

CONTRIBUTION OF THE OTTOMAN TURKS TO THE ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

It is believed that the Turkish architecture is as old as the Turkish history. However, the Turks made constantly progresses in the architectural constructions in Anatolia as well as in other countries where they settled for the long time. The Turks decorated Turkey with numerous Turkish Islamic architectural monuments such as mosques with graceful minarets, madressahs, fountains, palaces, aqueducts, shrines, tombs, baths, schools, hospitals and caravan saris. This paper highlights the induction of new form in the Islamic architecture and analyzes its gradual evaluation culminating in the architecture of the Ottoman rule in Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

The lands of Turkey, where Turkish and Islamic Culture is deep rooted, is one of the cradles of world civilization. Turkey virtually presents a synopsis of the history of world civilization and its architectural treasures reflect all the civilizations which have gradually developed on its soil from Hittite, through Phygian, Lydian to Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Turkish & include such masterpieces as St. Sophia the greatest monument of Byzantine architecture. However, numerically Seljuke and ottoman architectural monuments predominate.

When spreading westward, the Seljukian Turks won a great victory at Malazgirt near the Murat River on August 26, 1071. This victory was an important step for the Turks to become dominant in Anatolia. From that time on, Anatolia became the Turks everlasting home country. After the Malazgirt victory (1071 A.C.), the Seljuks proved themselves the creative power in the Turkish architectural art by many works of art that they gave. The Seljuk Sultans, the princess and viziers even competed with each other in

constructing mosques, hospitals, inns and the like. Some examples of these early monuments of the Seljukian period are the Alauddin mosque in Konya, the Esrefoglu mosque in Bysehir, the Ulu mosque in Afyon, the Ulu mosque in Devrigi, the Hatun mosque in Kayseri and the Ulu mosque in Diyarbakir.

In the early 14th Century the Anatolian Seljukians were divided into several districts governed by a *bey* (*Bey* is a title inferior to, *Pasha*, and superior to *Agha*). New styles were developed by these *beyliks*. The Karaman Beylik is one of these. And the art of this *beylik* forms a bridge to the Ottoman art. The Ottoman architecture was born in Iznik, developed in Busra and Edirne, and reached its peak in Istanbul (Hamlin 1944). The principles of the architectural techniques are observed in the buildings in Iznik. The Haci (Haji) Ozbek mosque was the first to have the central vault which is a characteristic of the Ottoman mosque. Later in Busra many examples of the Turkish architecture were given. Some of these are the Murat mosque, the Yildirim Beyazit mosque, the Green mosque, and the Murat II mosque. In Edirne a new technique was tried on the mosque with the three gallery minaret. The Iznik Busra-Edirne techniques continued to be used after Istanbul was conquered. The architectural technique of the dying Byzantine did not affect them. The palaces, seaside residences, schools of theology, fountains, bridges and many other constructions belonging to the Ottoman times have architectural value.

SELJUKIAN ARCHITECTURE

In Islam though great respect is paid to the departed, there is no actual cult of the dead, and tombs do not raise much above ground level. However, the Turks created monuments out of tombs by raising the vaults in the form of towers. The schools of theology and tombs are in fact Turkish architectural works. The tombs of the Seljukians are of a special type of buildings. These with their cylindrical shapes are seen in many parts of Turkey. The Amir Saltuk tomb in Erzurum, the Melih Ghazi tomb in Kirsehir, the Mama Hatun tomb in Tercan, the tomb in Ahlat and double tombs in Kayseri are only a few examples of these.

The Seljukian architecture used a technique of building the walls with cut stones on both inside, and filling the hollow places

in between. In some buildings marble was used. Decoration and carving in stone are seen in all of these buildings. The special characteristic of these decorations is that they are descriptive. An example of these is the two headed eagle emblem which is at the entrance of the Cifte Minareler mosque (Double Minaret) in Erzurum. This is the emblem of Seljukian sultans. Enameled tile is used extensively on the interior decorations. Wood carving is another kind of the Seljukian work of art. High altars and doors are very good examples of this.

CONSTRUCTIONS UNDER THE OTTOMAN

The founder of the Ottoman state were Turks of the Kayi branch of the Oguz family who with their leader Ertugrul *bey*, Kcamelinto Anatolia in the time of Sultan Alauddin Keykubad I settled by the Sultan in the region of Karacadag, including Ankara, Konya and Eskisehir. They later took from the Byzantines the district of Sogut and Domanic. On the death of Ertugrul his son, Osman, succeeded him at the age of 23. Osman Bey was born at Sogut in 1258. He had at first the title of *Beyi* (Protector of Frontier) under the Sultan, but in 1299 when the Seljuk power was crumbling, he proclaimed his independence. This news Turkish state took its name of Ottoman (Osmani) from its founder.

The foundation period (1299-1501) begins with Ghazi Osman, the founder. After the ejection of the Byzantines from Asia Minor was made complete, the Turkish force crossed into Europe. Penetrating as far as the Danube defeating the crusaders army, the situation in Balkans was stabilized and this state of affairs was brought to permanence by the capture of Istanbul in 1458 by Sultan Mehmet Fatih, the conqueror. Busra, Edrin (Adrianpole) and Istanbul were in turn the capital city of the state. The earliest buildings of the Busra period are at Busra and their architectural style spread from there to the other cities. This was the origin of that period of Ottoman architecture which we call the Busra School. The Ottoman architect preferred simplicity in their ornamentation and aimed at a balance between blank and decorated surfaces. Seljuk art on the other hand, ran somewhat to extravagance and avoided flat empty spaces.

Under the Bursa school the Ulu Camii type mosques continued both in Istanbul and in the provinces, but with a

difference that the roofing consists of coordinated domes. Specimens of this type of the Ulu Camii at Bursa (1394-1399) consist of 20 domes and 12 piers and the Eaki Camii at Edirne (14405-1414) with nine domes and four piers (Unsal 1959). As in the Seljuk mosques, one dome in the central axis is open at the top and in some cases there is a water basin below this. This plan employing the minimum number of domes and piers is preserved at Istanbul in the fifteenth century mosque of Zincirlikuvu and the sixteenth century mosque of Piyale Pasha. Later, however, this type being found unsuitable for a mosque was abandoned, and came to be used rather in public halls and other private buildings.

The earliest Ottoman palace was built at Bursa by Orhan Bey, conqueror of the city called Bey Sarayi but nothing remains of it today. Of the early Ottoman palaces at Edirne only a few fragmentary ruin are preserved. Sultan Mehmet Fateh after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 A.C. built Topkapi Sarayi (Creswell 1958). It comprises a group of large and small buildings built at different periods between the 15th and 19th centuries and the palace, therefore, exhibits a number of different architectural styles depending on the tastes of various Ottoman Sultans.

Another palace built in the 19th century as a summer palace by Sultan Abdul Majid is Dolmabahce palace. The alabaster, marble and crystal decorations and its valuable carpets, clocks, candles, bricks and vases give this palace its present charm (Ahmed 1956). On the other side of the Bosphorus, almost directly opposite Dolmabahce, stands the Beylerbeyi Palace. This was constructed in the 19th century by Sultan Abdul Aziz.

As Islam prescribes ablution before prayer, this was a great encouragement to the construction of *hamams* (public baths). *Hammams* built during the Ottoman period are typical examples of the Turkish architecture. The oldest being in Bursa was built by Orhan Bey, the Ottoman ruler, in the 14th century. Although the general plan of these *hamams* correspondence to the Roman baths, type of walls and the shape of arches and sculptured doorways give the buildings a distinctive appearance of the Ottoman architecture.

Fountains are also a fine example of Ottoman architecture and can be seen in most Turkish towns and villages. The most important ones are the Fountain of Sultan Ahmet III, built in 1728, at the entrance to the palace of Topkapi and another is the Fountain

of Tophane built also during the 18th century (Ahmed 1956). The marble surfaces of these fountains bear inscriptions of great beauty as well as decorative motifs of fruits and flowers.

SYNTHESIS IN OTTOMAN MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE

From the end of 14th century to the 16th century, the Ottomans produced an abundance of variations in a period of research and experiment. As can be seen in many Ottoman cities, in Busra's Mumza Bey mosque, Amasya's Bayezit mosque and Edirne's Sultan Murad mosque, a great number of alternatives were explored before the achievement of a new interpretation of the Kufa Type matured, as in the Bursa Ulu mosque, into the much altered appearance of its many domed structure. The variations can be seen in many monuments, either creating an attractive environment on their own or placing a stamp on the silhouette of the city, the amalgamation into multi-functional complex such as that of mosque, madressah and monastery reaching maturity in the Bursa Ulu mosque. The Uc Serefli mosque built at Edirne by the Ottomans represent the fruition of these researches and experiment and the realization of a new synthesis in mosque architecture in Turkey in the creation of a monumental type mosque with organic spatial composition dominated by a central dome. This mosque represents complete organic fusion of all these various elements thereby assuming an utterly new and individual personality.

However, from buildings representing the same stage of development as Manisa Hatuniye mosque to the appearance of Istanbul of Atik Ali Pasha mosque and finally the great Sehzade mosque, it represents the great era of empire. From here can be traced the development of the trend which had led previously to the Uc Serefli mosque. In both Seljuk and Ottoman architecture the preference for the broken pointed arches are rare. This pointed arch was used regularly from the eleventh century onwards at an earlier date, in the ninth century (Hill & Grabar 1964). Later it was adapted to Gothic architecture. Its origin goes back to Summerians. The blocks forming the arches are plain flat-faced, the only decoration consists of the alteration of light and dark coloured stones and the various shapes given to the joints between them. These arches are used for arcades and all important openings. Another type first used at Bursa in the Green and Beyazit mosques,

in the shouldered arch flat in the middle with the quarter circle at each side. In some arcades of the Ottoman period at Bursa and Istanbul, ogee arches are to be seen. Segmental arches are used over doors and gateways.

During the Golden Age (1501-1703), Turkish architecture attained its final and definitive form. This is the classical age of Ottoman art. During this era Koca Mimar Sinan, a genius of the world of architecture and his followers filled every quarter of the Empire with the products of their art. Since Sinan adapted himself completely to the dominant historical currents, he is not to be regarded as an innovator (Arnold 1952). However, the direction in which these developments were moving had been lacking any resemblance to any Christian construction and produced its crystallized products in Istanbul. Thus from the 16th century onwards through the medium of Sinan and those ottoman architects following him, the Turks were able to present great monuments, with both kinetic and static characteristics, to the Islamic world. The Sehzade, Sleymaniye, Sultan Ahmed Sihramah Hatun mosques Istanbul and the Salimiye mosque in Edirne are examples of this classic style with a place among the world's masterpieces.

Beyazit Mosque



Beyazit mosque is one of Istanbul's oldest mosques and the least changed since its completion in 1506. The architectural style recalls that of the Green mosque in Bursa. The imperial pew is on an elegant balcony supported by columns. The courtyard with graceful hexagonal ablution in the centre is enclosed by porticos whose pillars support 24 domes.

Selimiye Mosque



Selimiye mosque was built on Suleyman the Magnificent's order to honor his father Sultan Selim I in 1520-1522 by the renowned architect Sinan architect. The prayer hall is approached through a court of porticos formed by 18 columns bearing 22 cupolas. These porticos walls are pierced by a double row of ogival windows. The spandrels of the lower windows are inlaid with delicate enameled mosaics.

Suleymaniye Mosque

The Suleymaniye mosque is named for Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, who led the Ottoman Empire to the pinnacle of its power and glory in the 16th century. Contemporary with most illustrious princes of Europe, he was surprised by none of them, his noble sentiments, wisdom, generosity, valour, sagacity, knowledge of mankind placed him indeed in the highest ranks of emperors

(Mill, *et. al.* 1976). This mosque was built on the northern slope of the third hill of Istanbul by the great architect Sinan. Its construction was started in 928A.H./1520-1521A.D. and completed in 6 years (Hill & Grabar 1964). This mosque embodies all the splendour and majesty of the Ottoman Empire at its apogee. Suleymaniye mosque, a unique example of pyramidal formation is strikingly proportionate to both inner and outer view. Its exterior beauty, too, complements the inner, and like the Blue mosque, is compelling from a distance. The grand entry to the courtyard, however, created insoluble problems which enforced the mutation of capitals where the heights of columns varied. Sinan did not repeat the mistake at Sellim II's Mosque where the gate does not obtrude (Rice 1965).



Sultan Ahmet Mosque

Sultan Ahmet mosque is the great 17th century monument with impressive dome and six slender minarets. It is widely regarded as one of the prime skill and taste of the Turkish Islamic Architecture. The great dome occupying an oblong area of 64 by 72 meters is 33.6 meters in diameter and 2.5 meters wider (Goodwin, 1997). Even more commanding than its majestic proportions is the interior lightning that has made this mosque world famed as the “Blue Mosque”. Light streaming through 260

windows beneath the dome is diffused by the blue tiling of the interior walls creating an arresting sense of ephemeral spaciousness (*Ibid.*).

In the centre of the court an elegant ablution fountain stands on six columns. The Silhouette of the fine mosque with its six minarets having sixteen galleries in total is magnificent view from a distance.



CONCLUSION

As a matter of fact, the Ottoman Turks benefited both from rich local heritage as well as from the culture and architecture of the different races and of nations over whom they ruled for more than six centuries. The architectural treasures of the Ottoman Turks, therefore, reflect all the civilizations which have developed on their soil from Hittite through Phrygia, Lydia to Greek, Roman and Byzantine including the Saint Sophia, the great monument of Byzantine architecture. Ottoman building structures, as discussed above, are original and distinct owing in general little to the Persian style. Even if the idea that the basis theme of Ottoman architecture was adopted from Byzantine be admitted, that gradually transformed and became distinctive in style. However, the basis of the Ottoman architecture always remained original in nature and Islamic in character.

Thus, the greatest contribution of the Ottoman Turks was the liberation of the architecture of the Islamic world from its appearance as a mere sub-division of eastern Mediterranean antique of Christian art. In fact it is new syntheses assimilated from Asian eastern tradition and creation of new forms which had given new personality characteristic to Islamic architecture.

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