

Courtyards and Ottoman mosques in the 15th and 16th centuries: Symbolism, mimesis and demise

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Abstract

The first aim of this paper is to describe the emergence of courtyards in Ottoman sultanic mosques in the fifteenth century and discuss the background of this pivotal transition. The reception of courtyards in Ottoman mosques dates back to A.H. 841(1437), Üç Şerefeli Cami in Edirne. The fact that Eyüp Sultan Camii in Istanbul was the second sultanic mosque with a courtyard indicates the royal symbolism of courtyard at a mosque, since the one in Eyüp functioned as the stage of sword girding (*kılıç kuşanma*) ceremonial of newly enthroned sultans.

Secondly, in order to affirm that only sultans could construct mosques with courtyards, a few exceptional non-sultanic mosques with courtyards are examined. These pseudo-courtyards, were merely extensions which was a clever solution for non-sultanic benefactors.

Finally, it is analysed how Sinan prepared a formula for courtyards in mosques for his non-sultanic patrons in the sixteenth century. He adopted an existing “mosque and madrasa” style for these patrons, but carefully alluded to the difference between the mosque section and the madrasa. However, it was also Sinan who abandoned this meticulous design and started building mosques with courtyards for non-sultanic patrons in a sultanic manner in 1580s. The demise of courtyards as a symbol of the omnipotent sultan coincided with the political upheaval of the dynasty. Since then, Queen Mothers and other court officials began to participate in decision making of the colossal empire, as well as enjoying a freedom to donate mosques in a style once only adopted at sultanic mosques.

Keywords

Ottoman architecture, Mosques, Architectural patronage, Courtyard, Architectural symbolism.

1. Introduction

The reception of courtyards in Ottoman mosques dates back to A.H. 841(1437). This was when Murad II commissioned the construction of Üç Şerefeli Cami in Edirne, the then Ottoman capital. This mosque is considered to be the first mosque with two prominent architectural elements, which were to become the norms of subsequent sultanic mosques: a huge dome dominating the prayer hall and a courtyard surrounded by domical arcades.

Courtyards, unquestionably one of the essential elements of every building type in most part of the Muslim world, had not been widely accepted in Anatolian mosques until then, with only a few exceptions. The Seljuks in Anatolia usually preferred “*iwan style*” for their mosques and did not build monumental courtyards, while other building types such as Caravansarai and madrasa, were predominantly courtyard-centred. Some mosques in eastern Anatolia, such as those in Sivas or Diyarbakır, can be regarded as rare exceptions with courtyard. But their geographical and climatic proximity to Syria and Iran, where courtyards were essentially a ubiquitous component for every building, do give good reason for the deviation from the mosque types in mainland Anatolia.

The introduction of arcaded courtyards to Ottoman sultanic mosques marked an architectural transition in the fifteenth century, which coincided with the political, territorial and psychological transformations of the Ottoman dynasty. They started to take place at the beginning of the century, after the turbulent period of the Ottoman Interregnum and eventual reunification by Mehmed I. The Ottoman court relocated its capital from Bursa to Edirne during Mehmed I's reign and consequently this geographical shift brought drastic reformations to the dynasty in every aspect.

As for the mosques, along with the use of courtyard, other elements; size of the main dome, number of minarets and selection of building materials and ornament, were utilized to represent the social ranks of patrons from this century. Gülru Necipoğlu concludes

that it was the great court architect Mimar Sinan in the next century who codified “mosque types according to the gradations of social and territorial rank” (Necipoğlu, 2005, 20). In other words, the social gradation from sultan to commoners was well reflected in the design of buildings they sponsored. Above all, the use of courtyard in mosques seems to have been strictly forbidden for non-sultan patrons, including princesses and influential viziers, even before the codification by Sinan. Interestingly and ironically, such a rigorous prohibition was eventually violated by Mimar Sinan himself in the 1580s with several non-sultanic mosques as is discussed later.

Firstly, this paper describes the emergence of courtyards in Ottoman sultanic mosques in the fifteenth century and discusses the background of this pivotal transition in Section 2 and 3. The second sultanic mosque with a courtyard was Eyüp Sultan Camii, which was the spiritual centre of the Ottoman Istanbul and the stage of sword girding (*kılıç kuşanma*) ceremonial of newly enthroned sultans. In other words, the courtyard embodied the authority of Ottoman sultan through both symbolism and ceremonials. Secondly, in order to affirm that only sultans could construct mosques with courtyards, a few exceptional non-sultanic mosques with courtyards are examined in Section 4. These pseudo-courtyards, in fact, were merely extensions which was a clever solution for non-sultanic benefactors who wished to embellish their mosques with courtyards like that of a sultanic mosque. Finally, Section 5 analyses how Mimar Sinan prepared a formula for courtyards in mosques for his non-sultanic patrons in the sixteenth century. He adopted an existing “mosque and madrasa” style for these patrons, but carefully alluded to the difference between the mosque section and the madrasa section through the proportions of domes or eaves surrounding the “courtyard.” However, it was also Sinan who abandoned this meticulous design and started building mosques with courtyards for non-sultanic patrons in the sultanic manner in the 1580s. The

demise of courtyards as a symbol of the omnipotent sultan coincided with the political upheaval of the dynasty. Since then, Queen Mothers and other court officials began to participate in decision making of the colossal empire, as well as enjoying a freedom to donate mosques in a style once only adopted at sultanic mosques.

2. The first Ottoman mosque with courtyard: Üç Şerefeli Cami

Most of Ottoman architectural historians agree on the importance of Üç Şerefeli Cami as an epoch-making monument (Figure 1). Howard Crane for example, aptly and concisely evaluates the building as “innovative in conception, and occupies a transitional spot in the evolution of Ottoman mosque planning between Bursa and Istanbul” (Crane, 1991, 178). Neither hypostyle plan of traditional Anatolian congregational mosques (*ulu cami*), nor T-shaped iwan plan of convent mosques (*zâviyeli cami*) is not adopted here. Instead, the prayer hall is dominated by a monumental dome supported by two ponderous hexagonal piers and two thick load-bearing walls. And the courtyard in front of it, is surrounded by domical arcades. Unlike the standardized later courtyards, the dimensions of domes covering the arcades are still diverse here; the front row attached to the prayer hall has seven bays including two smaller oval domes, and the rear row has nine domed bays of smaller dimension. Leaving the lack of dimensional and aesthetic integration aside, this courtyard became the first example of Ottoman mosques.

Unfortunately, no contemporary literature informs the reason and background of introducing a courtyard in the mosque. Modern scholars usually interpret it as a result of a stylistic diffusion from south-eastern Anatolia and Syria, probably via western Anatolia. There we find two fourteenth-century mosques with courtyard built by local monarchs before the debouchment of the Ottomans: İsa Beğ Camii in Selçuk and Ulucami in Manisa. Although Murad II's personal attachment to this region (Manisa was his place of retirement) might support this suggestion, this is rather a morphological

comparison without enough evidences. The Turks in Anatolia were familiar with a courtyard in the other building types for more than two hundred years, and yet the Ottomans had clung to a mosque type without courtyard until the fifteenth century. Therefore, the sudden emergence of courtyards in mosques should be interpreted in a different way.

As will be discussed in the following sections, the fact that no one other than sultan was allowed to construct a mosque with an arcaded courtyard, indicates the real significance of the courtyard in Üç Şerefeli Cami. It was a novel architectural manifestation of the sultanic symbolism together with the monumental dome. As a matter of fact, arcaded courtyards emerged in the first half of the fifteenth century not only in mosque but also in palatial architecture (Kawamoto, 2012). According to the reports of European visitors, Edirne Old Palace, whose basic structure had been completed by 1430s, was a walled complex with a ceremonial courtyard. It was the site for audience and banquet with the sultan. The advent of the ceremonial courtyard, such as that at Topkapı Palace later, was the first step for the Ottoman palace to detach itself from the traditional Turco-Mongolian mode of ceremony in the garden-pavilion palace.

The simultaneous introduction of courtyards into the mosques and the palace alludes to their shared symbolism. The Ottoman court which settled in the new capital, Edirne, also endeavoured to introduce architectural innovations in order to symbolise the new governance by the absolutist sultan and the centralized administrative structure. It is sure that the two courtyards in the two building types were different in scale; bearing in mind the size of Topkapı Palace, the one in Edirne Old Palace should have been several times larger than the one in Üç Şerefeli Cami to say the least. And unlike the well-described court ceremonies in the palace's courtyard, we know almost nothing about the religious ceremonies performed in the mosque's courtyard due to the lack of Ottoman liturgical protocols in general. Nonetheless,



Figure 1. Courtyard of Üç Şerefeli Camii, Edirne: Photograph by the author.

considering that courtyard mosques had been practically monopolized by the Ottoman sultans for almost one and half centuries, these courtyards in two different buildings surely had a symbolic meaning in common. Furthermore, as we will see in the next section, the sultans' ceremonial use of the courtyard in the second courtyard mosque substantiates its imperial symbolism from a functional point of view.

3. Eyüp Sultan Camii and *kılıç kuşanması*

After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Mehmed II soon embarked upon an epochal enterprise of reconstructing the devastated metropolis. He appointed scores of abandoned intramural properties to viziers and other grandees, ordering them to build mosques (of course without courtyards) and other social infrastructures to repopulate the new capital. Mehmed II for himself set aside the site of Byzantine Church of the Holy Apostles in the centre of the city to erect a monumental domed mosque with an arcaded courtyard. The mosque, Fatih Camii, named after the sultan's honorific title, accompanied a complex of buildings including a soup kitchen and madrasas. It is often overlooked that the first Ottoman sultanic mosque with a courtyard after Üç Şerefeli Camii was not Fatih Camii but Eyüp Sultan Camii in an extramural district along the Golden Horn built in the late 1450s. This courtyard testifies the symbolism of the courtyards in mosques through its significance as a stage of royal ceremonials.

Eyüp Sultan Camii was dedicated to Ebu Eyyup El-ensarî (Eyüp Sultan), a companion of the Prophet Muhammad

in the seventh century, who allegedly died during the first Muslim siege of Constantinople. During Mehmed II's siege of Constantinople, the presence of Ebu Eyyup El-ensarî's tomb was miraculously "found" by his mentor, Şeyh Akşemseddin. Soon after the conquest, the sultan decided to construct a religious complex with the saint's mausoleum to symbolise the sultan's blessed victory. The present mosque does not retain the original fifteenth-century plan due to a series of reconstructions and alterations later. Today, the main section of the mosque complex is composed of a prayer hall (A), the mausoleum (B) opposite it and a rectangular courtyard (C) between them (Figure 2).

A renowned architectural historian, E. H. Ayverdi, advanced a reconstruction plan of the mosque's original form through an analysis of contemporary written documents (Figure 3) (Ayverdi, 1989a, 348-356). According to the plan, the saint's mausoleum (B') was placed within the arcaded courtyard (C') in the first mosque built by Mehmed II and with sixteen cells of madrasa beyond the arcades. The attachment of a U-shaped madrasa in Eyüp Sultan Camii was actually the first example of this kind in Ottoman architectural history. It later became a significant architectural element in creating pseudo-courtyards in front of non-sultanic mosques. Furthermore, the position of the mausoleum in the middle of the courtyard was another interesting feature of the original plan, since mosque courtyards in other regions had rarely been occupied by massive mausoleums. By and large, fourteenth-century Ottoman mausoleums were independent structures juxtaposed with mosques. Later Ottoman sultans who donated mosques with courtyards preferred to build their mausoleums behind the qibla wall, such as those in the Fatih complex or the Süleymaniye complex, so that worshipers inevitably pray (*salât*) toward them. In sum, arranging the mausoleum within the courtyard of Eyüp Sultan mosque was so unconventional and unfamiliar that we should investigate what it was built for.

As a matter of fact, the sacred mausoleum of Eyüp Sultan and its surroundings functioned as a stage for an essential imperial ceremonial, sword girding. The earliest example of Ottoman symbolic sword girding dates back to 1421, confirmed by a contemporary chronicle by an anonymous writer (Özcan, 2002, 408) (de Groot, 1991, 530). According to the chronicle, an eminent religious figure, Emir Sultan, bestowed a sword upon Murad II when his uncle Düzme ("the Impostor") Mustafa rebelled against him (Anonym, 2000, 68). Emir Sultan, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (sayyid) and married to a daughter of Bayezid I, father of Murad II, was without doubt, a key figure of the Ottoman dynasty at the turn of the century. Emir Sultan, being a sacred sayyid and a member of the House of Osman as a son-in-law of the late sultan, his bestowment of the sword to Murad II was an effective sign of approval of the sultanate.

Later, the act of sword girding was integrated into a series of enthronement ceremonials of new sultans, as the ceremonial's climax. Contemporary historian Selânikî confirms that the then newly enthroned Selim II paid a visit to Eyüp Sultan Camii in 1566, touring his ancestral mausoleums in several sultanic mosques (Selânikî, 1989, 43). Unfortunately, Selânikî does not describe the visit in detail and it is not sure whether the sultan girded a sword in Eyüp Sultan Camii during the procession or not. The first reference to a ceremonial of sword girding was that of Ahmed I, who enthroned in 1603 (Tanman, 1998b, 77).

Although available documents do not refer to any sword girding ceremonials in Eyüp Sultan Camii before 1603, we can assume that at least some kind of sword girdings for sultans were performed in the earlier days. In fact the emblematic act of sword girding for a new sultan dates back to the enthronement of Mehmed II in 1451. Tursun Bey reports that "he (Mehmed) girded a sword with God, in the way of God" (*Dahî li'llâh fî sebîli'llâh kılıç kuşandı*) soon after his enthronement (Tursun Bey, 1977, p. 37). Considering that Mehmed II's

father, Murad II, was also bestowed a sword during a serious crisis in the early period of his reign, this description is more than a rhetorical expression, but rather it reflects a certain ceremonial act that actually took place in Edirne. Taking these preceding examples of sword girding into account, a myth from an unknown source that claims Mehmed II was girded in Eyüp Sultan Camii with the sword of sovereignty by Akşemseddin soon after the completion of the complex, can be accepted as a historical fact, not a later fabrication (Necipoğlu, 1996, 25). In the case of Mehmed II, two sacred figures, Eyüp Sultan and Akşemseddin, authorised his sovereignty as a warrior sultan, in the same way that Emir Sultan did for Murad II. At least since the reign of Murad II, the Ottoman sword girding ceremonials were seen as the approval of the legitimacy of sultans from religious figures. Eyüp Sultan Camii, the first sultanic mosque in Istanbul, was the perfect setting for Mehmed II and his successors to visit on significant occasions such as departures of military campaigns, as a way of displaying the linkage between the sacredness and sultanate.

So, how was the mosque complex used for the ceremonials? B. Tanman provides a noteworthy analysis of the mosque complex and the sword girding ceremonial. He points out that a small pavilion-like structure (Sinan Paşa Kasrı), was built within the courtyard of the mosque, above a late fifteenth-century ablution fountain, at the end of sixteenth century (Tanman, 1998b, 79-81). Unquestionably, the pavilion, which is now completely lost as a result of the reconstruction in 1798-1800, provided a space for important royal ceremonials. Tanman gives two possible usages of this structure: a sultanic gallery for the audience or a box seat for grandees waiting for the sultan to appear for the ceremonial. In either case, the insertion of such a symbolic edifice indicates that the mausoleum and its surrounding courtyard, where the pavilion was, had been the scene of ceremonials since its foundation. As in Edirne Old Palace and Topkapı Palace, the Ottoman protocol required an arcaded courtyard for their imperial

ceremonial in Eyüp Sultan Camii. In this way, the mausoleum in which a religious figure bestowed a sword to the sultan should have been placed within the courtyard to conduct the rest of ceremonial.

Another later extension of Eyüp Sultan Camii substantiates the functional and morphological similarities between the courtyard of the mosque and those in the palaces. After Ahmed I encircled the mausoleum to provide a roofed section for visitors in 1612, a huge eave was attached to the wall of the mausoleum on the courtyard side. Tanman compares it to the eaves in Topkapı Palace and Edirne New Palace, under which the throne was set up for imperial ceremonies performed in the courtyards (Tanman, 1998b, 84-85). According to him, these eaves were the descendants of imperial tents (otağ-ı hümayun) of the Central Asian steppe empires. Leaving aside the question of their origin, the set of the arcaded courtyard and the imperial eave in Eyüp Sultan Camii obviously adopted the style of palaces.

Thus, the employment of the courtyard and the unique arrangement of the mausoleum in the mosque must be construed with their ceremonial functions and symbolism. An arcaded courtyard was an architectural manifestation of imperial symbolism, which were not permitted in non-sultanic mosques. Also, the analogy between the courtyards in the Ottoman palaces and Eyüp Sultan Camii corroborates that the first courtyard in Üç Şerefeli Cami originated from the palatial architecture, as discussed in the previous section.

4. "Courtyards" of non-sultanic mosques during the pre-Sinan period

It is a well-known fact that Ottoman grandees and other persons of means were encouraged to donate their fortune to public welfare. One of the most common ways of benefaction was to construct mosques that played the role of communal nuclei. In Istanbul, a quarter (*mahalle*) was usually formed around a small non-sultanic mosque and named after the mosque's benefactor, while sultanic mosques were open for a wider range of congregation.

In provincial cities without sultanic mosques, viziers or other high-ranking officials often constructed principal mosques, along with other social infrastructures such as schools, shops or fountains.

Were these non-sultanic patrons utterly barred from building courtyards for their mosques then? No one has yet discussed this question scrupulously. Since numerous non-sultanic mosques have been wholly renovated or completely lost without trace, it is an extremely arduous task to envisage the original plans from extant structures, if there are any left. In other words, we

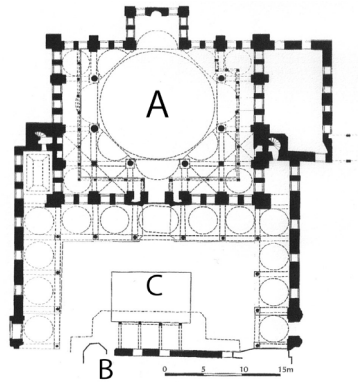


Figure 2. Plan of Eyüp Sultan Camii, İstanbul: Prepared by the author, based on a plan by Kuban (Kuban, 2007, 546).

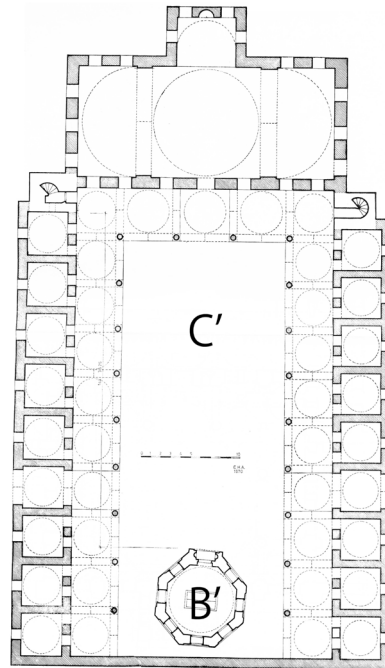


Figure 3. Reconstruction plan of Eyüp Sultan Camii: Prepared by the author, based on a plan by Ayverdi (Ayverdi, 1989a, Figure 563).

have to substantiate the nonexistence of courtyards in non-sultanic mosques with their deceiving appearances. With that in my mind, I attempted to find out non-sultanic mosques with courtyards built between the 1450s and the 1530s, that is to say, the pre-Sinan period starting from the reign of Mehmed II. Mainly by examining the monumental six-volume catalogue of Ottoman architecture by E. H. Ayverdi and A. Yüksel, there seems to be only three non-sultanic mosques in that period which have or possibly had courtyards: Başçı İbrâhim Camii in Bursa, Zağanos Paşa Camii in Balıkesir and Güzelce Hasan Bey Camii in Hayrabolu, in the order that they were built.

Before discussing these three mosques, I would like to introduce the İshak Paşa complex in İnegöl as a comparative example (Figure 4). The complex is composed of a mosque built before A.H. 873 (1468-69), a madrasa completed in A. H. 887 (1482) and a mausoleum of İshak Paşa, one of grand viziers of Mehmed II. The madrasa is the earliest Ottoman U-shaped madrasa in existence. It is worthy to note that the mosque (A) and the madrasa (B) share the central axis and the forecourt of the mosque was partially fenced by the two wings of the madrasa. Already in Eyüp Sultan Camii, Ottoman architects had moulded a courtyard by madrasa cells and the İshak Paşa complex is a modest, and maybe permissible, application of Eyüp Sultan Camii's plan to create a pseudo-courtyard in a non-sultanic mosque. Although the buildings are structurally set apart, the mosque's forecourt between a mosque and a madrasa gives an impression of a courtyard, with an ablution fountain in the middle. Encircling a mosque's forecourt by madrasa cells was a clever solution to provide a pseudo-courtyard for non-sultanic patrons who wished to imitate a sultanic courtyard mosque. As will be discussed in the Section 5, this method was further elaborated by Mimar Sinan in the sixteenth century. While arcaded courtyards of sultanic mosques were sheer symbolic structures of void, being fringed with madrasa cells, these "pseudo-courtyards" can be regarded as practical and functional elements of complexes.

What needs to be noted is that when a non-sultanic mosque seemingly has a courtyard, it can simply be a mosque's forecourt surrounded by a madrasa or some other structure as in the İshak Paşa complex. Furthermore, subsequent remodellings often refurbished unpretentious pseudo-courtyards to the extent that one would hardly distinguish them from the imperial courtyards. The demise of courtyards as a symbol of the omnipotent sultan and its popularization from the end of the sixteenth century obviously brought an oblivion of original tactful differentiation between imperial courtyards and pseudo-courtyards in non-sultanic mosques. As Mimar Sinan aptly demonstrated in his earlier career, the difference between the mosque section and the madrasa section should be discernible, no matter how the space surrounded by the two sections may seem like a courtyard.

Now, let us go back to the three non-sultanic mosques that seems to have or probably have had courtyards. Zağanos Paşa Camii in Balıkesir, which was constructed by Zağanos Paşa, a grand vizier of Mehmed II, in A.H. 865 (1460-61), was the oldest one out of the three. Unfortunately, the whole structure was totally destroyed by an earthquake in 1897 and entirely remodelled at the beginning of the twentieth century in a different style by the hands of Greek and Armenian artisans. Relying upon photographs taken during a damage investigation by the authorities, E. H. Ayverdi presents a schematic reconstruction plan before the remodelling (Figure 5). According to this, the original square prayer hall (A) was covered with nine equal-sized domes, supported by four piers, and the courtyard (B) had arcades of five domed bays on each side. The dimension of the whole complex was also imposing as the courtyard alone could have covered a square of side thirty meters.

However, the courtyard section was a later extension by the hand of Mehmed Bey, a son of Zağanos Paşa (Çobanoğlu & Erzincan, 2013, 74). This extension was dedicated to an elementary school attached to the mosque complex, like the madrasa of the İshak Paşa complex. Since there is no trace

of this “courtyard” today, it is impossible to confirm its original style and plan, whether it was an independent structure separated from the mosque’s prayer hall or connected to that from the beginning. Considering the school was constructed by the son afterward, it seems likely that the structures of the complex were designed individually and set apart from each other. Thus, Ayverdi’s reconstruction proposal is deemed to be incorrect, or at least does not represent the original plan in the late fifteenth century. The “courtyard” in Zağanos Paşa Camii must have been a forecourt of the mosque surrounded by cells of an educational institution, unlike the symbolic void of sultanic courtyards.

Başçı İbrâhim Camii in Bursa is another example of a non-sultanic mosque with a “courtyard” (Figure 6). The benefactor was Başçı (“head seller”) İbrâhim, probably a wealthy business owner in Bursa who died in A.H.885 (1481). The first waqf deed (*vakfiyye*) of the mosque was dated in 1459, and there are supplementary articles in 1467 and 1471. Its prayer hall is a typical single dome unit (A) and in front of that is a small courtyard (B), which is surrounded by domical arcades.

The waqf deed reveals that there were three stages of construction: first, only the prayer hall was built before 1459; next, the courtyard section was appended; and finally, a hammam was annexed to the structure (Ertuğrul, 1992, 128). These successive extensions remind us of the same processes that took place in abovementioned the İshak Paşa complex and the Zağanos Paşa complex. In fact, Ertuğrul points out that the arcades of the courtyard were used as a convent (*tekke*) and a madrasa. However considering the size of the complex, the educational institution attached to Başçı İbrâhim Camii must have been a small elementary one. All three complexes share a similar enlargement procedure and as a result, similar pseudo-courtyards. These small and non-symbolic pseudo-courtyards surrounded by rooms with certain functions should be distinguished from those in sultanic mosques.

The last example is Güzelce Hasan

Bey Camii in Hayrabolu, a small city in western Thrace (Figure 7). This structure was in fact underscored by Aptullah Kuran as the first Ottoman mosque with a courtyard, built in A.H.809 (1406) (Kuran, 1968, pp. 182-183). This construction date, which seems to have been adopted from an article by S. Eyice (Eyice 1964, 110), is obviously erroneous. The benefactor Güzelce Hasan Bey was a son-in-law (*dâmad*) of Bayezid II, the successor of Mehmed II, and a relatively unknown military officer at the turn of the sixteenth century. In all likelihood, the wrong date attributes the date of mosque’s waqf deed, A.H.909 (1504), whose hundreds digit was misinterpreted. Although the error has been rectified in recent works (Karakaya, 1996, 329), the mosque is often taken as an example of a non-sultanic mosque with a courtyard because of Kuran’s antecedent emphasis on its importance.

Unlike the aforementioned examples of pseudo-courtyards, there is no direct evidence that shows the courtyard section (B) in Güzelce Hasan Bey Camii was actually a madrasa or an elementary school. However, several circumstantial evidences indicate that it was also a pseudo-courtyard of a non-sultanic mosque. Firstly, this mosque, too, was severely damaged by an earthquake before the Balkan Wars in the twentieth century. Since the existing structure is the result of a restoration in 1966, it was hard to recognize the original plan at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The courtyard section could have been a later extension, as in Zağanos Paşa Camii. Secondly, the size of the mosque is as moderate as Başçı İbrâhim Camii. The arcades of the “courtyard”, if existed in the early days, might have been cells of a school as well. Lastly, the personality of Güzelce Hasan Bey and the scale of his waqf cast doubt on the existence of a courtyard in his mosque. We know almost nothing about this Hasan Bey except for being a *dâmad* of Bayezid II. Since the amount of endowed properties provide only an unassuming sum of 2563 *akçe* in a year (Gökbilgin, 1952, 416), his mosque itself should have been a humble one reflecting his minor status in the Ottoman government.

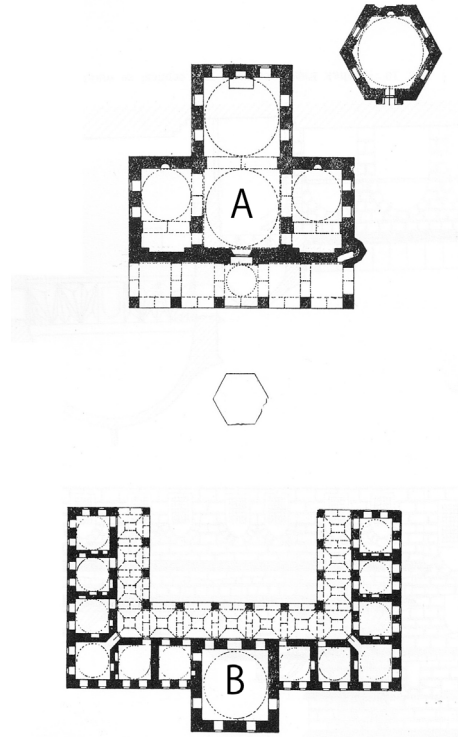


Figure 4. Plan of the İshak Paşa complex, İnegöl: Prepared by the author, based on a plan by Ülgen (Ülgen, 1958, 1921).

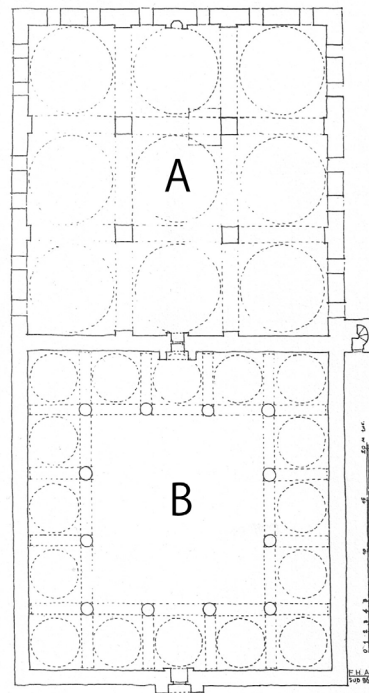


Figure 5. Schematic reconstruction plan of Zağanos Paşa Camii, Balıkesir: Prepared by the author, based on a plan by Ayverdi (Ayverdi, 1989a, 58).

This makes me hesitate to acknowledge that the mosque was exceptional

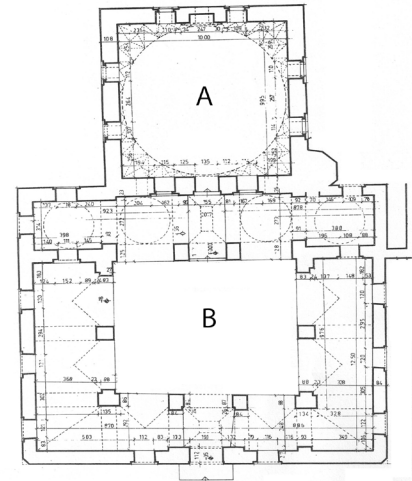


Figure 6. Plan of Başçı İbrâhim Camii, Bursa: Prepared by the author, based on a plan by Ayverdi (Ayverdi, 1989a, 70).

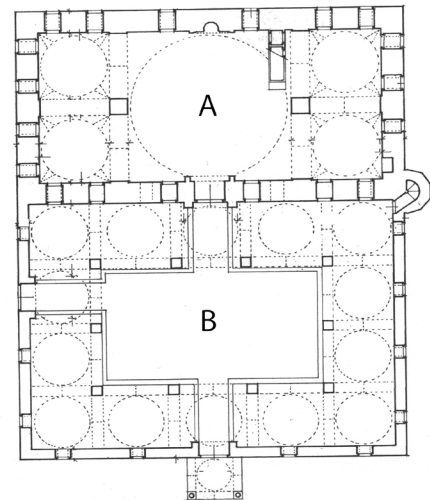


Figure 7. Plan of Güzelce Hasan Bey Camii, Hayrabolu: Prepared by the author, based on a plan by Yüksel (Yüksel, 1983, 146).

enough to be adorned by a symbolic courtyard. The “courtyard” could also be a forecourt of the mosque surrounded by cells of other facilities.

All courtyards of the three non-sultanic mosques turned out to be a part of educational facilities, unlike the authentic courtyards in sultanic mosques. A tacit code of designing compelled non-sultanic patrons to avoid building symbolic courtyards in their mosques, while they smartly evaded it by annexing madrasas or schools to form pseudo-courtyards. We will look at how the method was formulated by Mimar Sinan in the sixteenth century in Section 5.

5. Sinan's "courtyard"

Modern scholarship generally praises Mimar Sinan's works for rationality, which is undoubtedly an ideal of modern architecture. Domes of principal mosques and their support systems have been well debated from an engineering and geometric point of view. Necipoğlu, on other hand, describes Sinan's mosques from a social perspective, analysing the relationship between patrons' status and codes of decorum (Necipoğlu, 2005). Courtyards, which are often overlooked by those who attempt to classify the mosques by domes covering main prayer halls, are one type of architectural element that represent the sultan's authenticity as I have examined in the previous sections. For non-sultanic patrons, Mimar Sinan prepared a more sophisticated pseudo-courtyard that was almost identical to the sultanic courtyards at first glance. However, if we look at the structures closely, cautious design distinctions become clear. Since Sinan's works have preserved their original plans relatively well, in contrast to the preceding mosques examined in the previous sections, they provide us with well-established evidences for a discussion.

Mimar Sinan's first mosque with a pseudo-courtyard was the Sinan Paşa complex in Beşiktaş, Istanbul, which was completed in A.H. 963 (1555-1556) after the death of its patron, Grand Admiral Sinan Paşa (Figure 8). Kuran points out that here, Sinan experimented with the idea of "the mosque-medrese sharing a common courtyard" (Kuran, 1987, 104). Facing a forecourt (B) of the mosque, the prayer hall (A) has a double portico, which is a set domical arcades with an extended eave. This eave is actually a part of the roof covering the arcades that encircles the "courtyard" and behind the arcades there are cells of the madrasa. While the space between the mosque and the madrasa seems like a perfect mosque courtyard, when compared to other courtyards in sultanic mosques, the difference is striking. In the Süleymaniye complex, for example, the arcades surrounding the courtyard is a homogeneous square

covered by sixteen sequential equal-sized domes whose visual continuity integrates the prayer hall and the courtyard into one structure (Figure 9). On the other hand, the Sinan Paşa complex emphasises the distinction between the mosque and the madrasa whose pitched-roof arcades are clearly inferior to the prayer hall's portico crowned by domes. Although a non-sultanic complex could have been adorned with a courtyard, it should have belonged to a madrasa, not to a mosque. The Sokollu Mehmed Paşa complex in Kadırgalimanı, Istanbul, has a similar combination of a domed portico (1) and arcades of pitched-roof (2) (Figure 10). The U-shaped madrasa (B) is more distinctly separated from the mosque section (A) with two taller cuboid units, which are placed on the sides of the portico diagonally, providing entrances into the pseudo-courtyard.

Mimar Sinan displayed another architectural manipulation for the distinction between a mosque and a madrasa in the Kara Ahmed Paşa complex in Topkapı, Istanbul (Figure 11). Commissioned by Grand Vizier Kara Ahmed Paşa, the complex is often compared to the Sinan Paşa complex, with its U-shaped madrasa and hexagonal support system of the main dome (Necipoğlu, 2005, 381-382). However, the arrangement seems to have been inspired by the fifteenth-century İshak Paşa complex in İnegöl, as the short side wings of madrasa cells in both complexes do not reach the prayer hall. In order to cut off the pseudo-courtyard from the exterior, arcades of the madrasa (B) is extended toward the portico of the prayer hall (A). The arcades and the portico are visually different elements since the domes covering them are different both in dimension and height. This segregation expresses the affiliation of the courtyard to the madrasa section.

Interestingly enough, the mosque-madrasa method was also adopted in two sultanic mosques built in provincial cities: Takiyya al-Sulaymaniyya in Damascus and the Sultaniye complex in Karapınar, near Konya (Necipoğlu, 2005, 222-238). Being located in the provinces, these

complexes were assigned the plans of inferior non-sultanic complexes, in contrast to the monumental sultanic ones in the capital, Istanbul. Also in terms of function, they did not need the symbolic courtyards, as sultans never visited these provincial mosques for weekly or ceremonial prayers.

As we have seen, the construction of a palpable courtyard in a non-sultanic mosque was carefully avoided and differences between sultanic courtyards and non-sultanic pseudo-courtyards were profoundly expressed through the designs of Mimar Sinan. Such architectural constraints, however, seem to have been disregarded from the 1580s. This period was, according to the definition of B. Tezcan, the beginning of “the Second Empire” when absolutism

of sultan was replaced by an oligarchy or “proto-democratic” system. Tezcan argues that the system “would best be symbolized by a spider web with the monarch at the center but not on top of anyone else.” (Tezcan 2010, p. 193) The participants of the new political sphere are Queen Mother (validesultan), sultan’s favorite (haseki), other harem members, viziers, ulemas and janissaries who could express their intention through numerous actions including coercive dethronement of sultan.

The first non-sultanic patron who endeavoured to construct a mosque

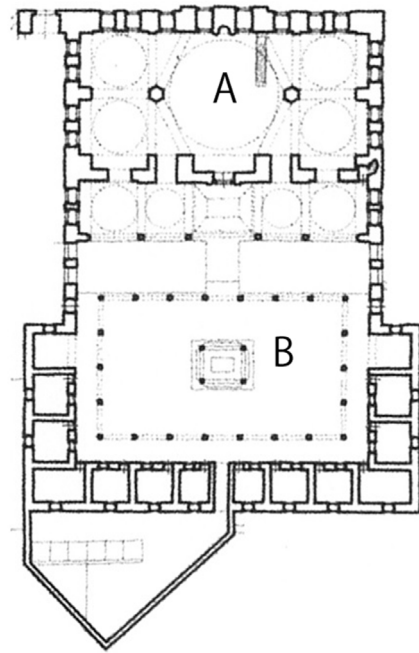


Figure 8. Plan of the Sinan Paşa complex, Beşiktaş, İstanbul: Prepared by the author, based on a plan by Necipoğlu (Necipoğlu, 2005, 417).



Figure 9. Süleymaniye Camii, İstanbul: Photograph by the author.

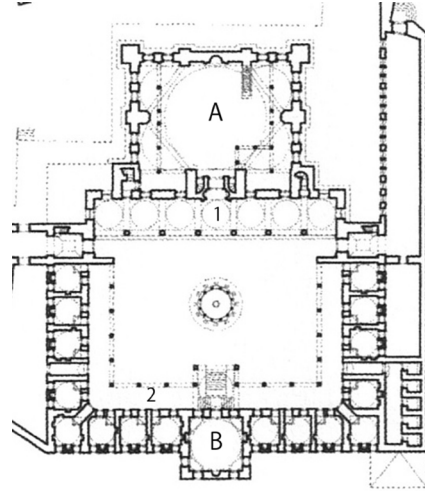


Figure 10. Plan of the Sokollu Mehmed Paşa complex, Kadirgalımanı, İstanbul: Prepared by the author, based on a plan by Necipoğlu (Necipoğlu, 2005, 334).

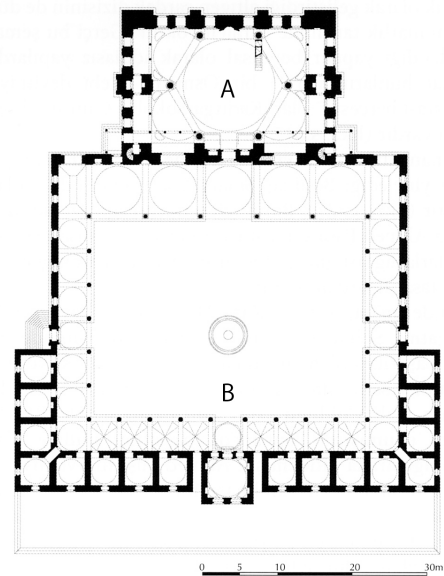


Figure 11. Plan of the Kara Ahmed Paşa complex, Topkapı, İstanbul: Prepared by the author, based on a plan by Kuban (Kuban, 2007, 316).

with an “authentic” courtyard was Nurbanu Sultan, mother of Murad III (reign: 1574-1595). In the early 1570s, she commissioned a huge complex in Üsküdar, Istanbul, whose construction was continued even after the death of the patron in 1583. Eventually it was composed of diverse facilities: a mosque, a madrasa, a hospital, a convent, a hospice and some others (Figure 12). The madrasa (B) is set behind an arcaded courtyard (C) of the mosque, which is an unprecedented structure in non-sultanic mosques (Necipoğlu, 2005, 286). The status of Nurbanu Sultan as *validesultan*, without doubt, allowed such a violation of the rule, since the courtyard was a later extension constructed in the 1580s, after the death of her husband Selim II in 1574 and the enthronement of her son. This was followed by two mosques of viziers, namely the Mesih Mehmed Paşa complex and the Nişancı Mehmed Paşa complex, both in Istanbul (Necipoğlu, 2005, 403-415). Like in the Nurbanu Sultan complex, these mosques have arcaded courtyards that are not fringed by madrasa cells. Although Mimar Sinan customarily maintained the distinction between the arcades and the portico with different dimensions of domes covering them, the space between the arcades and the portico of the prayer halls is comparable to sultanic courtyard. The shift of architectural design in non-sultanic mosques, regardless of how insignificant it may look to the modern eye, was an explicit sign of the fluctuating power structure.

6. Conclusion

In less than one and half centuries, courtyards in Ottoman mosques experienced a rapid transition: emergence, mimesis and demise. After its first appearance in Üç Şerefeli Camii in Edirne, symbolic arcaded courtyards were adopted in sultanic mosques built in the Ottoman capital cities, sharing the same symbolism with those in palaces. The fact that sword girding ceremonials were performed in Eyüp Sultan Camii demonstrates the ceremonial function of the courtyards, which was closely tied to the newly established absolute authority of the

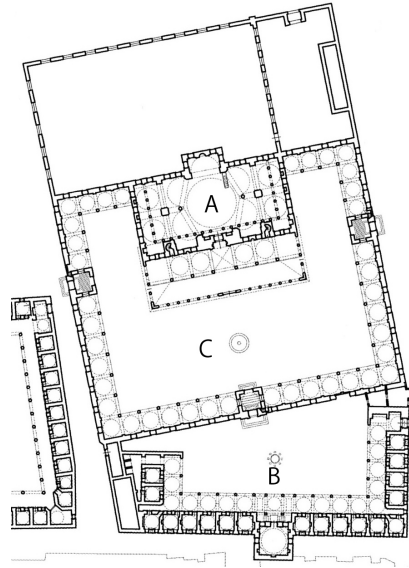


Figure 12. Plan of the Eski Valide (Nurbanu Sultan) complex, Üsküdar, İstanbul: Prepared by the author, based on a plan by Necipoğlu (Necipoğlu, 2005, 236).

House of Osman. An examination of existing mosques reveals that the use of a courtyard in a non-sultanic mosque was barred because of its imperial symbolism. However, non-sultanic patrons devised a clever solution to avoid the tacit agreement. They fabricated pseudo-courtyards for their complexes by encircling forecourts of mosques with other annexed facilities, such as madrasas. The method was further elaborated geometrically by the hands of Mimar Sinan in the sixteenth century, although complexes he designed was meticulously embedded with differentiated architectural elements that expressed the segregation between the mosque section and the madrasa section.

The imperial monopoly of courtyard mosques finally disintegrated in the 1580s, synchronising with the political upheaval that was caused by a rise of political significance of non-sultanic grandees and female members of the House of Osman. Finally they could enjoy the freedom to build courtyards in their complexes as a part of mosques, not of madrasas. However, the new style of non-sultanic mosques did not continue to flourish afterwards, due to the fact that from the seventeenth century, the Ottoman grandees started to devote themselves to building urban infrastructures such as schools,

fountains or libraries, not monumental mosques, which had saturated the capital in a series of intensive constructions up to the turn of the century.

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