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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

Semih Rüstem (1898-1946), is a Turkish Early Republican era architect who studied architecture at the Technical University of Budapest. His relationship with Hungarian Turanism and his architectural education in Hungary makes him an exception among Turkish architects. In the early 1930's, he designed several buildings mostly under the influence of European Modernism but traces of these Hungary-related steps can also be followed in some of his designs. The information gathered in the process of this research, which aims to examine Semih Rüstem's life and career in the context of cultural relationships between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, provides a basis for a discussion on the formal sources of the buildings he designed.

Keywords

Turkish Architecture, Early Republican Turkey, Hungarian Turanism, Hungary-Ottoman Empire Relationships

1 Introduction

Cultural and architectural relationships between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire in the first quarter of the 20th century are a promising research field and potentially contain some exceptional examples. Within the development of Turan ideology in the early 1900s, cultural interactions between the two countries gained a new dimension. Semih Rüstem is a figure that can be examined in this context. He studied architecture at the Technical University of Budapest around 1916-1920 and produced in Turkey in the 1930s. His biography remained in the shadows for a long time due to a lack of documents; however, research examining his career and productions was published recently (Gümüş, 2014). The aim of this paper is to introduce his biography and architectural productions in the context of cultural relationships between the Ottoman Empire and Hungary in the first quarter of 20th century. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1 Semih Rüstem and his wife Elizabeth, 1920's, Temel Family Archive

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2 Hungarian Turanism in the Context of Educational Exchanges

Turan ideology of 1910s is the main framework with which to understand Semih Rüstem's connection with Hungary. Hungarian Turanism can be briefly defined as a nationalist movement, which argues that the Hungarian nation originated from Asia and is historically related to other Asian nations. The Turkish nation is one of them, with similarities between Hungarian and Turkish languages and cultures. The first Turanian grouping, the "Turan Association", was established in Hungary in 1910. One of its main goals was to conduct research into the history, science, culture and art of Turanian countries (Demirkan, 2000:pp.26-27). For this purpose, Hungarian Turanists encouraged and supported some successful students from the "Turanian countries" to study at Hungarian universities. Tahsil-i Sanayi Cemiyeti (Society of Industrial Education) was founded in Istanbul in connection with the Turan Association. Within the partnership of these two associations, the aim was to create a Turanist generation by sending successful Turkish students to Hungary to further their education (Demirkan, 2000:p.36). An introductory article about the movement, which directly addressed Ottoman parents was published in the Turan Journal in 1913, and promoted educational opportunities in Hungary. Two aspects were highlighted according to this purpose; the first point was the similar structures of Hungarian and Turkish languages. It was argued that Ottoman students would learn Hungarian more easily than their French or German counterparts. Therefore, Hungary was a more reasonable destination for education than Germany or France. The second point focused on the economic support that would be provided to Ottoman students by municipalities and the Hungarian Government (Turan Annual, 1913:p.115 cited in Demirkan, 2000:p.95-97). Because of these attempts, in May 1916, 186 Turkish students arrived in Hungary to develop their education. In 1922, a group of students containing Semih Rüstem, returned to Istanbul and founded 'Eğitimini Macaristan'da Gören Öğrenciler Cemiyeti' (Society of Turkish Students who Studied In Hungary) (Turan, 1922:p.1922 cited in Demirkan, 2000:p.103-104.). From what is known, it is understood that Semih Rüstem had attended the Technical University of Budapest through Tahsil-i Sanayi Cemiyeti, and after returning to Istanbul, he continued his relationship with the Turanist community. During the Turkish War of Independence, the Turkish Section of the Turan News Agency was founded in Budapest; its aim was to convince European public opinion about the right of the War of Independence. In a brochure published by this Agency, it is stated that Semih Rüstem played an important role for the agency in this process (Turan News Agency brochure, 1935, cited in Demirkan, 2000:p.50).

3 An Ottoman Student in Budapest

The exact dates of Semih Rüstem's education at the Technical University of Budapest could not be determined, but a document from the university's archive, which is a registration list from 1918, can be considered as a clue (Fig. 2). According to the document, Semih Rüstem took the Architecture Departments Year 1 courses (Mathematika II, Ábrázoló Geometria II, Mechanika II, Ókori alaktan II, Chemia II, Rajz II, Geológia II)¹ in the second semester of 1918-19 academic year². By checking the curriculum of the same year, it is possible to determine that these were the first-year courses of the Architecture Department, and as such, were printed on the registration form. In addition to these courses, 'Magyar díszítő motívumok' was a hand written addition to the list, which is an elective class taught by Huszka József³. There is a detail that can be considered interesting in this context; Huszka József is the writer of 'A magyar turáni ornamentika története' (History of Hungarian Turanian Ornamentation). Therefore, his research field reflects the cultural path of Hungarian Turanism.

Lapszám 17.

Semih Rüstem

Született *Konstantinápoly* 1898-ik évben *október 2-án*
 vallású; az 1918/19-iki tanév *január* havában *megkezdtem*
kezdésnapja alapján a *József-műegyetem építész*
 osztályába *rendes hallgatóul* felvételezt.

Tantárgy	Tanév Alkalmazott Technikum	Elsőfélévi	Megjegyzés	Tantárgy	Tanév Alkalmazott Technikum	Elsőfélévi	Megjegyzés
Mathematika	1918/19	II.		Alkalmazott szilárdtesttan			
Ábrázoló geometria		II.		Chemiai technológia			
Mechanika		II.		Technikai fizika			
Ókori alaktan		II.		Középítástan I. f.			
Chemia		II.		Ókori építés története			
Rajz		II.		Középkori építési alaktan			
Geológia		II.		Általános géptan			
<i>Magyar díszítő motívumok</i>		II.		Építéstan I. f.			

Fig. 2 Semih Rüstem's registration form, 1918, Technical University of Budapest Archive.

¹ Descriptive geometry II; Mechanics II; Morphology of Classical Antique Architecture; Chemistry II; Freehand drawing II; Geology II.

² Archive of Technical University of Budapest, BMEL_EPK_K-17_Szemih_Rustem, 1918.

³ Curriculum of 1918/1919 and information about mentioned course is available from:

http://public.omikk.bme.hu/bme_evkonyv/weblap.php?step=2&cat=orarendek&konyvtar=:/orarendek/1918_19_2/&alcim_id=778

In addition to the registration form of the University's Architecture Department, there are two further facts from Semih Rüstem's Budapest years. The first is a translation from the Hungarian architect Károly Kós's book 'Sztambul' (Istanbul), and secondly his contribution to the publication entitled 'Török emlékek Magyarországon' (Turkish Monuments in Hungary), published in 1918 by Ernő Foerk.

Konstantinápolyi Magyar Tudományos Inézet (Hungarian Institute for Sciences in Constantinople) was established in Istanbul by the Hungarian government and directed by the Hungarian art historian Antal Hekler. The research field of the institute included Turkish-Hungarian, Byzantine-Hungarian relationships, Byzantine and Islamic arts. In 1917, Károly Kós was sent to Istanbul by the Hungarian Government and joined Antal Hekler's team. His mission was to conduct research for the institute, which focused on Istanbul and Ottoman architecture (Ágoston, 2002). As a result of Károly Kós's research process, the book 'Sztambul', *Várostörténet és Architektúra* [Istanbul: Urban History and Architecture] was published by the Institute in 1918. In his foreword, Antal Hekler stated that the purpose of the book is to understand and explain the development phases of Istanbul. The book contains three main chapters; the history of Istanbul's Byzantine and Ottoman periods and its architectural products were discussed in the first two chapters, with the last chapter focussing on Istanbul's problems as a metropolitan area. 'Sztambul' was translated into Turkish in 1995 and published by the Ministry of Culture. Prior to this, the chapter titled "Ottoman-Turkish Mosques" was translated by Semih Rüstem into Ottoman Turkish and published in *Dergâh Magazine* in 1921 (Nuhoğlu, 2013:p.83). In this chapter, Károly Kós criticized the fact that European art history research was based on the Greco-Roman culture. He argued that the roots of the central dome plan type goes back to the Ural-Altaic tribes and that Turkish architecture moved deliberately towards this plan type; this is contrary to the idea that Turks did not have a separate and independent concept of architecture before the conquest of Istanbul (Kós, 2008:p.97-100). The main idea of the chapter is in line with the nationalism of the age and the Turan ideal, so it is clear why Semih Rüstem attempted to translate and publish the 'Ottoman Turkish Mosques' chapter.

Török emlékek Magyarországon, (Turkish Monuments in Hungary) was published in 1918 by Ernő Foerk. It was the outcome of a survey that was organized in 1917 by Ernő Foerk for students of the Hungarian Royal State Higher School for Construction. Semih Rüstem was one of the participants (Foerk, 1918:p.19) and prepared some technical drawings for the publication, which are Gül Baba Tomb, Ruins of a Turkish Bath in Bács, Turkish Tombstones in Temesvár (Foerk, 1918:pp.3,34-35,50).

Based on Ernő Foerk's research on Turkish monuments in Hungary, and that in the same period, Károly Kós was sent to Istanbul, it can be argued that the interest shown to Turkish

architectural history during the first quarter of 20th century in Hungary was parallel to Hungarian Turanism. Semih Rüstem also contributed to the research as a Turkish student who studied architecture through the support of Turanist associations.

4 Semih Rüstem as an Architect

After returning to İstanbul with his Hungarian wife Elizabeth⁴, Semih Rüstem started to work as a freelance architect designing several buildings between 1929-1933. In 1929, he initiated the Adana Slaughterhouse Project (*Belediye Mezbahası*, Anon., 1933), which can be considered as an ambitious project both economically and technically for the early republican years. The slaughterhouse, located in Adana, a southern city of Turkey, was designed in 1929 and constructed between 1930-1932. As underlined in an article published in *Arkitekt* magazine to introduce the slaughterhouse, Semih Rüstem himself was concerned about details such as the relationship of the slaughterhouse with the city, the use of local materials and local workers. Because of the hot climate in Adana, a central plan was not the preferred choice for the slaughterhouse. It consisted of six pavilions and a water tower (*Belediye Mezbahası*, Anon., 1933). The entrance façade of the building is formed around a pointed arch and resembles İstanbul's Sütlüce Slaughterhouse from the early 1920s. Both buildings façades bear the traces of Ottoman Revivalism, which was the dominant architectural style from the early 1900s to 1930s, especially in public buildings. It can be briefly defined as combining some architectural and ornamental elements such as wide roof overhangs with supporting brackets, pointed arches, muqarnas, tile decoration from Ottoman architecture with new construction techniques and materials (Bozdoğan, p. 18). However, the design of the water tower cannot be appraised under Ottoman Revivalism, and identifying its stylistic inspirations seems to be complicated. How if Semih Rüstem's educational background is taken into consideration, the water tower of the slaughterhouse is strikingly similar to the tower of "Vajdahunyad Castle" – officially the Historical Main Group of the Millennium Exhibition held in Városliget [City park of Budapest] – designed by Ignác Alpár and built in the beginning of twentieth century in Budapest. "Vajdahunyad Castle" is an eclectic complex, which bears traces from various historic Hungarian buildings; one of the towers of the castle is a replica of the Corvin Castle in Vajdahunyad/Transylvania (today Hunedoara, Romania) from fifteenth century. Because of the similarities between the two towers, such as the design of consoles and the roof; it can be argued that Semih Rüstem might have been inspired by the Vajdahunyad Castle while designing the water tower of Adana Slaughterhouse. (Fig. 3, 4, 5)

⁴ Temel, S. (Daughter of Semih Rüstem Temel), (2013). Temel Family History. (Personal communication, 24 November 2013).



Fig. 3 Adana Slaughterhouse, Mimar, 1933-26.



Fig. 4 Vadjahunyad Castle, photo: Dila Gümüş, 2015.

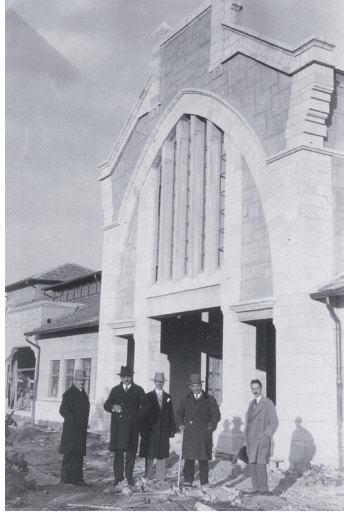


Fig. 5 Adana Slaughterhouse, early 1930's, Temel Family Archive.

In the same year as the slaughterhouse, Semih Rüstem's four dwelling projects, including his own house, were constructed in Adana. In the 1930s, modern-looking dwellings with flat roofs, plain façades and strip-windows became popular in Turkey. They were called 'cubic' in Turkish popular culture, and living in a 'cubic house' was a sign of distinction (Bozdoğan, 2001:pp.193-197). Semih Rüstem's dwelling projects in Adana mostly reflects architectural trends of the 1930's. (Fig. 6)



Fig. 6 Semih Rüstem House, early 1930's, Temel Family Archive.

Semih Rüstem's house, completed in 1932, is a two-storey house with a flat roof. Horizontal lines are dominant in the façade design. The two striking elements of the façade are the concave curves of the entrance and the extended balcony, which was termed by the architect as "balcony for strolling" (*Bir Mimar İkametgahı*, Anon., 1932). The curved entrance of the building and the circular form of the balcony is compatible with art deco style balcony consoles. (Fig. 7)



Fig. 7 Semih Rüstem House, early 1930's, Temel Family Archive.

The House of Sait Bey was constructed next to the Semih Rüstem House in the same year (*Sait B. Evi*, Anon., 1932), but unlike the Semih Rüstem House, it has more linear details. It has a flat roof, strip windows and plain façade design. In line with the previous example, it follows the architectural fashion of the period. The surfaces between windows are highlighted with different colours, and this application foregrounds the contrast between the vertical and horizontal lines of the façade design. Because of this practice, it has been argued that there are neoplastic influences in the façade of the Sait Bey House (Aslanoglu, 2010:p.310). (Fig. 8, 9)

After the Semih Bey and Sait Bey houses were registered as cultural heritages in 2004, the MaRS architecture office, initiated the Semih Rüstem Temel Business Centre Project that contained the houses. Within the scope of the project, the Sait



Fig. 8 Sait Bey House, early 1930's, Temel Family Archive.



Fig. 10 Semih Rüstem Business Center, 2012, Mars Archive, photo: Cemal Emden.

similar size balcony on the first floor. The entrance façade of the building, with its L-shaped balcony, can be associated with neoplastic architecture. Similar to the Semih Rüstem and Sait Bey houses, the Şevket Bey House and İsmail Hakkı Bey House were constructed side by side. Contrary to the other three buildings, flat roof and strip windows are not used in the İsmail Hakkı Bey House. The building has a brick roof with large eaves and has a more traditional look compared to the other houses of the architect. The only attraction on the façade is the highlighted window series of the first floor. (Fig. 11, 12, 13)



Fig. 9 Semih Rüstem and Sait Bey Houses, 1930's, Temel Family Archive.

Bey House was demolished and rebuilt, and the Semih Rüstem House restored. A business centre was constructed behind the houses and has details compatible with them⁵. The business centre consists of two different buildings. The one constructed behind the Semih Rüstem House has circular edges in line with the house. Vertical and horizontal lines that intersect in the Sait Bey House's façade can also be observed in the building immediately behind it. (Fig.10)

Another dwelling designed by Semih Rüstem in Adana is the Şevket Bey House, which was completed in 1932. The ground floor and first floor of the building were designed as two different residences, so their entrances are in different façades. The architect's intention was to reserve open spaces for both residences in the building (*Dişçi Şevket Bey Katevleri*, Anon., 1933). On the ground floor, there is a large veranda, and a



Fig. 11 Şevket Bey House, Mimar, 1933-28.

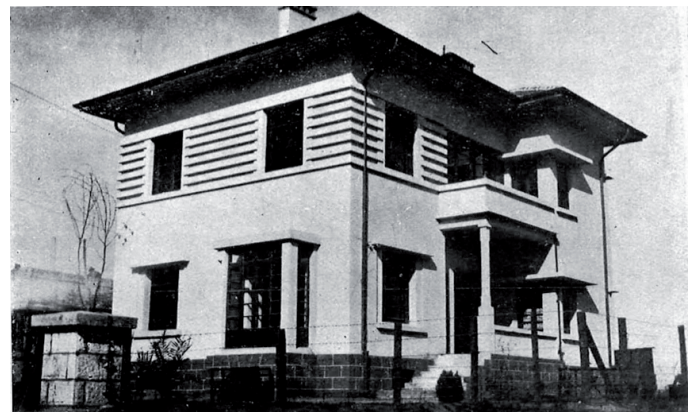


Fig. 12 İsmail Hakkı Bey House, Mimar, 1932-17.

⁵ Yücel, C. (Partner and Architect of MArS), (2013). Semih Rüstem Temel İş Merkezi. (Personal communication, 5 March 2013)



Fig. 13 Şevket Bey and İsmail Hakkı Bey Houses, Mimar, 1933-28.

Semih Rüstem's dwelling designs in Adana, except for the İsmail Hakkı Bey House, are the examples for modern dwellings of the Early Republican years. In the same period, he also designed a modern bank branch building (İş Bankası Mersin Şubesi) in Mersin, a neighbouring city to Adana (*İş Bankası Şubesi*, Anon., 1932). The works of the architect in Adana made him quite famous in his time. In 1933, an article named "First Ten Years Art Life of the Republic" was published in *Mimar*, a Turkish periodical specifically concentrating on architecture. Successful Turkish architects of the ten year period were introduced in the article in which Semih Rüstem and his productions in Adana were mentioned (*Cumhuriyetin On Senelik San'at Hayatı*, Anon., 1933, 264).

In addition to the Adana works, Semih Rüstem designed a residence for famous Turkish painter Şevket Dağ, which is located in Rumelihisarı, İstanbul; plans for the residence had been drawn in 1932. (*Ressam Şevket Bey Yalısı*, Anon., 1934). The Şevket Dağ residence, perhaps because it is located on the Bosphorus, and perhaps because of Şevket Dağ's choice, is dissimilar from the "cubic" appearance of the other dwellings designed by Semih Rüstem. A prominent element on the façade is the two-storey cantilever (çıkma). It is covered with a small roof that stands independently from the main roof. Second floor of the cantilever was designed as the workshop of Şevket Dağ; it is surrounded by windows on three sides to benefit from light as much as possible (*Ressam Şevket Bey Yalısı*, Anon., 1934). The large semi-circular opening next to the projection is another striking element on the façade. The palette placed on the façade is a reference to Şevket Dağ's signature of a similar form.

The cantilever, which is supported by curved consoles, can be considered as the element of the residence that refers to Ottoman Revivalism. However, the way the roof system is organized and the semi-circular opening detail on the façade, have distinct characteristics from Ottoman Revivalist architecture. Once again, taking Semih Rüstem's biography and educational

6 T.C. Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 'Ankara İmar Müdürlüğü'ne İstanbul Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi İnşaat Muallimi Mimar Semih'in tayini.', 17/10/1933, no:15106, dosya:75-83.



Fig. 14 Ressam Şevket Bey Waterfront, Mimar, 1934-41.

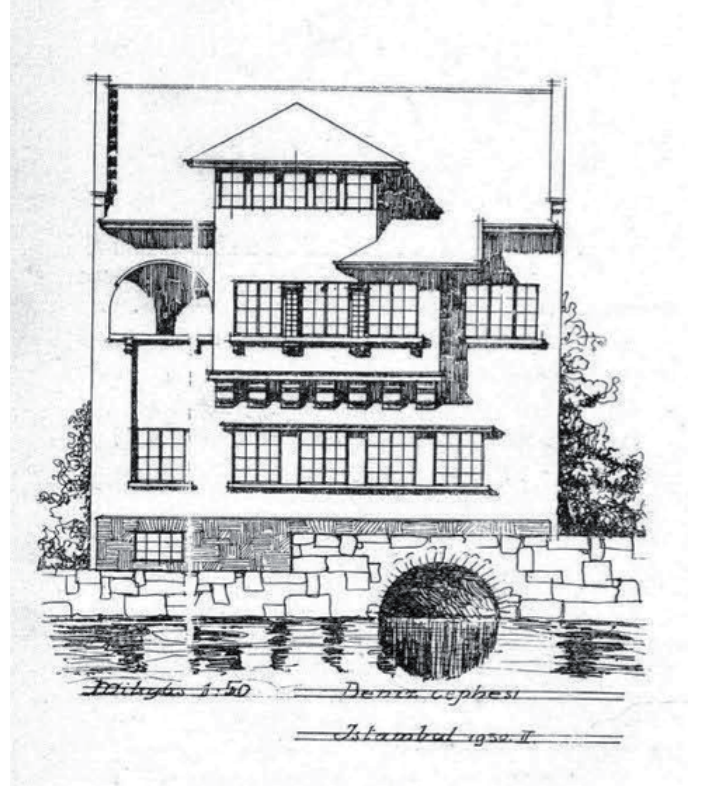


Fig. 15 Ressam Şevket Bey Waterfront, Mimar, 1934-41.



Fig. 16 Wekerle Houses, photo: Dila Gümüş, 2015.

background in consideration may provide an explanation of these architectural details. The brick surfaced roofs of the Şevket Dağ Residence that intersect at different angles and the semi-circular opening on the front façade, can be associated with the houses designed by Kós Károly and inspired by Transylvanian vernacular architecture, such as the group of houses on the Wekerle Housing Estate, Budapest. (Fig. 14, 15, 16)

5 Semih Rüstem as a Bureaucrat

Semih Rüstem was appointed to the Ankara Development / Housing Directorate as director in 1933. In the document of appointment, he is referred to as “İstanbul Fine Arts Academy construction instructor Architect Semih”. It is understood that he was working at the Fine Arts Academy before moving to Ankara⁶.

The Development Directorate in Ankara was responsible from the construction of the city’s public facilities. After starting work in Ankara as a bureaucrat, his career shifted to a different stage. It was no longer possible to trace his architectural productions. Many officers and politicians struggled for this position because, during the Early Republican Period, one of the projects that received the most investment was the planning of the new capital city of Ankara. After the proclamation of Ankara, a small Anatolian town, as the new capital city in 1923, construction of the city became a major issue for the Republic of Turkey. It is clear that being the Development/Housing Director of Ankara was an important position in the 1930s. Hermann Jansen, a German city planner who was responsible for the planning of Ankara, closely followed the selection of the director with whom he would work. Jansen argued that the person to be appointed should be a successful architect and should be familiar with the principles of housing in modern cities (Tankut, 1993, 140-168).

In 1937, Semih Rüstem resigned from his position; following his resignation, his only activity until 1944, carried out within the framework of this research, was the title he won in the Samsun Zoning Plan competition in 1941, although his project was not initiated. (*Samsun Şehri İmar Müsabakası Projelerine Jüri Raporu*, Anon., 1941)

Semih Rüstem and his family left Turkey in 1944 and emigrated to the USA. Münir Ertegün, Turkey’s Ambassador to Washington, was married to the architect’s sister, so it is conceivable that this journey was made through important contacts. With the support of Münir Ertegün, Semih Rüstem Temel must have found the courage to continue his career in the USA. During the Second World War, the journey from Istanbul to Baltimore was not an easy choice. Soon after arriving in the U.S.A., Semih Rüstem opened an export-import office in Manhattan called ‘Temel Corporation’; he continued to deal with commerce in Manhattan until his death in 1946⁷.

⁷ Temel, S. (Daughter of Semih Rüstem Temel), (2013). *Temel Family History*. (Personal communication, 24 November 2013).

6 Conclusion

Most of the Early Republican era architects started their education at Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi (Fine Arts Academy) in Istanbul, with the successful ones continued their education in European countries following their graduation. For architecture, Germany and France were generally preferred; Hungary was not a usual destination. Semih Rüstem followed an uncommon route with the support of Turanian Associations, making him an exceptional case among other Turkish architects. As a result, his story also contains some clues about cultural relationships between the Ottoman Empire and Hungary in the first quarter of 20th century, in the context of Turanism. In his architectural works, together with modernist influenced forms and Ottoman Revivalism, it is also possible to trace elements from Hungarian architecture. In 1933, he was appointed to the Development Directorate of Ankara, an important position at the time; it is reasonable to suppose that his education abroad must have played a part in getting it. Within his new position, he worked and produced in the urban planning field for several years. From 1929, when he started to work as a freelance architect, until 1933 when he was appointed to the Ankara Development Directorate, Semih Rüstem was the player of an interesting and hybrid architectural production process.

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