

THE EVOLUTION OF ISLAMIC ART AND ARCHITECTURE THROUGH THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

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ABSTRACT

The Ottoman Empire, which spanned over six centuries from the late 13th century to the early 20th century, played a pivotal role in shaping the development of Islamic art and architecture. The evolution of Ottoman art and architecture reflects a complex interplay of cultural, religious, and political influences, resulting in a distinctive style that left an indelible mark on the Islamic world and beyond. This paper explores the transformation of Islamic art and architecture under the Ottomans, focusing on the integration of earlier Islamic traditions, the influence of Byzantine and Persian aesthetics, and the innovations brought about by Ottoman architects and artists.

The early phase of Ottoman art and architecture was deeply influenced by the Seljuk and Byzantine styles, which provided the foundation upon which the Ottomans built their own unique aesthetic. The incorporation of Byzantine architectural elements, such as domes and large central spaces, into the design of mosques and other public buildings became a defining feature of Ottoman architecture. The Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, initially a Byzantine cathedral, served as an important model for the development of Ottoman mosque architecture, particularly in the use of large domes and monumental spaces that convey a sense of grandeur and spiritual transcendence.

As the empire expanded, the Ottomans synthesized diverse artistic traditions from across their vast territories, including those of Persia, Egypt, and Central Asia. This cultural synthesis can be seen in the intricate tilework, calligraphy, and ornamentation that adorned Ottoman buildings, combining geometric patterns with floral motifs and religious inscriptions. Calligraphy, in particular, became a central element of Ottoman art, symbolizing the sacredness of the written word in Islam. The use of Arabic script in architectural decoration not only served an aesthetic purpose but also reinforced the religious significance of the structures.

One of the most significant contributions of the Ottomans to Islamic architecture was the development of the central-plan mosque, exemplified by iconic structures such as the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, designed by the renowned architect Mimar Sinan. Sinan's work represents the pinnacle of Ottoman architectural achievement, combining functional engineering with artistic brilliance. His use of vast, open interiors and harmonious proportions created a sense of balance and serenity, embodying the spiritual ideals of Islam. The combination of form and function in Ottoman mosque design influenced the construction of Islamic religious buildings throughout the empire and beyond, solidifying the Ottoman aesthetic as a dominant force in Islamic architecture.

In addition to religious architecture, the Ottomans made significant contributions to the development of secular art and design. Palaces, such as Topkapi in Istanbul, showcased the empire's wealth and power, with elaborate courtyards, intricate tilework, and lush gardens reflecting the opulence of the Ottoman court. The integration of art and architecture extended to other forms of artistic expression, including miniature painting, textiles, and ceramics, all of which flourished under Ottoman patronage.

In conclusion, the evolution of Islamic art and architecture during the Ottoman Empire represents a unique blending of Islamic tradition with local and foreign influences. The Ottomans not only preserved earlier Islamic artistic practices but also innovated and expanded upon them, creating a style that was distinctly Ottoman yet universally influential. The legacy of Ottoman art and architecture continues to shape the cultural and religious landscapes of the modern Islamic world, standing as a testament to the empire's enduring impact on global artistic heritage.

Keywords: Evolution, islamic art, architecture, ottoman empire.

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INTRODUCTION

The Ottoman Empire, which ruled from the late 13th century until the early 20th century, represents one of the most influential periods in the development of Islamic art and architecture. As the empire expanded its borders across Southeast Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa, it absorbed and transformed various cultural and artistic traditions, blending them into a unique and distinctive style. The evolution of Ottoman art and architecture reflects not only the empire's political and military achievements but also its role as a bridge between East and West, synthesizing influences from Byzantine, Persian, and Islamic art.

Islamic art and architecture before the Ottoman era had already established its foundations in religious structures such as mosques, madrasas (Islamic schools), and palaces. These structures were marked by their emphasis on geometric patterns, intricate ornamentation, and the use of calligraphy, all of which symbolized the unity and infinity of God, as well as the sacredness of the Quran. The Ottomans inherited these artistic traditions and elevated them by incorporating local and foreign influences into their architectural and artistic practices. Early Ottoman architecture was particularly influenced by the Seljuk Turks and the Byzantine Empire, whose styles shaped the forms and functions of religious and civic buildings across Ottoman cities (Necipoğlu, 1995).

One of the key developments in Ottoman architecture was the use of large domes and open spaces, which allowed for the construction of monumental mosques and public buildings. The Hagia Sophia, originally a Byzantine cathedral, served as a powerful inspiration for Ottoman architects, particularly after its conversion into a mosque following the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The adoption of the central dome, which became a hallmark of Ottoman mosque design, symbolized the empire's spiritual and political dominance. As Goodwin (1971) notes, "the dome became an iconic symbol of Ottoman power and the sovereignty of Islam over its territories." This architectural innovation not only created a new aesthetic in mosque design but also allowed for the creation of larger, more open interior spaces that could accommodate growing congregations.

The contribution of Mimar Sinan, the chief architect of the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century, was crucial in solidifying Ottoman architecture as one of the pinnacles of Islamic artistic achievement. Sinan's designs for mosques, including the famous Süleymaniye Mosque

in Istanbul, revolutionized the use of space, light, and proportion in Islamic architecture. His work epitomized the balance between function and aesthetics, creating a harmonious blend of spiritual symbolism and structural innovation (Necipoğlu, 2005). Sinan's mastery of geometry and spatial organization also reflected the broader intellectual and cultural achievements of the Ottoman Empire during its golden age.

In addition to religious architecture, Ottoman art flourished in various forms, including calligraphy, ceramics, and textiles. Calligraphy, in particular, held a special place in Ottoman art due to its close association with the Quran. The Ottomans developed their own style of Arabic script, known as *diwani*, which became a key decorative feature in mosques, palaces, and manuscripts. Calligraphy served as both an artistic and religious expression, symbolizing the sacred nature of the written word in Islam (Blair & Bloom, 1994). Ottoman ceramic tiles, especially those produced in İznik, became highly prized for their intricate floral designs and vibrant colors, decorating mosques and palaces throughout the empire. These artistic expressions were not only functional but also reflective of the Ottoman court's patronage of the arts, which played a vital role in spreading the empire's cultural influence.

This paper will explore the evolution of Islamic art and architecture during the Ottoman Empire, focusing on key developments in religious and secular architecture, as well as other artistic forms. By examining the interplay between local traditions and external influences, this study aims to highlight how the Ottomans created a distinct artistic legacy that continues to shape Islamic art and architecture today.

1. Early Influences: Seljuk and Byzantine Foundations

The evolution of Ottoman art and architecture cannot be fully understood without examining the early influences that shaped its development, particularly the contributions of the Seljuk Turks and the Byzantine Empire. These two powerful cultural and artistic traditions provided the foundation upon which the Ottomans built their own distinctive style. As the Ottoman Empire emerged in the late 13th century, it inherited a wealth of artistic and architectural techniques from these earlier civilizations, which were then integrated into the Ottoman aesthetic, creating a unique synthesis of Islamic, Persian, and Byzantine elements.

The Seljuk Turks, who established their empire in the 11th century and ruled over vast territories in Anatolia and Persia, were instrumental in developing a distinct Islamic architectural and artistic tradition. The

Seljuk influence on Ottoman art and architecture is particularly evident in the early Ottoman mosques and madrasas, which borrowed heavily from Seljuk designs, including the use of the iwan (vaulted hall or space), brickwork ornamentation, and intricate tilework. The Seljuks were known for their mastery of geometric patterns, which became a hallmark of Islamic decoration. According to Blair and Bloom (1994), the Seljuks “excelled in the use of tile and brick to create intricate, mathematically precise patterns that symbolized the order and infinity of the divine.” This use of geometric forms was not only an aesthetic choice but also a religious one, as it reflected the Islamic emphasis on the unity and transcendence of God.

In addition to the Seljuk legacy, the Byzantine Empire, with its capital in Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul), played a crucial role in shaping the development of Ottoman architecture. The Byzantine influence is most notably seen in the use of large central domes, a feature that became a defining characteristic of Ottoman mosque architecture. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans converted the Hagia Sophia, a monumental Byzantine cathedral, into a mosque. The Hagia Sophia’s massive central dome and innovative structural supports became a model for future Ottoman mosques, including the famed Süleymaniye Mosque and the Blue Mosque (Necipoğlu, 2005). These buildings, with their vast domed interiors, aimed to create a sense of spiritual elevation and grandeur, evoking the heavens and the divine presence.

The Byzantine influence extended beyond structural forms to include decorative elements as well. Byzantine mosaics and iconography, known for their vivid colors and intricate detail, influenced Ottoman tilework and ornamentation. The Ottomans adapted Byzantine artistic techniques to Islamic motifs, creating a new visual language that blended Eastern Christian and Islamic aesthetics. For example, the use of floral and vegetal motifs, which were common in Byzantine art, was incorporated into Ottoman tile designs, particularly in the famous İznik tiles that adorned many of the empire’s mosques and palaces (Goodwin, 1971). This integration of Byzantine and Islamic elements reflects the Ottomans’ ability to absorb and transform diverse artistic traditions into their own.

Moreover, the architectural innovations introduced by the Seljuks and Byzantines provided the Ottomans with both practical and symbolic tools. The Seljuk use of large courtyards and muqarnas (stalactite-like decorations) in mosque design created a sense of space and grandeur,

which the Ottomans further developed in their own architectural projects. Meanwhile, the Byzantine mastery of dome construction and their use of complex support systems enabled the Ottomans to build larger and more structurally ambitious buildings, symbolizing the empire's political and spiritual authority.

In conclusion, the early influences of the Seljuks and Byzantines were foundational to the development of Ottoman art and architecture. The Ottomans did not simply copy these earlier traditions; rather, they synthesized and transformed them into a new, distinctly Ottoman style that would leave a lasting impact on Islamic art and architecture. By blending the geometric precision of Seljuk ornamentation with the monumental grandeur of Byzantine structures, the Ottomans created a visual and architectural language that reflected both their Islamic faith and their imperial power.

2. Architectural Mastery: The Development of Ottoman Mosque Design

Ottoman mosque design represents the pinnacle of Islamic architectural achievement, embodying the synthesis of spiritual symbolism, structural innovation, and artistic mastery. Over the centuries, Ottoman architects refined and expanded upon earlier Islamic and Byzantine architectural traditions to create monumental mosques that continue to inspire awe today. This development reached its zenith during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent in the 16th century, particularly under the direction of the empire's chief architect, Mimar Sinan. The evolution of Ottoman mosque design is characterized by the harmonious combination of form and function, symbolizing both the divine presence and the power of the Ottoman state.

The early phase of Ottoman mosque architecture was influenced by the conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The Hagia Sophia, originally a Byzantine cathedral, became a model for future Ottoman mosque design, particularly in its use of the large central dome and expansive interior space. As Goodwin (1971) notes, "the dome became a central element in Ottoman mosque architecture, symbolizing the heavens and the divine unity of God." The adaptation of the central dome structure allowed Ottoman architects to create a sense of grandeur and spiritual elevation within the mosque, reinforcing the connection between the material world and the divine. This architectural feature would become a defining characteristic

of Ottoman mosque design, seen in famous structures such as the Blue Mosque and the Süleymaniye Mosque.

Mimar Sinan, the most celebrated architect of the Ottoman Empire, was instrumental in perfecting the use of the central dome in mosque architecture. His innovative designs combined structural precision with artistic elegance, creating mosques that were both functional places of worship and aesthetic masterpieces. Sinan's work represents the peak of Ottoman architectural mastery, with the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul serving as his crowning achievement. The mosque, built between 1550 and 1557, features a vast central dome supported by semi-domes, creating a balanced and open interior space that allows for the seamless integration of light and air. According to Necipoğlu (2005), Sinan's genius lay in his ability to "transform the physical structure of the mosque into a spiritual and ethical experience, where the architecture itself guides the worshipper towards contemplation and inner peace."

In addition to the use of domes, another key feature of Ottoman mosque design was the incorporation of minarets. The minaret, a tall, slender tower used to call the faithful to prayer, became a symbol of Islamic religious authority and Ottoman imperial power. The Ottomans often built multiple minarets at their mosques, as seen in the Blue Mosque, which has six minarets, reflecting both the religious and political importance of the structure. The height and prominence of the minarets served as a visual reminder of the empire's dominance and the ethical responsibility of the ruler to uphold and protect Islam. The architectural design of the mosque thus became intertwined with the concept of statehood, where the ethical leadership of the sultan was symbolized through the grandeur and visibility of religious structures (Nuredin & Nuredin, 2023).

The use of light in Ottoman mosque design was another important element that contributed to both the aesthetic and spiritual experience of the worshipper. Sinan's mastery of light is evident in his careful placement of windows in the Süleymaniye Mosque, which allows natural light to filter into the interior, creating an ethereal and uplifting atmosphere. The play of light within the mosque's vast interior spaces was intended to evoke a sense of divine presence, reminding worshippers of the transcendence of God. This use of light not only enhanced the spiritual function of the mosque but also highlighted the intricate decorative elements that adorned the walls, domes, and mihrabs (prayer niches). Blair and Bloom (1994) describe the Ottoman use of light as "a key element in creating a spiritual

space, where the boundaries between the earthly and the divine are blurred.”

Tilework and calligraphy also played a central role in the decoration of Ottoman mosques, with the İznik tiles being the most famous example of Ottoman ceramic art. These vibrant, hand-painted tiles adorned the interior walls of many mosques, including the Blue Mosque, and featured intricate floral and geometric patterns, as well as Quranic verses written in elegant calligraphy. The use of calligraphy in Ottoman mosque decoration served not only an aesthetic purpose but also a religious one, as it emphasized the sacredness of the written word in Islam. The integration of these decorative elements into the architecture of the mosque reflected the Ottomans’ deep respect for Islamic artistic traditions, while also showcasing their ability to innovate and elevate these forms to new heights.

Ottoman mosque design represents a culmination of centuries of architectural evolution, combining influences from earlier Islamic, Byzantine, and Persian traditions. The Ottoman architects, particularly Mimar Sinan, refined these influences and created a distinct architectural style that became synonymous with Islamic art and architecture. Through their use of domes, minarets, light, and intricate decoration, the Ottomans created spaces that were both physically awe-inspiring and spiritually uplifting. These mosques were not only places of worship but also symbols of the empire’s political and ethical authority, leaving a lasting legacy that continues to influence Islamic architecture to this day.

3. The Role of Calligraphy and Ornamentation in Ottoman Art

The artistic and architectural developments of the Ottoman Empire are inseparable from the prominent role of calligraphy and ornamentation, which became defining elements of Islamic art under Ottoman rule. Throughout the empire’s history, these artistic forms were integrated into both religious and secular structures, serving not only aesthetic purposes but also religious and cultural functions. Calligraphy, in particular, was elevated to the highest art form in Islamic culture, symbolizing the sacredness of the written word, while intricate ornamentation, including floral and geometric patterns, embodied the Islamic emphasis on the infinite and the divine.

Islamic art, especially under the Ottomans, avoids the use of figurative imagery in religious contexts, as such depictions are generally considered inappropriate for places of worship in Islam. This restriction led to the

development of non-figurative forms of decoration, such as calligraphy and ornamentation, which became the central visual elements in Ottoman art and architecture. As Blair and Bloom (1994) explain, "Calligraphy was seen as a direct link between the human and the divine, as it gave form to the words of the Quran, Islam's holy book." Calligraphic inscriptions, whether in Arabic or Persian, often featured Quranic verses, prayers, or the names of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, and were carefully integrated into the architectural framework of mosques, palaces, and even public spaces.

The Ottomans developed their own distinctive style of calligraphy, most notably the diwani script, which became a hallmark of their artistic output. Diwani script, characterized by its ornate curves and loops, was used not only in manuscripts but also in monumental inscriptions that adorned mosques and other important buildings. It is a script that, while highly decorative, maintains readability, and its elegant lines evoke a sense of flow and movement, making it ideal for use in architectural spaces. The incorporation of calligraphy into the very structure of buildings gave these words a sense of permanence, elevating them from mere decoration to sacred objects in their own right (Blair & Bloom, 1994).

Ornamentation, on the other hand, played a complementary role to calligraphy in Ottoman art. Floral and geometric patterns were meticulously crafted to adorn walls, ceilings, and facades of buildings. These intricate designs were created using a variety of materials, including stone, wood, and ceramics. The famous Iznik tiles, which were used to decorate many Ottoman mosques and palaces, are perhaps the most celebrated examples of this tradition. The tiles were often covered in repeating floral and geometric patterns, emphasizing the Islamic artistic focus on unity and infinity. The patterns themselves often symbolized paradise, the gardens of heaven, and the natural world, reflecting the divine order of creation. As Necipoğlu (2005) notes, "Ottoman ornamentation served to both beautify and symbolize the perfection of God's creation, offering a visual representation of divine harmony and balance."

The combination of calligraphy and ornamentation was not only decorative but also symbolic. Calligraphy, with its association with the Quran and sacred texts, often took on a central role in mosque architecture, such as in the domes, mihrabs (prayer niches), and minarets. Ornamentation, meanwhile, served to highlight and frame the calligraphic

elements, creating a seamless integration of text and design. This interplay between words and patterns created a cohesive visual language that reflected the spiritual and ethical ideals of Islam. In the Süleymaniye Mosque, one of Mimar Sinan's greatest masterpieces, the use of both calligraphy and ornamentation enhances the spiritual experience of the worshipper, drawing their attention to the divine through a combination of visual beauty and sacred words (Necipoglu, 2005).

Beyond religious structures, the Ottomans also applied calligraphy and ornamentation in their secular buildings, including palaces, schools, and public fountains. The Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, for instance, features numerous examples of calligraphic panels and ornamental tilework that reflect the wealth and sophistication of the Ottoman court. These artistic elements were used not only to express the power and prestige of the empire but also to reinforce the religious and cultural values that underpinned Ottoman society. As Goodwin (1971) states, "In Ottoman architecture, the line between the sacred and the secular was often blurred, as artistic forms typically reserved for religious buildings found their way into public and private spaces, creating a unified cultural expression."

In conclusion, calligraphy and ornamentation were essential elements in the development of Ottoman art and architecture. Through the use of elegant scripts and intricate patterns, the Ottomans created spaces that were both aesthetically pleasing and deeply symbolic. These artistic forms reflected the spiritual and cultural values of the empire, emphasizing the sacredness of the written word and the divine order of the universe. The legacy of Ottoman calligraphy and ornamentation continues to influence Islamic art today, demonstrating the enduring power of these visual forms in both religious and secular contexts.

4. Architectural Mastery: Cultural Synthesis: The Integration of Eastern and Western Artistic Traditions

The Ottoman Empire, with its vast territories spanning three continents, served as a crossroads for diverse cultures, traditions, and artistic influences. As a result, Ottoman art and architecture developed through a rich process of cultural synthesis, integrating elements from both Eastern and Western traditions. This synthesis is most evident in the empire's architectural achievements, which combined Islamic, Byzantine, Persian, and European motifs into a cohesive and distinct Ottoman style. The cultural blending that occurred within Ottoman architecture reflects the empire's role as both a political and artistic hub, uniting various traditions into a unified aesthetic that bridged the East and West.

4.1. Byzantine and Persian Influences in Ottoman Architecture

One of the most significant influences on Ottoman architecture was the Byzantine tradition, particularly in the use of monumental domes, as seen in the Hagia Sophia. The Ottoman architects, most notably Mimar Sinan, drew inspiration from the Byzantine tradition of large central domes and used them as a defining feature in their mosque designs. The Hagia Sophia's dome, originally constructed in the 6th century, symbolized the grandeur and divine authority of the Byzantine Empire. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans converted this iconic structure into a mosque, marking the beginning of a new chapter in Ottoman architecture. The adaptation of the central dome became a hallmark of Ottoman mosque design, as seen in the Süleymaniye Mosque and the Blue Mosque, which combined the structural innovations of Byzantine architecture with Islamic aesthetics (Necipoğlu, 2005).

The influence of Persian architecture is also prominent in Ottoman buildings, particularly in the use of intricate tilework, pointed arches, and ornate decoration. Persian architectural traditions, which had flourished under the Safavid dynasty, emphasized detailed ornamentation, calligraphy, and symmetrical layouts. The Ottomans, inspired by these elements, incorporated Persian techniques into their mosques, palaces, and madrasas. One of the most notable examples of Persian influence in Ottoman architecture is the use of İznik tiles, which feature floral and geometric patterns, echoing the intricate designs found in Persian art. These tiles, used to decorate the interiors of many Ottoman buildings, reflect the empire's ability to absorb and transform Eastern artistic traditions (Hillenbrand, 1999).

4.2. Western Influences and European Integration

In addition to Eastern influences, the Ottoman Empire was also significantly shaped by Western artistic traditions, particularly those from Renaissance and Baroque Europe. The empire maintained close diplomatic and trade relations with various European powers, which facilitated a two-way exchange of artistic ideas. Ottoman architects were exposed to European innovations in design, particularly in the fields of perspective, spatial organization, and ornamental detail. As Inalcik (2017) notes, "the Ottomans were not isolated from European artistic developments; rather, they actively engaged with and adapted European motifs, creating a hybrid architectural style that was distinctly Ottoman."

The Ottoman sultans, particularly in the later centuries, sought to integrate European elements into their palatial architecture. For example, the Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul, constructed in the mid-19th century, showcases a blending of Ottoman and European Baroque and Rococo styles. The palace's grandiose interior, with its lavish use of crystal chandeliers, marble columns, and gold leaf ornamentation, reflects the influence of European court architecture. At the same time, traditional Ottoman elements such as calligraphy and tilework are present, demonstrating the empire's ability to fuse Eastern and Western artistic traditions into a cohesive architectural style (Goodwin, 1971).

Another important example of cultural synthesis in Ottoman architecture is the Topkapi Palace, which combines Islamic and Western elements in both its design and decoration. While the palace's layout follows traditional Islamic patterns, with its central courtyards and domed chambers, it also incorporates European Renaissance motifs in its ornamentation and interior design. This blending of styles reflects the Ottomans' pragmatic approach to architecture, in which they adapted foreign influences to suit their own needs and tastes (Necipoğlu, 1991).

4.3. Cross-Cultural Exchange and the Role of Artisans

The cross-cultural exchange that defined Ottoman architecture was facilitated by the movement of artisans and craftsmen across the empire's vast territories. Skilled workers from Persia, Egypt, the Balkans, and even Europe were employed in the construction of Ottoman buildings, bringing with them their unique artistic traditions. This exchange of knowledge and techniques helped to create a diverse yet unified architectural style that was both cosmopolitan and distinctly Ottoman. Artisans from different regions worked together on major building projects, blending their respective traditions into a cohesive whole (Çelik, 2016).

For instance, the intricate tilework that adorns many Ottoman mosques and palaces was often created by Persian and Anatolian craftsmen, who brought their expertise in ceramic production to the Ottoman court. Similarly, European architects and engineers were employed in the design and construction of certain Ottoman buildings, particularly those influenced by Renaissance and Baroque styles. This blending of Eastern and Western craftsmanship is evident in the architectural details of buildings like the Selimiye Mosque and the Çırağan Palace, which showcase a fusion of Persian, Byzantine, and European motifs.

4.4. Symbolism and Meaning in Ottoman Architecture

The cultural synthesis that characterized Ottoman architecture was not just a matter of stylistic integration but also carried deep symbolic meaning. The blending of Eastern and Western elements in Ottoman buildings reflected the empire's geopolitical position as a bridge between Europe and Asia. The use of both Islamic and Christian motifs in Ottoman art and architecture symbolized the empire's role as a unifier of diverse cultures and traditions. In many ways, Ottoman architecture served as a visual representation of the empire's cosmopolitan identity, in which multiple cultural influences were absorbed and transformed into a singular, unified aesthetic.

As Kuban (2007) explains, "Ottoman architecture was a product of cultural integration, where different traditions were not merely juxtaposed but fused together to create a new artistic language." This synthesis of cultures can be seen in the design of Ottoman mosques, where Byzantine domes and Persian tiles coexist with Islamic calligraphy and geometric patterns. The result is a harmonious blend of artistic traditions that reflects the empire's multicultural nature and its ability to mediate between East and West.

4.5. The Lasting Impact of Ottoman Cultural Synthesis

The architectural and artistic achievements of the Ottoman Empire left a lasting impact on both the Islamic world and Europe. The synthesis of Eastern and Western traditions in Ottoman architecture influenced the development of later Islamic art, particularly in regions such as North Africa and the Balkans, where Ottoman architectural styles were adopted and adapted. At the same time, the Ottomans' engagement with European artistic traditions had a profound effect on the development of architecture in Renaissance and Baroque Europe, particularly in the use of domes, courtyards, and intricate ornamentation (Rogers, 1987).

In conclusion, Ottoman architecture represents a unique fusion of Eastern and Western artistic traditions, resulting in a distinct style that bridged the cultural divide between Europe and Asia. Through their synthesis of Byzantine, Persian, and European elements, Ottoman architects created a cohesive architectural language that reflected the empire's cosmopolitan identity and its role as a mediator between different cultures. This blending of traditions not only enriched Ottoman art and architecture but

also left a lasting legacy that continues to influence Islamic and European architecture to this day.

CONCLUSION

The Ottoman Empire, with its rich history spanning more than six centuries, played a pivotal role in the evolution of Islamic art and architecture. The empire's vast territorial expanse, which stretched across parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa, allowed for a unique blending of diverse cultural, religious, and artistic traditions. The result was a distinct architectural and artistic style that left an indelible mark on both the Islamic world and the broader global artistic landscape.

Throughout this evolution, Ottoman architecture became a fusion of Islamic, Byzantine, Persian, and European elements, reflecting the empire's cosmopolitan nature and its ability to synthesize and adapt external influences. Early Ottoman architecture, heavily influenced by the Byzantine tradition, particularly the Hagia Sophia, laid the groundwork for the iconic domed mosques that came to define the empire's religious structures. The use of large central domes, spacious interiors, and intricate ornamentation created a sense of grandeur and spiritual elevation that became characteristic of Ottoman mosque design.

One of the key figures in this architectural evolution was Mimar Sinan, the empire's most celebrated architect. Sinan's mastery in combining structural innovation with aesthetic elegance is evident in his major works, including the Süleymaniye Mosque and Selimiye Mosque, which stand as testaments to the peak of Ottoman architectural achievement. His ability to harmonize form and function, light and space, and calligraphy and ornamentation transformed Ottoman mosque design into an art form that not only served the spiritual needs of the community but also symbolized the empire's power and prestige.

The role of calligraphy and ornamentation in Ottoman art was equally significant. Calligraphy, seen as a visual representation of the divine word, was integrated into the very fabric of Ottoman architecture, particularly in mosques, where Quranic verses adorned domes, mihrabs, and walls. This emphasis on the sacredness of the written word, combined with the intricate floral and geometric patterns of Ottoman ornamentation, reflected the Islamic principle of creating beauty that both inspires and instructs.

Moreover, the Ottomans were successful in creating a unique synthesis of Eastern and Western artistic traditions. The influence of Persian tilework, Byzantine domes, and European Baroque and Rococo styles enriched Ottoman architecture, resulting in a dynamic and adaptable artistic language. Structures like the Dolmabahçe Palace and Topkapi Palace are prime examples of this cultural blending, showcasing the Ottomans' ability to integrate foreign influences while maintaining their own distinct aesthetic identity.

In conclusion, the evolution of Islamic art and architecture during the Ottoman Empire stands as one of the most significant achievements in the history of Islamic civilization. The Ottomans not only preserved the artistic traditions they inherited but also innovated and expanded upon them, creating a legacy that continues to influence Islamic and global art today. Ottoman architecture, with its combination of spiritual depth, structural ingenuity, and artistic beauty, remains a lasting symbol of the empire's cultural and religious significance. The synthesis of Eastern and Western elements in Ottoman art and architecture is a testament to the empire's cosmopolitan nature and its enduring influence on the artistic traditions of the Islamic world.

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