

HISTORY OF OTTOMAN ARCHITECTURE



CAPITALS OF THE EMPIRE

After the conquest of the Christian cities **Bursa**, **Edirne** and **Constantinople** the Turkish sultans transformed each of them to make their capital. Each one marked a stage in the development of the young Ottoman Empire. This gave the possibility to discover and learn from other cultures, like the Byzantines, but always in a way of reinterpretation, according to the characteristic of the Ottoman's own architecture and culture.

Although they are not too distant from each other, the three cities are very different. Bursa is situated at the foot of the Olymp of Mysie, Edirne on a flat land irrigated by three rivers, Istanbul on the sea. Water used to be a determining factor for the planning of their cities, for it was celebrated by the Koran.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF PROFILE

According to the Byzantine conception following the Roman traditions, the cities were designed according to a plan in horizontal and arranged with arterial roads and squares. In contrast, that of Turkish architecture design begins with the profile of landscape to emphasize the vertical aspect, with the development of the most important and representative buildings such as the mosques. It is with Sinan that this concept will be further developed to the point that due to its dominant position the mosque determines the profile of the whole city.

The Turkish city's structure was determined by two factors: the nomadic origin of this people, and then by their conversion to Islam. Since its beginning Islam has always refused to give an exaggerated importance to the real world and to accumulating of wealth favored by the city. The splendour and the monumentals dimensions were reserved for only the sacred buildings, especially the mosques.

PUBLIC SPACES

The Turks' way of life and especially their concept of life in society has also an influence on urbanism. Square are quite rare and are big open spaces where markets take place. The *bazaar*, in covered roads with barrel vault is the Turkish city's shopping centre. Therefore one cannot find big public spaces for the community as they existed in the Greek, Roman or Byzantine empire. *Cafés* in the open air, generally near the mosque, or in green areas, are preferred as social spaces but always in a informal way.

The *külliye* is the most important part of the Ottoman cities, but it's function doesn't correspond to this idea of public space. It is the religious and social place, where in most cases there is a mosque, a *madrasa*, a hospital, a refectory, a tomb, a library, and more.

The mosque and the külliye formes a well ordered complex apart from the urban structure of the residential areas.

EVOLUTION OF THE RELIGIOUS AND CIVIC SPACES

THE KÜLLIYES OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE



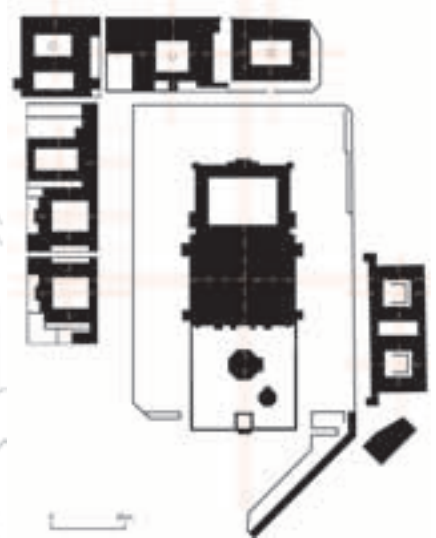
BURSA
YILDIRIM BEYAZIT KÜLLIYE,
1391-1403

The first complete külliye is the one of Bursa, the first capital of the Ottoman Empire. It included the mosque, the madrasa, the sultan's *turbé*, a nursery, a refectory of the natives, public baths and a caravanserai. The buildings are situated on terraced land, on the outskirts of the city. There are no axes nor parallels that connect the different buildings, there is no hierarchy as to the spaces that connect the whole complex, there is no pre-arranged system for the layout of the constructions, the disposition is only due to the conformation of the land. Being higher and larger than all the other buildings the mosque dominates the whole complex. This is rather due to its silhouette than to its effective mass.



EDIRNE
BEYAZIT II KÜLLIYE,
1484-1488

It is probable that at the time of building the complex the city extended all about it and that the layout of the complex was influenced by the lanes and adjacent houses. The asymmetrical urban form, with the buildings forming an irregular U-shape around the central axis of the mosque, is determined by the conformation of the land. The buildings are situated on a flat landscape, this way the silhouette of the mosque appears clearly visible. It is like a "campus", including, in a side, a big madrasa, an infirmary and a psychiatric hospital, the whole forming the school medicine. This result from the hierarchy and distinction between the sacred building and the utilitarian buildings.



ISTANBUL
SÜLEYMANIYE KÜLLIYE,
1550-1556

The complex was built by the architect Sinan (1491-1588), the most important architect of the ottoman empire. The layout is on a hill, which complicated Sinan's task but this enabled him to draw an advantage and to confer this characteristic silhouette of the city. The symmetric disposition of the other buildings in comparison with the main axle of the mosque confers a strong hierarchy to the complex. A beginning of hierarchization between the sacred building and the ones surrounding it already existed in Edirne in the külliye Beyazit II, but Sinan accentuated it more: the more he excelled himself with the construction of mosques the less he cared about façades of other buildings. In spite of this the complex is characterized by a very high precision regarding the general layout of the buildings.

THE MOSQUE



Süleymaniye Cami, 1550-1556, Istanbul

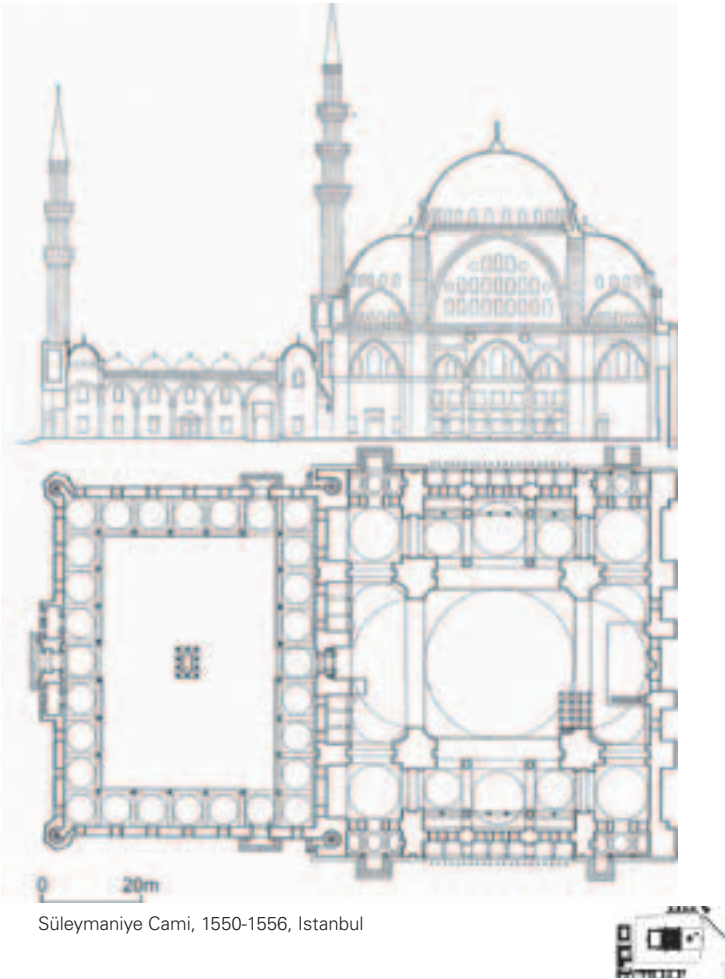
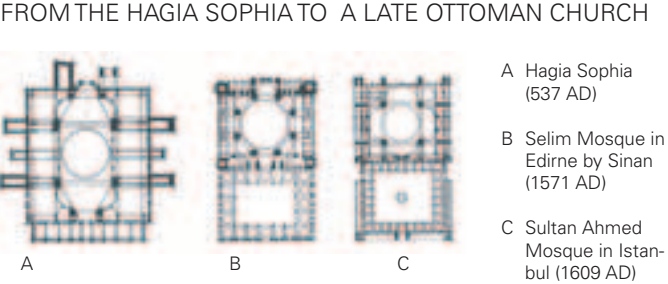
THE MOSQUE IN THE OTTOMAN TRADITION

Seen from the outside, the first mosques (*camii*) of Brousse, Edirne and Istanbul are compact cube shaped constructions. This volume changes progressively into a body of “crystal-clear” appearance. This is characterised by the minarets and the superimposed and jointed domes and semi domes that give the silhouette that most clearly expresses the sacred Turkish architecture. The external appearance always reflects the internal structure. With few formal variations this one is composed with four piers included in a central plan with square basement, connected with four big arches, serving as lateral bracing crowned with a monumental buttress. Another characteristic preserved is the big entrance gate and the orientation of the mosque from the rear wall (kibla) in direction South/West, i.e. towards Mecca.

FROM AN EARLY OTTOMAN MOSQUE TO THE SOLIMAN MOSQUE



FROM THE HAGIA SOPHIA TO A LATE OTTOMAN CHURCH



Süleymaniye Cami, 1550-1556, Istanbul

SACRED TURKISH ARCHITECTURE AND THE RELATION TO A CHRISTIAN TRADITION

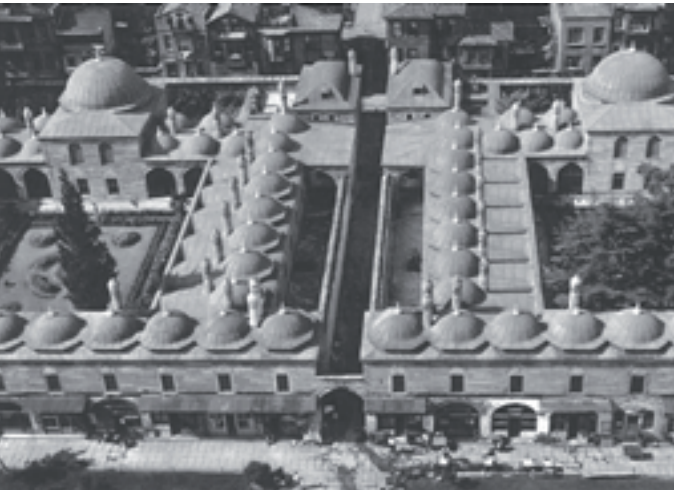
The first Ottoman mosques were composed of a succession of spaces, formed by massive walls supporting the dome (domed prayer hall). The big change of conception occurs with the conquest of Constantinople (1453) and the discovery of the church of Hagia Sophia as a reference. In time however Ottoman architects would free themselves of this reference, as exemplified by the important Ottoman architect Sinan and his successors. The directional space inherited by Saint-Sophia of the early Ottoman era will evolve in plan to become sets of perfectly balanced spaces based on rotating symmetries.



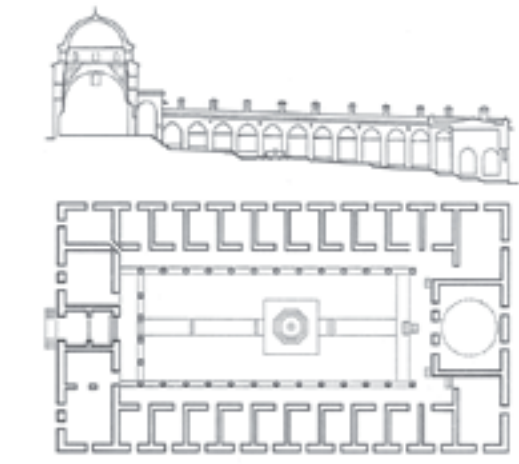
Selimiye-Cami Mosque, 1575, Edirne

Selimiye-Cami Mosque, 1575, Edirne

THE MADRASA



The Madrasa of Soliman Mosque, Istanbul



Yildirim Beyazit külliye, madrasa, 1398-1403, Edirne, Plan

The *madrasa* is a school of theology, the plan of which had been inherited from the Persian-seljukid madrasas, and evolves by reducing proportions and simplifying the forms. One can find a subordination to the dimensions and treatment of materials comparable to those of a mosque. The typical plan of an Ottoman madrasa includes a porticoed courtyard, flanked by vault- or dome-covered cells that were intended for use by students. A vaulted hall opens onto the courtyard, walled on three sides, with the fourth entirely open, situated on the main axis.



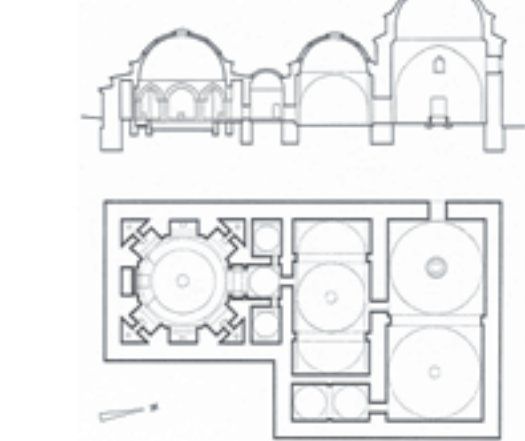
Ahmet Pasha Cami Madrasa, Istanbul

Yildirim Beyazit külliye, Edirne

THE HAMAM

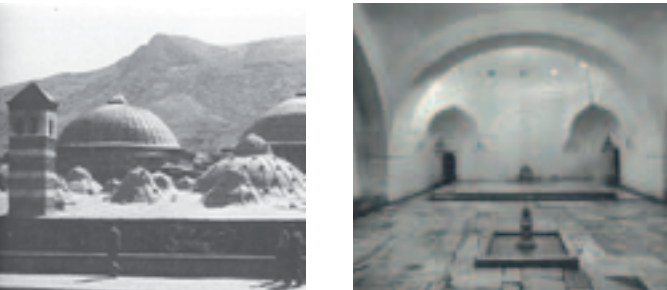


Yeni-Kaplica, 16th century, Bursa



Yeni-Kaplica, 16th century, Bursa, Elevation and plan

The custom of public bathing is a very old ottoman tradition, strictly linked to the prescriptions concerning body hygiene as presented in the Koran with regard to the cult. It also served as an alternating meeting place for both males and females. The general disposition of the *hamam* includes an anteroom, a first bath room with moderate temperature and then a steam bath. . Even at the climax of the Ottoman Empire the public baths maintained chiefly a practical and modest aspect, especially in the external façade.



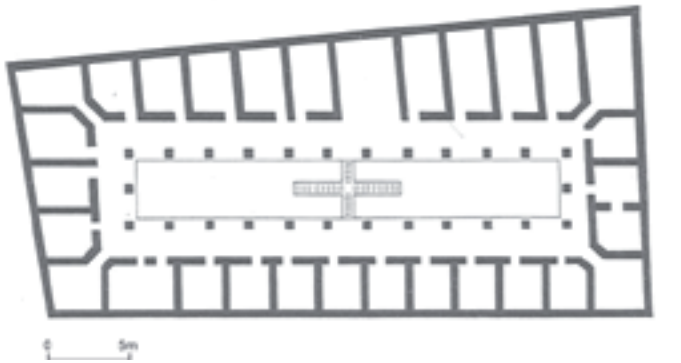
Ali Pasha Hamam, 1573, Tokat

Yeni-Kaplica, 16th century, Bursa

THE HAN (CARAVANSERAI)



Rüstem Pasha Han, Istanbul



Rüstem Pacha Han, Istanbul

The *han* (also called *caravanserai*) represents the only type of hostel in the Ottoman Empire. Usually the han would be situated in the center of the city, so their form had to adapt to the irregular constructions in the urban surroundings. This kind of building had no more than two storeys.

Their function was simple and purely utilitarian: individual rooms for the travellers arranged around a hall with galleries for the distribution. Another function was as trading place and market, due to the high numbers of persons who were passing through for short laps of time.



Rüstem Pasha Han, Istanbul



Koza Han, Bursa

HOUSES



House, Ankara, 18th. century, Elevation and plan

Compared to the mosques the Turkish residential houses and the palace have a simple and modest aspect. Two factors determine the living plan: firstly the climate and the landscape, and secondly the Islamic religion which imposes a strict separation between the spaces of the men and those of women. For this reason the rooms do not communicate but are articulated in L or U-shape around a hall-courtyard. This courtyard sapce for access and living is a very important element of the house, because it is the commonly shared space and the place for access to the fresh air. The number of floors rarely exceeds two, and the building material generally used is wood.



Interior of a house, Konya

ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

STALACTITES



Hataunye Cami, To



Yechil Cami, Bursa

The *stalactites* or *muquarnas* are decorative elements in stucco, inherited from primitive Turkish art. They were used to connect the piers directly to the archs above, to mask the geometric transition between the walls and the domes to the capitols of the columns. This motive is also found around the piers to emphasize the junction with the external walls where the lateral archs are inserted. Their function is emphasize the internal space's unity and structural rigor, in order to conceal the tectonic transition.



Soliman Mosque, Istanbul

REVETEMENT



Faience



Yeni Cami, Adana

Faience tiles were used by the Ottomans to cover the internal spaces in order to visually dissolve the wall's materiality and to eliminate any sign of weight. The surface as a result appears hard, impenetrable and compact, but at the same time radiant without glittering. In contrast to mosaics they reveal with precision and clarity the outline of the tiled forms. In this way the walls look like a glassy, clear continuous surface.



Faience

DOORS



Soliman Mosque, Istanbul

Set within the simple elevations of the majority of traditional houses the only facade element to present its owner's appropriate social status to the outside world is the door. All symbolic attributes can therefore be found miniaturized in this facade element, whether in iron, wooden sculpture or in stone. At the monumental scale there are the *ivan*, the mosque's monumental gates, that are also richly ornate with the classical elements of Ottoman decoration.

