada Mosque, which was built in 1963 and still in use today²⁰. In fact, one of the marble slabs with floral motifs which once decorated the outer facade of the Karakoy Mosque has been used to frame the main entrance of the Kinaliada Mosque and nowadays lies on the ground within the courtyard. Also some other pieces which are claimed to be part of the original Karakoy Mosque are visible around this area: a *musalla taşı*²¹, a column, a richly decorated marble block and a small marble piece which emerges from the brickwork surrounding the courtyard²².

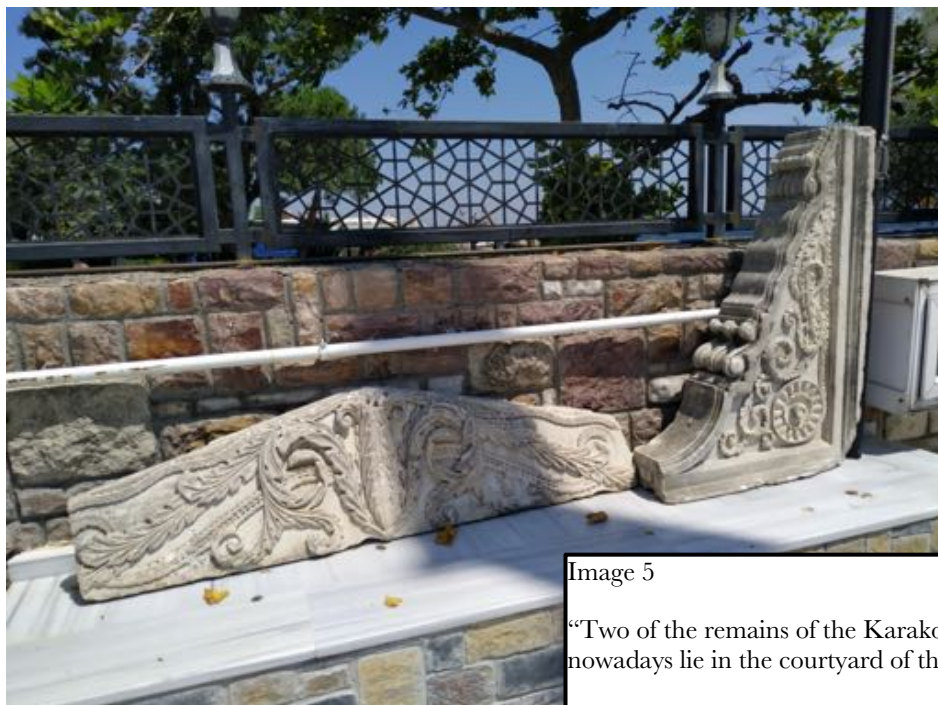


Image 5

“Two of the remains of the Karakoy Mosque which nowadays lie in the courtyard of the Kinaliada Mosque.”

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²⁰ Dünya Times Newspaper. Karaköy Camii efsanelerle örtüldü, <http://dunyatimes.com/karakoy-cami-efsanelerle-ortuldu-haberi-24.html> (accessed March 27, 2020)

²¹ A marble piece of furniture similar to an altar, commonly used during funeral ceremonies.

²² As regard the other parts of the mosque which allegedly reached Kinaliada, it has been suggested that some of them has been used in the construction of the island's pier. (Hürriyet Pazar Newspaper. Kaybolan cami, 1th October 2000). Nevertheless it is difficult to establish whether this information is true.



THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE KARAKOY MOSQUE: HISTORY AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

In the early 2000's another thorny issue emerged: the proposal for the reconstruction of the mosque in Karakoy, according to its original appearance. In 1993 the areas of Beyoglu and Galata became protected sites and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality therefore elaborated a conservation plan in which the reconstruction of several religious buildings was suggested (Ahunbay, 2012: 125). As part of this program, an official request for the reconstruction of D'Aronco's mosque had already been submitted to the Municipality of Beyoglu in 1995. One of the main proponents for the project was the conservative journalist and columnist Mehmet Sevket Eygi, outspoken critic of the demolishing of religious buildings during Republican era. Recalling that mosques, beyond their religious functions, contribute to the beauty of a city, Eygi had commented on the current layout of Karakoy square, stating that it «[...] looks like a soulless, shapeless concrete pile»²³. Fethi Turgut, who was at that time the Vice President of the Municipality of Beyoglu in charge of the historical buildings, seemed to lean towards the project, but the proposal, that did not fail to create controversy, apparently had no result. Later on, in 2002, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality included the reconstruction project of the Karakoy Mosque in the investment plan for interventions on cultural heritage²⁴. In 2006, the project Galagenova, headed by Nuri Kaya, had again draw attention on the topic²⁵. The Galagenova project, which aimed to provide suggestions for the reconstruction of Karakoy Mosque, as part of an intercultural dialogue between Turkey and Italy, nevertheless have not had the opportunity to be pursued.

On June 17, 2010 the 2nd Regional Authority for the protection of the cultural heritage of Istanbul finally approved the resolution for the development of the reconstruction project of the mosque²⁶. A public tender was therefore launched and won in 2012 by the AGS Mimarlık Company (Eriş, 2016: 80). According to Sebahattin Degirmentepe, representative of the company, the project is based on D'Aronco's original drawings, preserved in the archives of the Udine Civic Museum, and it has been carried out with the advice of Italian scholars and experts²⁷. Again, the proposal raised concerns on several fronts. It was noted that the original drawings by D'Aronco would not fully correspond to

²³ "[...] son derece ruhsuz, sekilsiz, beton yigini gibi duruyor.". Milliyet Newspaper. "İkinci cami davası", 05th July 1995

²⁴ Sözcü Newspaper. "Karaköy camii tekrar inşa edilecek", <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2012/gunun-icinden/karakoy-camii-yeniden-insa-edilecek-146011/> (accessed May 3, 2020).

²⁵ Cumhuriyet Newspaper. "Galagenova adlı gen!", 16th July 2006

²⁶ Arkitera. "Karaköy Mescidi yapım çalışmalarına başlandı", <https://www.arkitera.com/haber/karakoy-mescidi-tekrar-yapilacak/> (accessed March 10, 2020)

²⁷ Habertürk Online Newspaper. "Tarihi Karaköy Camii yeniden inşa ediliyor", <https://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/801854-tarihi-karakoy-camii-yeniden-insa-ediliyor> (accessed May 10, 2020)



the finished work, since several changes were made by the architect during the construction phase. Also, the original mosque once stood on the Western side of a plot together with several other buildings that no longer exist, including the one on which the mosque raised (Ahunbay, 2012: 127). In this sense the reconstruction, more than a *replica*, would be an independent structure. On the other hand, some criticisms have defined the initiative as more political than actually intended to safeguard the historical-artistic heritage²⁸. Nevertheless, several experts, including Afife Batur, declared to be in favor of the reconstruction as long as certain conditions were respected. Batur also pointed out the importance of working in collaboration with Italy and warned about the danger of carrying out such a project just for the sake of “popular demands”²⁹.



Image 6

“The abandoned worksite for the reconstruction of the mosque as it looks today. The Ziraat Bank building next to the site is currently under restoration.”

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In 2012 the work site, consisting of a perimeter of 474 meters, was finally delimited in Karakoy square. However, even before the work could officially begin, the project encountered one last, and currently unresolved, problem. As far as we know from the press, the successors of the owners of the premises who

²⁸ Cumhuriyet Kültür. “Yeniden yapım”, 13th June 2013

²⁹ Hürriyet Newspaper. “Karaköy camisi'nin sadece kayıp iki taşını bulabildik”, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/karakoy-camisi-nin-sadece-kayip-iki-tasini-bulabildik-38535314> (accessed April 4, 2020)



once occupied the lower floors of the mosque still own the property and have therefore decided to take legal action against the Municipality of Istanbul, causing the project to be put on hold³⁰. We have decided to contact the restoration company AGS Mimarlik and the Istanbul office of the Directorate General of Foundations for information on the current state of the work and they both kindly confirmed that there is an ongoing judicial process. According to the Directorate General of Foundations in Istanbul, the expropriation order for the estate has been issued. Therefore, while awaiting the outcome for the budget process, the construction of the mosque will not begin before the next year. Lastly, on the 2th January 2020 the official journal of the Republic of Turkey reports the decision number 1975, with which is ordered the acceleration of procedures for the expropriation of two cadastral parcels at the Kemankesh district in Karakoy for the reconstruction of the “Merzinfonlu Karamustafa Pasha Mosque”³¹.

CONCLUSIONS

Raimondo D’Aronco had a leading role in the development of Art Nouveau within the Ottoman Empire. The Karakoy Mosque was probably one of his most original works in Istanbul. The choice of materials and architectural elements, that seem to have been borrowed from both European Art Nouveau and Byzantine legacy, made this "little mosque" a unique combination of antique and modern.

In the late ‘50s, during the DP government, a vast zoning program held in Istanbul sealed the fate of the Karakoy mosque, which seems to have been dismantled without any valid reason. It could be said that some of the urban interventions realized in those years may reflect the sensitivity of the time. In this sense, structures with functional more than monumental features, such as *han*, *hamam*, *mescit*, fountains and private residences, may have been demolished as a result of the lack of a precise urban structure value. Nevertheless, the attempt of some specialized journals, such as *Arkitekt*, to draw attention on the topic, witnesses that at the time of the events the matter was perceived - at least within the academia - undoubtedly as crucial. What is sure, to put it as Afife Batur, the "jewel-like mosque"³² of Karakoy, which had been the symbol of the square for years, is lost forever.

³⁰ Milliyet Newspaper. “Menderes yıktırdı, özel şahsa uymadı”, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/menderes-yiktirdi-ozel-sahsa-uymani-1973142> (accessed February 18, 2020)

³¹ T.C. Resmi Gazete, 2 Ocak 2020, no. 30996, 187

³² İstiklal Newspaper. “Karaköy Camii projesine ne oldu?”, <https://www.istiklal.com.tr/kose-yazisi/istanbul-karakoy-cami-projesi-ne-oldu/446098> (accessed February 18, 2020)



In this paper we aimed to give an account of Raimondo D’Aronco’s career in Istanbul, focusing on the case study of the Karakoy Mosque and the events that will allegedly lead to its reconstruction. This last issue seems to be of crucial importance, both regarding the conservation of the local artistic-cultural heritage, and from an historical and political point of view. The reconstruction project, which started in 2012, seems to have come to a halt. Nevertheless, in the last years, the ongoing reshaping of the Karakoy area, which includes several restoration projects, such as the one of the historical Ziraat Bank building, might have had an impact in reopening this matter. In 2020 the official journal of the Republic of Turkey reported the decision for the acceleration of procedures required for the reconstruction of the “Merzinfonlu Karamustafa Pasha Mosque”. According to these last developments, the reconstruction project seems to be anything but archived.

The reconstruction of the Karakoy Mosque, which still divides public opinion and experts, might be seen as an attempt to compensate for the mistakes made in the past, or as a way to revitalize historical identity. In any case, it is hard to tell whether or not the project will finally achieve its purpose. In the event that the project is realized, the Karakoy Mosque will be a unique example of its kind in the region.

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