

AN OTTOMAN BUILDING COMPLEX
OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY:
THE SOKOLLU MOSQUE AND ITS DEPENDENCIES
IN ISTANBUL
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AN OTTOMAN BUILDING COMPLEX OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY: THE SOKOLLU MOSQUE AND ITS DEPENDENCIES IN ISTANBUL

BY DOĞAN KUBAN

FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND A REAL appreciation of classical Ottoman architecture, the monuments of the second half of the 16th century are of primary importance. After the consolidation of the military conquests, the opulent Ottoman society of this period, which had a rather long tradition in monumental performance, produced an incredibly rich scala of significant buildings. The architects searched for a richer and more dynamic statement which, in the last analysis, was the expression of the new society, the unchallenged master of its time in both material and, from their point of view, spiritual domain.

Sixteenth-century Ottoman architects, especially Sinan and his school, did not introduce new techniques, but they did elaborate old formulas of cupola architecture with a mature architectural taste; with well developed techniques of construction and decoration, they brought Ottoman style to the ultimate level of its expressive capacity as a total architectural concept.

It is worth while to note that a comparison between Ottoman style and other contemporary Mediterranean styles may produce fruitful arguments for the reappraisal of some basic tenets of the history of architecture. The evolution of High Renaissance and the very little known evolution of Ottoman architecture are parallel processes in the Mediterranean basin which express the essential differences between the social and cultural atmospheres

prevailing in Italy and in the heart of the Muslim Near East; but in the same time, they point out to the existence of more deeper trends of formal affinities.

The Sokollu complex in Istanbul is the work of Sinan and his school. It was built in the 16th century for the Grandvizir Sokollu Mehmet Paşa, one of the most celebrated statesmen of the Empire, and his wife, Esmahan Sultan, daughter of Sultan Selim II. The complex, which consists of a medium-sized mosque, a *medrese* and a *tekke* (cloister), is not the only foundation of the Sokollu family; the Grandvizir himself established a great many public buildings in different cities of the imperial domain,¹ and both his wife and son, İbrahim Paşa, have several buildings and foundations to their credit. The Sokollu complex, however, built near their palace in the old Hippodrome area, in the heart of the city and on the site of an old but unidentified Byzantine church, was probably one of their most important contributions to the social life of their time. It, therefore, illuminates the character of a foundation established by a great dignitary of state, the relative social and architectural importance of its components as well as the ideas of artistic and social accomplishments of the period and the standards of architectural achievement.

¹ For other buildings of Sokollu Mehmet Paşa, see N. Iorga, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, Gotha, 1908-13, vol. 3, p. 165.

History

In the list of Musfafa Sai's *Risale-i Tezkiret ül-Ebniye*, the Sokollu Mosque is mentioned in the 9th place; the *medrese* is No. 12 under the heading of *medreses*. The location is named as *Kadırga Limanı*, the old harbor quarter of Sophien.² Evliya does not mention this complex. In the 18th-century work of Hafız Hüseyin Efendi, *Hadikat-ül-Cevami*, we find the following information (abridged to its essentials): "...it is an elevated [*fevkanî*] building, transformed [sic!] from a church. During the grandvizirate of him [Sokollu], it was built by the daughter of Sultan Selim II, Esmahan Sultan; and he [Sokollu] added a *medrese* and a fountain in the courtyard and cells for the students and a cloister behind. Therefore it is known as Sokollu Mehmet Paşa Camii. ... In the interior there is a piece of *Hacer el-Esved* [the holy stone in the Kaaba]; it was placed there for the visits of the believers. ..."³ Then, Hüseyin Efendi gives the inscription (see below) on the principal gate of the northwest facade. Other information, except a date given by him which will be discussed in its place, adds little to our understanding of the building. He tells us about the lives and tombs of Sokollu and Esmahan Sultan, and especially about the shaikhs of the *tekke*, some of whom have their tombs in the yard to the rear of the mosque.

² Mustafa Sai, *Risale-i Tezkiret ül-Ebniye* in Mimar Sinan, Hayatı eseri I. *Mimar Sinan'ın hayatına, eserlerine dair metinler*. Critical Edition by R. M. Meriç, Ankara, 1965, pp. 75 and 95.

³ Hafız, Hüseyin Efendi (Ayvansarayî), *Hadikat ül-Cevami*, edited by Mustafa Satî Efendi, İstanbul, 1281 H./A.D. 1864, vol. I, p. 193 ff.

At the end of the 19th century, Paspatis, without any material evidence and with a faulty interpretation of the sources,⁴ thought that the church Anastasios was the initial building of the Sokollu mosque. The mention of a church in the main inscription, and probably the rather conclusive statement in Hadika, led many scholars to accept the location of the mosque as the original site of the church of Anastasios; the transformation of the church into a mosque, however, was rejected for obvious reasons. Janin proved afterwards that the site of the church of Anastasios was not here but in another region of İstanbul.⁵

The demolition of an existing church mentioned in the inscription and fragments of reliefs, one of a madonna with child found in the northwest wall of the mosque during recent restorations, indicate that the mosque was built upon the site of an older building.⁶ But we do not know the name of this church. In the area between the old Hippodrome and the port of Sophien the sources mention several churches and monasteries.⁷ However, without further research and excavations, it is impossible to identify the Byzantine church replaced by the mosque.

⁴ A. G. Paspatis, *Byzantinai Meletai*, Constantinople, 1877, pp. 364-375. In 1874 Paspatis discovered large foundation blocks near the Sokollu mosque and, by deduction, took the mosque to be the former church of Saint Anastasia Pharmasoltyria.

⁵ R. Janin, *La géographie ecclesiastique de l'Empire Byzantin*, tome III, *Les Eglises et les Monastères*, Paris, 1953, p. 28 ff.

⁶ Anon, *İstanbul Abideleri*, İstanbul (Yedigün neşriyatı), n.d., p. 103.

⁷ See R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*, Paris, 1950, pp. 299, 313.

There are several descriptions of the Sokollu Mosque,⁸ but an early useful study was that of C. Gurlitt, who published plans and sections of the complex.⁹ There is also a rather literary description of the mosque by the anonymous author of the book *Istanbul Abideleri* which contains valuable information.¹⁰

Date

The date of the mosque is given by an inscription above the door of the main gateway:

تاریخ بناسی بودر
هم نام فخر عالم یعنی وزیر اعظم * کیم بختی لایزال اقبال سرمدیدر
کنار خاکسار ک یقوب کتسه سنی * برده بدالبدیکم شهرک سرامدیدر
بیت العباد اولدی اولدار کفر و ظلمت * حقا بومعجزات کبرای احدیدر
تاریخ فکر ایدر کن بوقحه هاتف غیب * دیدی (بو جامع دین فتح محمدیدر
۹۷۹

In this inscription it is said that the Grandvizir is the founder of the mosque; there is no mention of the other buildings. The inscription also mentions the destruction of the old church. The last line, "*bu*

camii din, fethi Muhammedidir" gives the date of H. 979/A.D. 1571-72; this is, as is usual in such cases, the completion date of the monument, and its location over the main gateway indicates that the mosque and the adjacent *medrese* were completed at the same time.

This inscription does not coincide with the description given by Hüseyin Efendi: here the Grandvizir, and not his wife, is clearly mentioned as the founder. The Hadika's version has generally been accepted without question, except by Koçu in a newspaper article,¹¹ but there is no plausible reason for rejecting the correctness of the inscription. A more probable explanation would be that the cloister and perhaps the fountain (*şadırvan*) in the courtyard were added later or completed by Esma-han Sultan, who died six years after her husband (A.D. 1585).

In Hadika there is a passage which states that the venerable shaikh, Nureddin Zade Efendi, to whom the cloister was entrusted, died immediately after the completion of the building, and that another shaikh, Mehmed bin Ömer Efendi, suggested by the latter, was appointed. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find the exact date of Shaikh Nureddin Zade's death. However, according to Hadika the second shaikh died in 997 H./A.D. 1588-89, after a stay of several years in the *tekke*.¹² This date suggests that the construction of the *tekke* was completed about the same time as the other buildings of the complex. As a matter of fact, there is no

⁸ For the description and evaluation of the mosque cf. Halil Edhem, *La conservation des monuments antiques et historiques en Turquie*, Actes du Congrès d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, 1923, p. 215 ff., pls. 7-8 (include the plan, section and elevation of the mosque); A. Gabriel, *Les mosquées de Constantinople*, Syria, 1926, pp. 394-395; E. Egli, *Sinan*, Zürich-Stuttgart, 1954, pp. 94-96; D. Kuban, *Osmanlı Dinî Mimarisinde iç mekân teşekkülü*, Istanbul, 1958, pp. 48-49; D. Kuban, *Les mosquées à coupole à base hexagonale*, Beitrage zur Kunstgeschichte Asiens, in memoriam E. Diez, Istanbul, 1963, p. 39; C. E. Arseven, *Türk Sanatı*, Istanbul, n.d., pp. 348-350.

⁹ C. Gurlitt, *Die Baukunst Konstantinopels*, Berlin, 1907-12, vol. 2, pp. 82-83, pls. 26, d and f.

¹⁰ *Istanbul Abideleri*, pp. 100-103.

¹¹ R. E. Koçu, *Türk Istanbul*, Cumhuriyet (extra publication on the city of Istanbul), Istanbul, 1953, p. 82.

¹² Ayyansarayî Hüseyin Efendi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 194.

constructional evidence to show a difference between the mosque and the *medrese* on one hand and the *tekke* on the other.

The architect of the building

It seems that there is no doubt concerning the identity of Sinan as the architect of the building. However, during the year H. 979 A.D. 1571, Sinan had been extremely busy with the construction of the great mosque of Sultan Selim, the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne. Several court orders carrying the date of this year show Sinan continuously working at Edirne.¹³ He had been probably equally busy the year before as the preparations for the Sultan's mosque had begun as early as 1567. During the same period many buildings were built, all of which are accepted as the work of the master.¹⁴ It is obvious that all these buildings cannot have been designed by a single hand. We should consider that the working system of Sinan's office was similar to that of a modern architectural firm in which every architect is responsible for the design of a single building and is credited as co-author of the project with the owner of the firm. It is probable that Sinan's office was so organized. Sinan was the designer of large monuments ordered by the Sultans, and in his leisure time, by the great dignitaries. But in many instances one should admit the possibility of lesser archi-

texts working under his supervision. It would be extremely difficult to differentiate between the style of the master and those of his pupils, since many of Sinan's pupils became great architects, and the style of his school was homogeneous to a large extent. Only a very careful study might show distinctive nuances of which we are unaware at the present level of our knowledge of Ottoman buildings.

Description of the complex

The Layout.

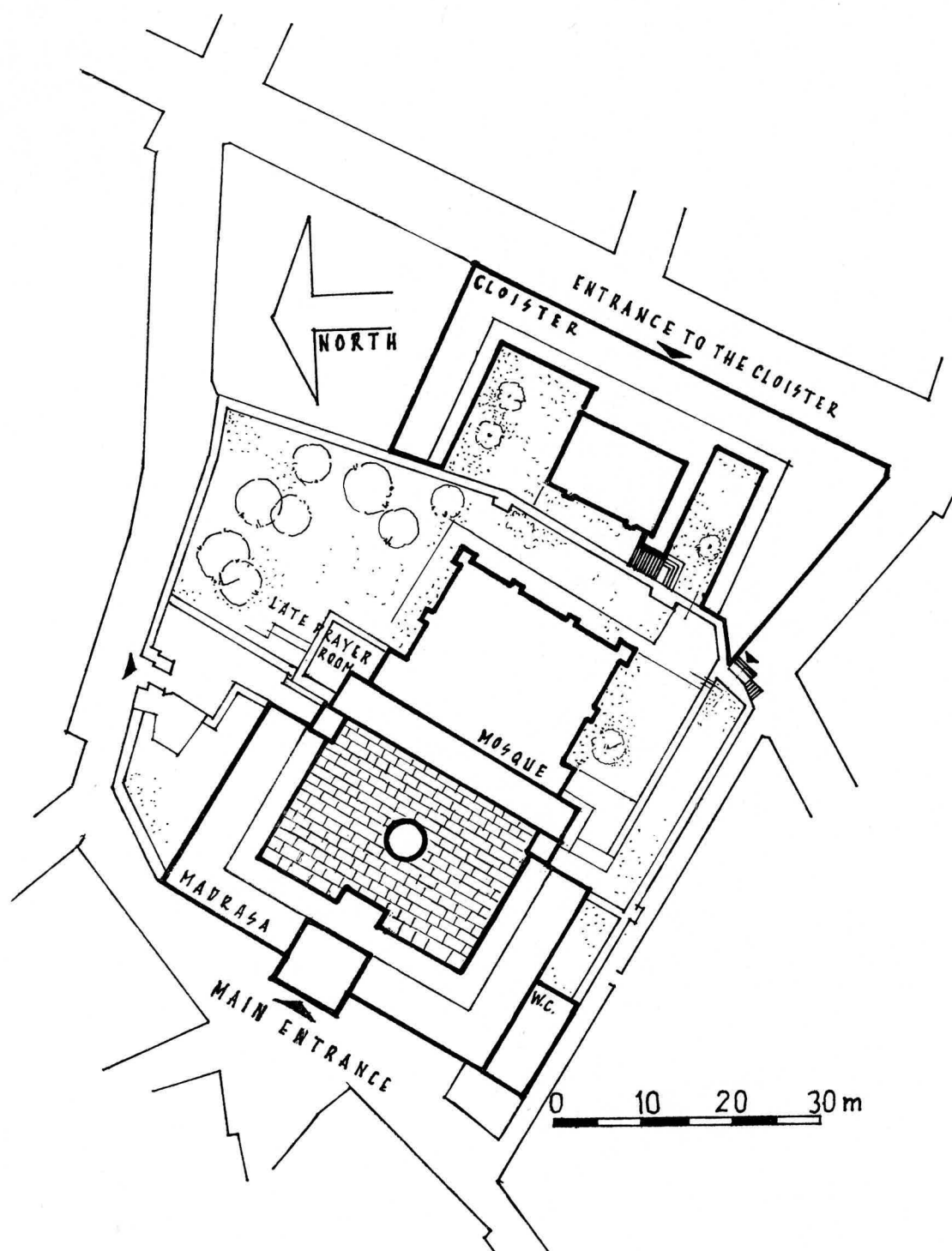
The site of the complex is an irregular polygon, very steep in the east-west direction (*text fig. 1*). The mosque and the *medrese* with their common courtyard are placed at the lower part of the site, the entrances being from the northwest, northeast and southwest. Only from the northeast can one enter the main level of the mosque; other entrances reach this level by means of stairs, the main entrance on the northwest being about 5 meters lower than the court level.

The *tekke* is behind the mosque, placed on the southeast part of the site and connected with the rear courtyard of the mosque through a small door. The main entrance of the *tekke* is from the southeast. It seems that the *tekke* does not constitute an integral part of the original architectural composition. However it is masterfully situated, like the mosque and the *medrese*, on the difficult terrain.

The complex and its depending cemeteries are surrounded by streets which probably roughly correspond to the original ones. Because of the character of the terrain the inner and outer scales of the

¹³ Ahmet Refik, *Mimar Sinan*, Tarihi Osmanî Encümeni Mecmuası (last volume with the new alphabet), documents nos. 9, 10, 12.

¹⁴ The other works of Sinan's in these years are: The Selimiye mosque in Edirne (1568-75); The Piyale Paşa mosque in Istanbul (finished in 1573); The mausoleum of Sokollu in Istanbul (finished before 1574), among others.



TEXT FIG. 1.—GENERAL PLAN OF THE COMPLEX.

complex are different: from the outside one sees a building of two or more floors; from the courtyards, even the mosque itself has humble proportions. The level of the terrain behind the mosque is about 5 meters lower than the street level. The composition of the layout does not necessitate this arrangement. A possible explanation of this is the existence of older buildings on the spot, which were completely demolished for the use of their materials; the foundation level was not filled up and was used afterwards as a garden for the ensemble. Later it became a cemetery full of tombs of religious men, both those who had been the shaikhs of the *tekke* and others;¹⁵ it is extremely pleasant with its cypress trees, shrubs and greenery.

The main level of the mosque and the *medrese* and part of the *tekke* are built on a substructure of large arcades which are expressed on the façades as large niches. On the main façade these niches were used as small shops.¹⁶ Whether they were originally intended for this purpose, we cannot say.

Medrese.

The main entrance is from the northwest. The classroom of the *medrese* projecting outside from the center of the northwest façade covers the main gateway and thus, with its supporting pillars, provides shade and volume to underline the main entrance (*fig. 1*). The ceiling of this main porch is decorated with painted stucco motifs; and the arch of the small door

leading to the stairs, with its delicate floral design in the shape of lilies, adds another decorative note to this entrance.

A steep stairway (the average dimensions of the steps are 0.195 × 0.375 cm.) leads to the courtyard (*fig. 2*). The ceiling of this stairway was also covered with painted stucco decoration which no longer exists.

The stone-paved courtyard is surrounded by arcades; in the center there is a *şadırvan* (a fountain for ablution).¹⁷ There are several existing examples of a *medrese* and a mosque combined around a court,¹⁸ but here the courtyard has a rather peculiar design: areas of different functions are accentuated with special forms; the *son cemaat mahalli* (the outside porch for late prayers) of the mosque has spacious proportions and the treatment of the northwest façade of the prayer hall with its niches, side entrances, faience panels and the columns of the arcade with *mukarnas* capitals is very classical (*fig. 3*). The porch consists of seven cupola-covered bays. The central cupola is higher than the others, as usual. The bays were decorated with paintings, but the original decor no longer exists.

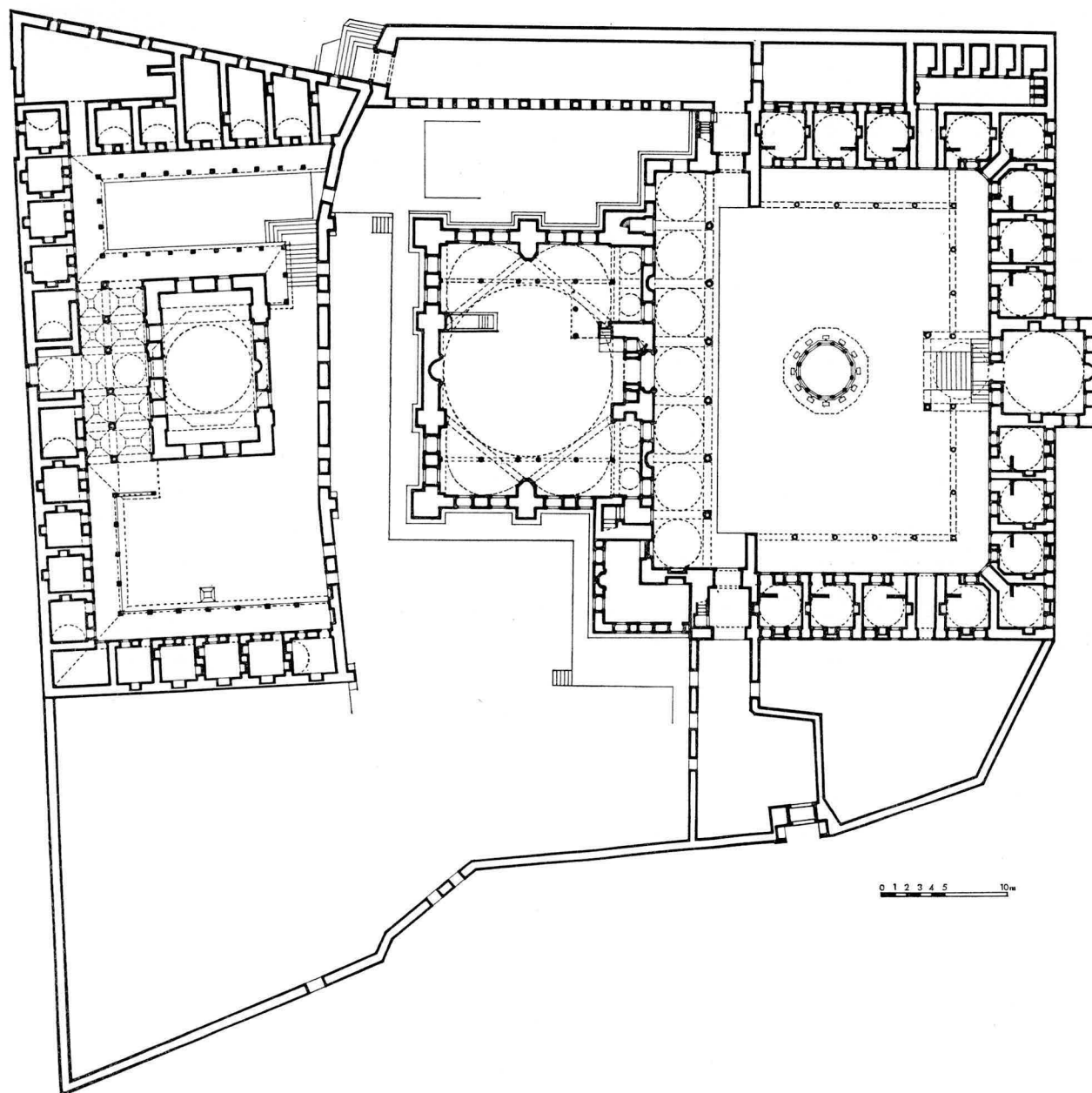
The other three sides of the courtyard are occupied with the cells of the students and a central classroom; the arcade in front

¹⁵ *Istanbul Abideleri*, p. 100.

¹⁶ A late use of these niches is shown on a drawing by Gurlitt in *Die Baukunst Konstantinopels*, vol. 2, pl. 26 e.

¹⁷ A *şadırvan* is not necessarily a fountain for ablutions. In many instances it has a symbolic and aesthetic character while real ablution fountains are placed somewhere else, as is the case with the mosque of Sultan Ahmet, the Yeniciami, etc.; however, in mosques of average size, the *şadırvan* is generally used for a practical purpose.

¹⁸ Among the buildings in Istanbul attributed to Sinan are the Mosque of Ahmet Paşa the Mosque of Mihrimah, and the Mosque of Zal Mahmut Paşa.



TEXT FIG. 2.—PLAN OF THE MOSQUE AND THE MEDRESE.

of them, formed with arches "en accolade" of very low proportions (*fig. 4*), constitutes a striking contrast to the entrance of the mosque. This arch form is fairly common in the later buildings of the Sinan Period.¹⁹ On the opposite side of the mosque, in the center of the northwest arcade, a cupola-covered bay marks the end of the main staircase and the entrance of the classroom; from under the arcades two symmetrical stairs lead to this room (*fig. 5*).

The high colonnade of the porch of the prayer hall proper and the low arcades of the *medrese* cells are united by two small pavillons over the side entrances containing the rooms of the *müezzin* and the *kayyum*. These closed architectural elements, higher than the arcades of the *medrese* and lower than the porch, provide a smooth and effective passage between the two functionally and formally different elements of the composition (*fig. 6*).

The central dodecagonal fountain has marble columns constituting the frame for marble panels and an iron grid of common geometrical design. The basin inside is open and in its center there is a marble "vasque." The cupola-covered fountain and its roof have probably retained their original shape (*fig. 7*).

From the northeast side of the site a small gateway leads to a small, rather irregular outer yard from which one enters, under the *Kayyum's* room, the courtyard. Another gateway on the southwest leads to the courtyard through an open passageway (*fig. 8*).

¹⁹ Other examples are in the interior of the Rüstem Paşa Mosque, in the courtyards of the Mosque of Zal Mahmut Paşa, and of the *tekke* and the *medrese* of the Mosque of Eski Valide at Üsküdar.

The Interior of the Mosque.

One enters the prayer hall through a deep, rich monumental portal in which a small door opens; the design of the portal is common for the period (*fig. 9*). There are two other entrances on this façade: small doors lead to the galleries on one side, to the minaret on the other (*fig. 10*). The upper galleries are also reached from the inside by stairs built in the thickness of the buttresses. The interior of the mosque has an unsurpassable spatial unity found in many medium-sized mosques of this period (*fig. 11*). A rectangular space of about 18.80 × 15.30 m. is covered with a dome carried on an hexagonal base constituted by a triple partition of the northeast-southwest walls of the basic rectangle. The projecting parts of the supporting pillars have different forms: on the northwest side they are massive buttresses flanking the entrance (*fig. 12*); on either side of the room they are polygonal according to their function; on the *kible* side, they are rather shallow pilasters framing the *mihrab*.

The only spatial elements in this simple structural scheme are the galleries surrounding the room which are supported by thin marble columns (*fig. 13*); the side galleries are narrow and very low; they do not hinder in any way the essential spatial unity of the interior. These low proportions were possible because of the use of horizontal slabs for the ceiling of the galleries; at the same time, this construction produces rather narrow galleries which are in harmony with the dimensions of the interior. On the entrance wall, galleries on different levels, with the addition of the *müezzin mahfeli*, create an extraordinary appeal to modern taste (*figs. 14a and b*).

The alternate use of small and large arches in these galleries is a familiar hallmark of this period.²⁰ The central point of interest in the composition of this interior is the central bay of the *mihrab*-wall containing the *mihrab*-niche; it is covered up to the base of the dome with tiles, and it is pierced with six windows having elaborately designed stucco frames with colored glass fillings (fig. 15).²¹ In the distribution of decorative elements, this wall is of the utmost importance. From this part of the *mihrab* wall, the tile-covered surface spreads to the pendentives; there, the concave, colorful glazed surface reflects the light coming from the dome windows; thus the color effect of this upper level crowns the upwards movement of the vision, consciously concentrated on the *mihrab* wall. The other use of tiles is on the tympanums of the side windows and on the medallions, which are of decidedly secondary importance. The only asymmetrical note in this hierarchy of color is the tiny crowning spire of the *minber*, covered with beautiful mosaic tiles.

Nothing remains from the original painted decoration of the walls and the dome. Only under the galleries are there some remains of painted decoration, which we shall discuss later.

More than ninety windows illuminate this interior; there is a hierarchy in the placing of these windows. The *mihrab* wall has the fewest windows; the function

of their colored-glass fillings is to diminish the intensity of the light. The north wall has also rather small openings. The bulk of light is provided by the side windows and by the windows in the drum (which is not a true drum), and in the semi-domes. At the corners of the semi-domes there are painted fake windows. We do not know whether the use of these fake windows was already common in the 16th century or whether it was a creation of later times, perhaps the 18th century.²² Except for the stucco *mukarnas*, a purely decorative feature, the Ottomans and the Seljuks before them did not have recourse to this baroque habit of effects created by sculptural or painterly means (figs. 16 and 17).

The composition of the side walls is regular (fig. 8): in every arched bay there are two rows of two windows; the rectangular windows of the first rows are crowned with tile panels; the arched windows of the upper row have colored glass of simple design.

In the Ottoman mosques, the use of light has a totally unorthodox character: the interior is submerged in light. To counterbalance this and to prevent any possible embarrassment of the worshipper by an excess of direct light, a neutral color scheme is used. For the same reason, the windows which provide the most light are placed in the upper part of the room. The light is also controlled by the use of stucco panels and their colored glass, and the colors used in the *mihrab* windows towards which the worshipper turns are purposely darkened.

²⁰ A well-known example is to be found in the courtyard of the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne.

²¹ Nevertheless, these windows do not belong to the original building and we do not know if they imitate the original design (cf. E. A. Grossvenor, *Constantinople*, Boston, 1895, vol. 2, p. 149).

²² The classical design of the windows date from a recent restoration. In the Gurlitt photos, they show a late baroque character (*op. cit.*, pls. 26, b and c).

The *minber* (fig. 19a and b) and the *müezzin mahfeli*, both in marble, are in harmony with the character of the interior. The simple polygonal arabesque of the balustrade and the delicate rows of prismatic *mukarnas* are essential decorative motives in them (fig. 20).

The floor of the mosque is covered with stone plates which are hidden under the rugs.

Rooms Around the Courtyard.

The classroom is contained in the domed chamber above the main entrance. As an architectural element, it acts aesthetically in underlining the axiality of the composition and, at the same time, functionally in covering the main entrance; the importance given to it as a main element of the composition is enhanced by the cupola-covered bay and two symmetrical stairs before it (fig. 5). It is a well lighted room. It has a small niche for the teacher in the wall opposite the door. Unfortunately none of the original decoration remains.²³ There are sixteen rooms for the students of the *medrese*. Every room is lighted sufficiently by four windows on the outside and one on the court. Each has a fireplace and is probably intended for two students.²⁴ Nothing remains of their original decoration.

The rooms serving the *müezzin*, the caller to prayer, and the *kayyum*, the custodian of the mosque, occupy the upper part of the side entrances to the courtyard

and are reached by two narrow stairs in the wall.

From the courtyard a small gangway leads to the lavatories at the western corner of the site.

Tekke.

This is an independent and important architectural composition. The whole building, which was in bad condition, has recently been restored and is now used as a student hostel. A cut-stone wall separates the narrow backyard of the mosque from the *tekke* complex (text fig. 3). This complex consists of a cupola-covered meeting room and small rooms for the students and dervishes which surround two courtyards on both sides of the central room.

From the southeast one enters a vaulted entrance hall which leads to the meeting room. This entrance hall, with its symmetrical arrangement and its rarely used cloister vaults, is an interesting feature in itself. On the right of the entrance, there is a one-story courtyard surrounded by eleven cupola-covered rooms which have a columnnade in front of them. The flat wooden ceiling of the arcade is now totally destroyed. In the courtyard there is a well; once a garden with trees, it is totally desolated now. On the left side of the entrance is a two-story courtyard surrounded by twenty-one rooms with arcades. At the corner of this left side, on the southernmost point of the complex there is a private wooden house, the house of the shaikh of the *tekke* (fig. 21); the house is certainly from the 19th century but most probably replaces an older original one. The northern one-storied courtyard extends to the south behind the meeting room and is con-

²³ We have been unable to investigate very carefully the classroom as it is being used as a storage-room for old documents and has been filled with wooden shelves.

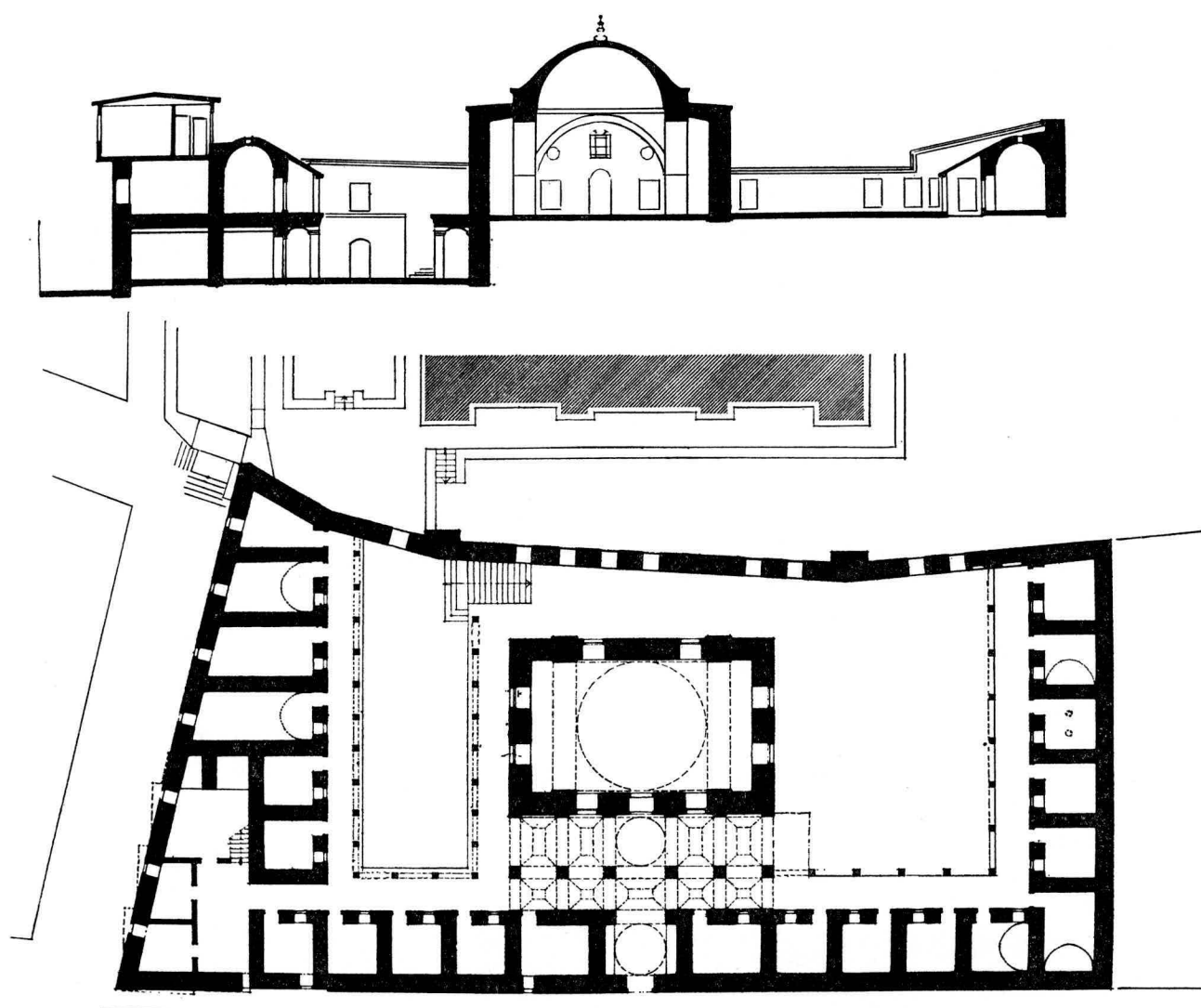
²⁴ Cf. Gurlitt, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pl. 26 ff.

ected with the southern courtyard by a stair. A small door from this lower courtyard leads to the backyard of the mosque; this is the only connection between the mosque and the *tekke*.

An interesting structural feature is the covering of the prayer room: a rectangular space is covered by a central cupola and two narrow flat stone ceilings. The cloister-vault construction of the entrance hall is

brick. The mixed wall construction of the *tekke* is similar to that of the mosque.

The building has very few decorative details: the capitals are quite non-existent; the existing ones are simple blocks of a single moulding. The rooms are white-washed. The cupola of the central room has what is apparently an old decoration, the motives of which are the same as those used in the re-decoration of the mosque.



TEXT FIG. 3.—THE PLAN AND SECTION OF THE TEKKE.

From the outside, the entrance with its pointed cupola (*fig. 22*) and the wooden house of the shaikh are the main motifs. The sequence of three cupolas on the main axis of the building is also to be noted.

The Prayer Room on the Left of the Mosque Proper.

This late but very carefully executed L-shaped room with an apsidal niche was probably used for praying purposes. It has no connection with the main room. The reason for its existence is unsolved.

The Fountain and Cemetery.

The fountain at the corner of the north-west facade of the *medrese* has no date. But it is also a late addition, possibly from the 17th century.

The low garden behind the mosque is closed to the street. It has no specific function and eventually became a burial ground, a characteristic feature of every mosque in Turkey (*fig. 23*).

Structural experimentation

In the development of Ottoman mosque architecture, experimentation with different domical systems constituted the main occupation of the architects; these knowing experiments continued for about two centuries. There are some studies in which the place of the Sokollu mosque was discussed.²⁵ A few hints might show the characteristic approach of Turkish architects to the problem of structure.

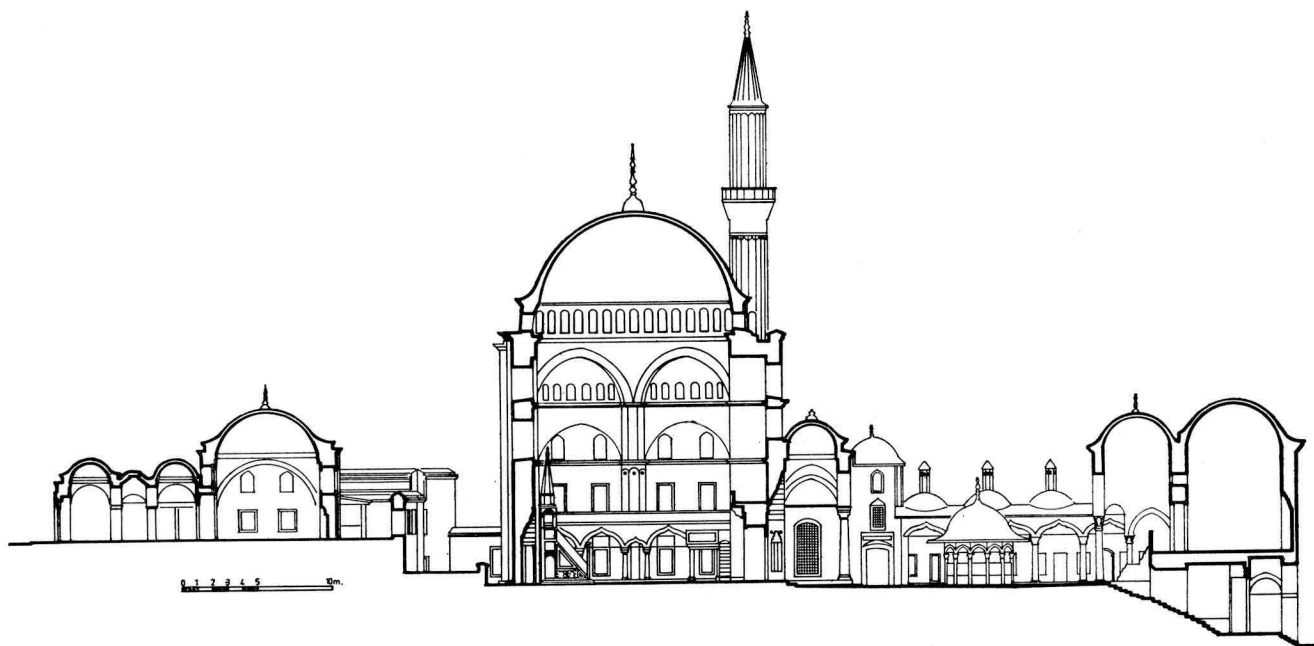
²⁵ Cf. footnote 8.

The diameter of the Sokollu Mosque's dome is about 13 meters. A wall of 1.5 meters is usually normal for this diameter.²⁶ Here the thickness of the walls is about 1 meter; to compensate for the relative weakness of the walls, a system of six buttresses was devised: they do not constitute a separate system of support such as in the Selimiye in Edirne but are part of the carrying walls. Their forms are conditioned by their specific place in the composition of the interior; as a result, the northern buttresses are rather large without being the result of a structural necessity.

In this cupola the hexagonal system is a matter of aesthetic choice. A hexagon has the advantage of providing a rather simple system of covering for a medium-sized room: it combines a relatively limited number of supports with relatively small dimensions for the corner semi-domes. Thus, the elements of transition become structurally less important. In a cupola of this size they lose all their structural meaning as the semi-domes, to a great extent, rest directly on the walls. At the same time the size of the decorative *mukarnas* decreases, thus providing a more balanced transition zone in the interior (*fig. 24*).

The side buttresses which have polygonal shapes are expressed in the outside configuration as turrets; here again, they are not only simple weight-towers but aesthetic elements of the exterior composition as well. The cupola is connected to the lower part of the structure by a small drum with flat buttresses: this low drum and its

²⁶ The mosque of Sitti Sultan in Edirne has a dome with a diameter of 13 meters and its walls are 1.5 meters thick; the Ayşekadın mosque in Edirne has walls 1.1 meters thick for a dome diameter of 10.5 meters.



TEXT FIG. 4.—SECTION THROUGH THE MOSQUE AND THE MEDRESE.

pilaster-like buttresses are more aesthetic than structural. The brick construction of the cupola is simple and probably without ribs.

External configuration of the complex

The mosque is surrounded by its unpretentious dependencies of one or two-stories. The most prominent part of the facade is the main entrance with its monumental pillars and projecting mass (*fig. 1*). A picturesque note is obtained by the alternate layers of stone and brick in the walls and by the chimneys of the student rooms.

From the section (*text fig. 4*), one grasps the inherent beauty of the combination of cupolas of different sizes on several levels which create a movement of pure geometrical forms (*fig. 25*). In this arrangement of small-sized domes three elements, name-

ly the main dome, the smaller dome of the class-room, and the minaret (each with its dimensional and formal nuances) dominate the composition.

The most characteristic feature of this architecture is its stratification: every strata is well-defined by a clear molding. The top molding of the porch of the mosque proper continues around the courtyard, delineating the masses (*fig. 6*). So, the level of the bases of the semi-cupolas is expressed with another molding; it continues, even on the surface of the northwest facade of the main room for no specific reason except that of the continuity of the level-limiting lines. The base of the dome constitutes another strata above which the simple, spherical dome rises without any formal emphasis. However, the dome dominates this composition as strongly as any other dome-centered composition be-

cause of the accent put on the delineation of levels.

In every mosque the upper level of the walls of the rectangular prayer-hall is shown by a horizontal line, from the outside as well as from the inside, and in every mosque design, the treatment of the cupola as crowning element is the same. Thus the most original feature of a mosque design must lie in between the levels of transition elements; and its disposition creates the originality of the central mass of a mosque. In the Sokollu mosque, the side turrets and the projecting part of the northwest abutments which constitute an attic-like façade are characteristic. The twin cupolettes on either side of this attic are common with many other hexagonal schemes, such as that of the Cerrahpaşa mosque (figs. 26a and b).

The treatment of the façades

Two-storied façades are composed in a simple way. In the *medrese*, the basement is plain well-cut stone; the walls of the cells have a mixed construction of stone and brick. The upper level has two rows of windows: those of the lower row have marble frames and are rectangular; the upper row consists of arched and smaller windows with simple stucco panels and decorative brick archivolt (fig. 27). In the center, the lower windows of the classroom have a decorative brick arch which crowns them with a plain tympanum.

The main façade of the mosque on the side of the inner courtyard is very classical in its organization. On either side of the main portal, which is decorated with the usual *mukarnas* of precisely-cut stone (fig. 28), there are two bays with two rows of

windows. These windows are in very shallow recesses delineated with fine moldings; they have the usual iron-grids. On the rectangular spaces above the lower rows of windows, tile panels with religious inscriptions are placed. At both ends of this façade two small doors open to the stairs for the minaret and the galleries for women. The door leading to the women's quarter was carefully placed to the northeast corner of the façade in order to provide a maximum isolation for them. The upper part of the façade, behind the domes of the porch, is a simple rectangle pierced with three arched windows which have stucco panels composed of simple leaf-shaped elements. The corners of the rectangle are emphasized by circular semi-columns and the whole rectangle is crowned with a rather elaborate cornice (fig. 29).

Other façades of the main room have regular symmetrical window rows. There is no particular articulation of organized wall elements as we would see in any European building after the Renaissance. The façades of the *tekke* have a simpler treatment with less openings.

The minaret

The minaret has no structural connection with the rest of the building. It is the only element of the exterior composition which interrupts the continuous lines of the cornices, intruding its vertical body without any special arrangement in the composition (fig. 30). Generally speaking, the minaret of the Ottoman mosque, especially before the 16th century, was not organically connected with the main body of the building. The large compositions of Sinan show a fine knowledge of mass dis-

position in the placing of the minarets. This is not the case with that of the Sokollu mosque, however. The rather unhappy intrusion of the minaret into the composition can not be easily observed because it is hidden from the sight of the visitors coming from two main directions.

All the elements of the minaret (*fig. 31*), the polygonal shaft, the single balcony with its balustrades and stalactites, the conical roof, are typical of the period. Here, however, in the use of fine "fillets" moldings which end with an arcature, the relationship with the design of the Selimiye Mosque is detectable. This rather archaic design on the surface of the minarets can be explained by the influence of the old minarets of Edirne which have a very strong decorative character. As we have indicated before, Sinan and probably some of his pupils were spending their time in the construction of the Selimiye in Edirne during the construction of the Sokollu Mosque.

Some constructive details

The walls of the classroom consist of alternate layers of stone and brick (*fig. 29*): to a single stone layer of 26–27 cm. correspond three layers of brick, each of 3.5 cm.; the mortar between the bricks is 4 cm. or more thick, and between stone and bricks it is about 2 cm. thick. One specimen of brick measured by us has the dimensions of $23 \times 33 \times 3.5$ cm.; the same pattern is repeated on the southwest walls with a slightly different size for stones. On the walls of the prayer room of the *tekke*, the dimensions are quite the same: the mortar between the layers is 3.5 cm.; another specimen of brick has the dimension of 16×32

$\times 3.5$ cm. It seems that this 1 to 3 ration of stone and brick was in general use during the 16th century. As a matter of fact, in many of Sinan's buildings, the sizes of stones are generally similar, being 27–29 cm. in layer.²⁷ Even in the Sultan's Lodge of the Mosque of Sultanahmet, built in the beginning of the 17th century, the wall construction remains identical.

Another small detail in the use of brick is the construction of decorative arches of bricks on the same level with the surface of the wall. We do not know when this began to occur, but it is a characteristic of the 16th century buildings.

One observes in this building, as well as in some other buildings of the period, the use of big nails fixed on flat ceilings to hold stucco plaster or ordinary plaster; the nails used for this purpose on the ceilings of the side entrances have a diameter of 2 cm. For the construction of flat ceilings, the use of iron bars carrying stone slabs is also to be seen in different places, namely in the gateways and galleries.

The decoration of the monument

Are there decorative schemes applied systematically to the walls of the mosque? This problem has never been studied. However, even superficially, one can discern some common principles in the placement of inscription panels, in the employment of tiles, capital forms, etc. Here, we will attempt an analysis of the decoration of the *mihrab* wall.

The *mihrab* wall, all the pendentives, the roof of the *minber*, the rectangular

²⁷ Personal communication given by Mrs. Afife Batur.

panels above the windows of the first floor and above the first row of the gallery windows are covered with tiles. As pointed out before, the central bay of the *mihrab* wall was subject to a special treatment, and the bulk of the tile decoration was applied to this space. A triple partition comprises the main scheme (*fig. 16*). The center is occupied by the marble *mihrab* niche, the height of which is less than that of the lower rectangle of the walls. A band of inscription completes the first lower zone: it is divided by narrow strips of tiles into quadrangles of different shapes and dimensions. Below the horizontal band of inscription, on both sides of the *mihrab*, the corresponding height is divided horizontally into three zones. The lower part is occupied by large panels which represent a kind of niche full of flowers (*fig. 33*); above them, there is another band of inscription. A circular medallion of inscription follows (*fig. 34*). The triangular spaces between these elements and the strips of tile are filled with appropriate motifs. One thing to be remarked in this first zone is the probably deliberate effort to break the regularity of the triple partition; as a matter of fact, the ending band of inscription is divided into two parts. The triple partition does not continue in the second zone; the first zone is therefore complete in itself. Indeed, a stucco molding which marks the end of the lower rectangular part separates completely the second zone from the first.

The second zone is simpler: between three windows of regular intervals and equal in size, the surface is covered evenly with tiles representing flowered stems in each interval. However, there is no dividing strip. Two medallions of inscriptions are placed between the windows (*fig. 35*).

This second zone which corresponds to the second transition level of the main room also ends with a large molding.

The third zone, which fills the inside of the big arch, has also three windows, the central one being obviously larger than the others. The space between these windows is covered with tiles of the same design as those of the second level; there are no strips and no medallions.

The visual importance of each zone is clearly manifest in this scheme. But at the same time, the decoration is completely subordinated to the general architectural scheme of the interior. This was an area to be enhanced by color and form but not to be expressed as a unity in itself. And this is an important point for the understanding of the Ottoman architecture and architectural decoration which maintains its validity for every period.

If one compares the decorative scheme of the *mihrab* wall with those in other contemporary buildings, one observes the complete originality and uniqueness of design. In all Sinan's mosques, no two have the same *mihrab* wall. However, since our knowledge of Ottoman architecture is not complete, we cannot say with certainty that such freedom of design should be taken as the universal hallmark of these buildings.

The use of tiles on the pendentives is also rare. In the Rüstem Paşa Mosque in Istanbul, we have another example of this device. The panels above the windows of the first floor have a symmetrical floral design (*fig. 36*); others have inscriptions (*fig. 37*). All the inscriptions are white on a blue background. The color scale of the floral panels, on the other hand, is one of the richest of the period: the famous Bolu red, blue and green are dominant hues in the

large panels on either side of the *mihrab*. To this general description I should add a few technical notes on matters already known from the publications of T. Öz, A. Lane, K. Otto-Dorn and K. Erdmann.²⁸ These tiles are examples of what Lane lists as the third Iznik style, which, according to him, is technically one of the most perfect creations of the ceramic art. They embody a wonderful glaze devoid of cracks, perfect colors, especially the famous Bolu red or Armenian bole which died out at the beginning of the 17th century.

The tiles are totally Turkish in character: a floral design of peculiar naturalism without being realistic (*fig. 35*). At this stage of tile decoration, the design is no longer restricted to a single tile and is not taken as the repetition of a single motif (except in borders) but rather covers architecturally defined panels. This development was already at hand in the Rüstem Paşa Mosque (A.D. 1560), but here it has become a general rule. Nevertheless, the composition of the panels is still far from the maturity of the 17th century and is even much less developed than the design of the tile panels in the Eski Valide Mosque at Üsküdar (A.D. 1583).

The motifs are similar to those used a few years previously in the decoration of the Rüstem Paşa Mosque: i.e. flowering plants, coiling stems with big featherlike leaves known as *saz* and floral arabesque patterns; interlaced stems with tiny flow-

ers and larger single flowers occupy the whole surface of the narrow tiles that constitute the borders. The motifs are outlined in dark colors. The famous Tomato Red is brighter and more voluminous here than in the Rüstem Paşa Mosque. This red is to be found especially on the two larger panels. The dominant green has a bluish hue; and on the roof on the *minber*, a most attractive element of the *mihrab* wall, the color is blue rather than green.

The tiles used on the wall surface are of different sizes: on the large panels, square tiles measure 22.5 × 22.5 cm.; on the sides, the tiles' dimensions are 18.5 × 24.5 cm. and on the borders, 8.5 × 24.5 cm. and 20.0 × 22.5 cm. It seems that the sizes of the tiles were dependent on the area to be covered and their design was prepared with this purpose in view. Most probably, 1 to 1 scale drawings were executed on the spot and sent to Iznik for the manufacture of the tiles. This fact is already known from contemporary court orders.

The paintings

Painting on plaster (stucco in the majority of cases) had a fairly wide application in the mosque and in the other buildings of the complex: the ceilings of the entrances, of the main staircase, of the arcades and of the cupolas of the porch were all painted. Probably the interior walls and stalactites and certainly the cupolas were painted. We have rather limited remains of painted decor on stucco and we have no means to make sure about the originality of these paintings.

In two places, however, remains of painted decoration are usually attributed to the period of construction: one is under the gallery which overhangs the main en-

²⁸ T. Öz, *Turkish Ceramics*, Ankara, 1957; A. Lane, *Turkish Pottery*, Later Islamic Pottery, London, 1957, pp. 36–67; A. Lane, *The Ottoman Pottery of Iznik*, *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 2, pp. 247–281; K. Otto-Dorn, *Türkische Keramik*, Ankara, 1957; K. Erdmann, *Neue Arbeiten zur türkischer Keramik*, *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 5, 1963, pp. 191–221.

trance to the prayer hall (fig. 39) and where the rectangular spaces between the consoles are filled with large quatrefoils on a red background, delineated by narrow white strips. The quatrefoils are filled in turn with violet flowers on a blue background; these large and many-petalled flowers resemble those on the tile panels, but they cannot definitely be attributed to the same time.²⁹ On the consoles are similar flower motifs on a red background. A border strip of plain red and white rosettes on a blue background surrounds the rectangular surface.

The paintings over the entrance door are also classical in character: leaves and rosettes, the strong design of flowers, and emphasized border lines show similarity in treatment with the design on the faience tiles. But any attribution to the original period would be subject to doubt. The paintings under the *müezzîn mahfeli* are not earlier than the 18th century (fig. 40).

There was a baroque decoration which dated probably from a restoration at the end of the 18th century on the pendentives and on the pillars. It has been replaced with newer paintings in the course of more recent restoration. Gurlitt mentions remains from the original painting on stucco (*Linienwerk*) to be seen on the ceilings of the lower galleries and which have disappeared since.³⁰

Colored glass

The windows of the prayer room have the usual stucco panels filled with colored

glass; the most important ones are on the *mihrab* wall. It seems that all these panels are from a much later date. According to Grosvenor "the only recent feature, the twelve windows of rich stained glass presented by Cevdet Paşa in 1881, are in keeping with the original design."³¹ One may deduct either that the new panels were imitations of the old ones or that they were in harmony with the rest: this last conclusion is more probable, since the design of the windows is hardly acceptable as the work of the sixteenth century. However, we learn from the anonymous author of *Istanbul Abideleri* that some fragments of the original stained glass are still to be found in the newer windows.³²

Stone carving

Moldings.

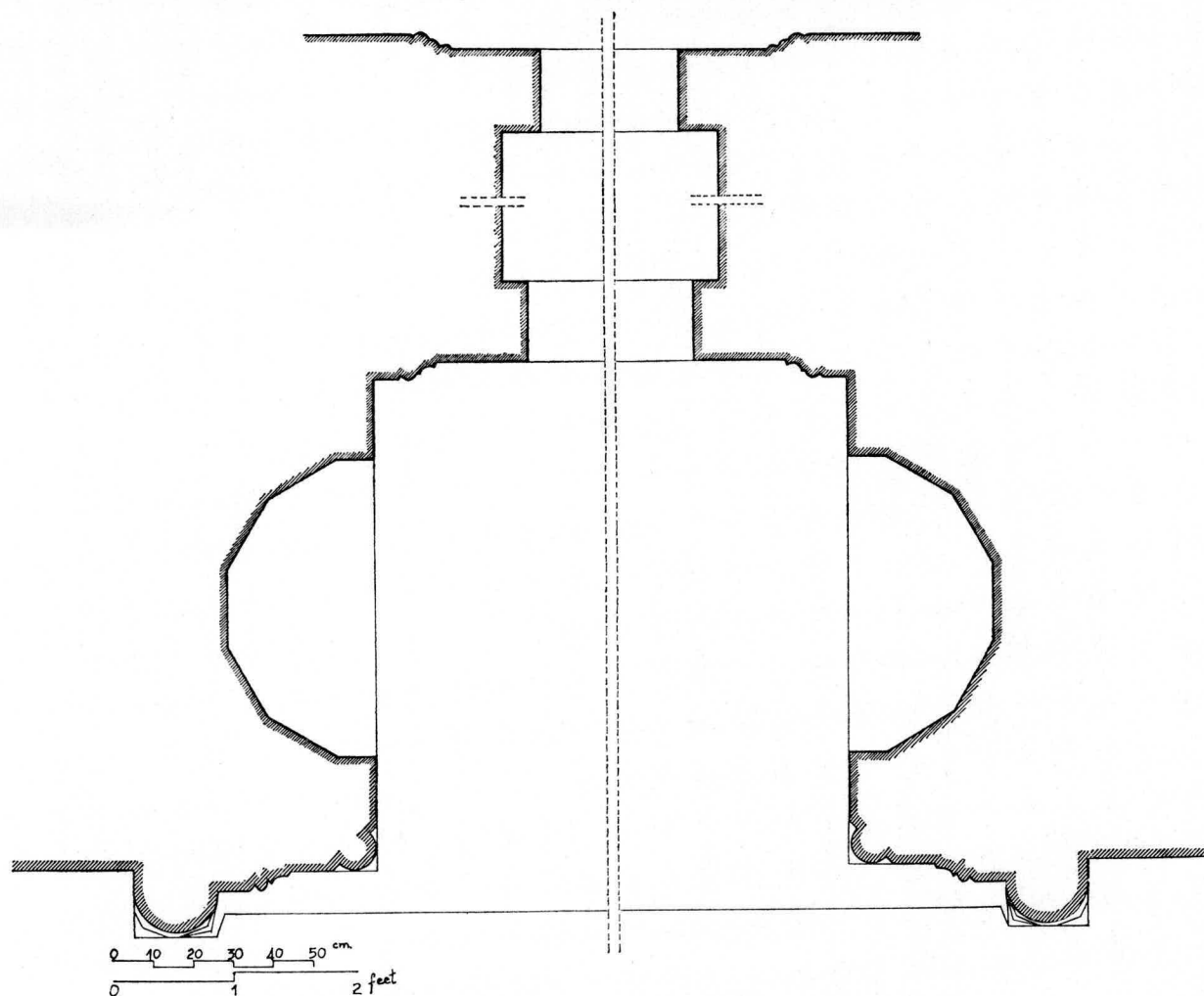
A few forms of profile have been in general use since the late 15th century. Three of them are essential, namely the *tore*, a kind of *cyma recta* and *cyma reversa* (called *armudî*) and the *cavetto* which were common. The only difference between the early period and the one with which we are dealing lies in the combination of these profiles in the composition of a molding (text figs. 5a and b). We find the same profiles in the Mosque of Murat Paşa in Istanbul (A.D. 1471) and in the Mosque of Davut Paşa in Istanbul (A.D. 1485) as well as others. The moldings (especially on door jambs) of the 16th century tend to have more elements than the three or four in use during the preceding century. The profiles used in the cornices are

²⁹ For further details on this painting, cf. K. Otto-Dorn, *Osmanische Ornamentale Wandmalerei*, Kunst des Orients, vol. 1, 1950, p. 51, Abb. 7.

³⁰ Gurlitt, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 82.

³¹ Grosvenor, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 419.

³² *Istanbul Abideleri*, p. 100.



TEXT FIG. 5 a.—MOULDINGS FROM THE MOSQUE: UPPER, ENTRANCE DOOR.

a combination of the tore and the cavetto, united by either an inclined or a straight plan. Here the main cornice of the mosque is constituted by alternate sequences of two tori and two cavetti.

Capitals.

Two forms of capitals were used in endless variety by Ottoman architecture throughout the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. Rather simple stalactite capitals

with rows of prismatique shapes have been used in the interior as well as on the exterior of the mosque (*figs. 41 a and b*). An interesting type is the capital in the upper gallery; with its smaller triangular elements and central rectangle which is a continuation of the upper surface, it brings a personal touch to the capital design (*fig. 41 c*). In general, these capitals do not have a strong plasticity and their design is not very elaborate. The lozenge shaped capitals used in the courtyard of the *medrese*



TEXT FIG. 5 b.—MOULDINGS FROM THE MOSQUE: LOWER, THE MIHRAB.

are of two types: the simplest one (fig. 41 d), is found in the arcades, while a more developed capital with two rows of different sized lozenges is used in front of the classroom (fig. 41 e).

Stucco Work.

Remains of painted stucco ceilings have been uncovered during recent restorations. Stucco has been used for the stalactites in the squinches and in the niches. The geometrical character of these stalactites is the same as that found on the capitals. In some niches, the main structure of the *mukarnas* was constructed in brick.

The *mukarnas* or stalactite design is the same for different materials, be they stucco or stone. In the case of plastered and painted or of whitewashed walls, the difference in the material is difficult to assert.

Inscriptions.

Except for a dated one, all the inscriptions are of religious nature and are excerpts from the Koran and the *Hadith*. What

rules have governed the placing of these inscriptions? Except for the date of inscription of a monument and the names of Allah, the Prophet and the first Caliphs, we know little about the distribution of inscriptions in a building. This would require a careful study which would be out of place in this article.

Conclusion

This is not a definitive study of the Sokollu Mosque. But one may conclude from the observations above that, even for a Grandvizir of the Ottoman Empire, magnificence was not to be expressed by means of a construction. The nature of civilization in the Ottoman society was not similar to that of the Renaissance, and the idea of a monument to partake of human life was not strongly developed. That is to say, a monument, even one of the highest importance, was never the focus of cultural interest, except in very rare instances, such as in the construction of the Süleymaniye. The symbolic character of a

monument was always surpassed by its functional importance. This is also true of the monument itself: the layout and the composition of a complex such as the Sokollu, and the *tekke* behind it, are masterpieces of architectural design. The technique of the faïences or of the stonework may be perfect, but there is always

a flaw which is the lack of a finishing touch, the failure to carry the architectural idea through to realization. This disdain for perfectionism is to be always witnessed in the linkage of the details to the whole. Nevertheless, there is a homogeneity in style, from beginning to end, even in the smallest details.

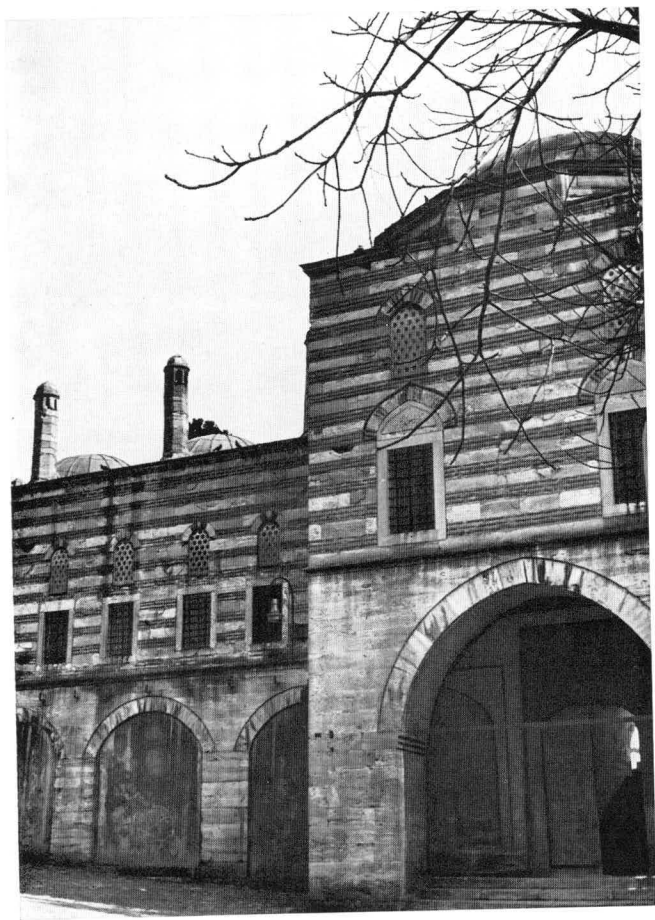


FIG. 1.—THE MAIN GATEWAY WITH THE NORTHWEST FAÇADE OF THE MEDRESE.



FIG. 3.—THE PORCH OF THE PRAYER HALL.

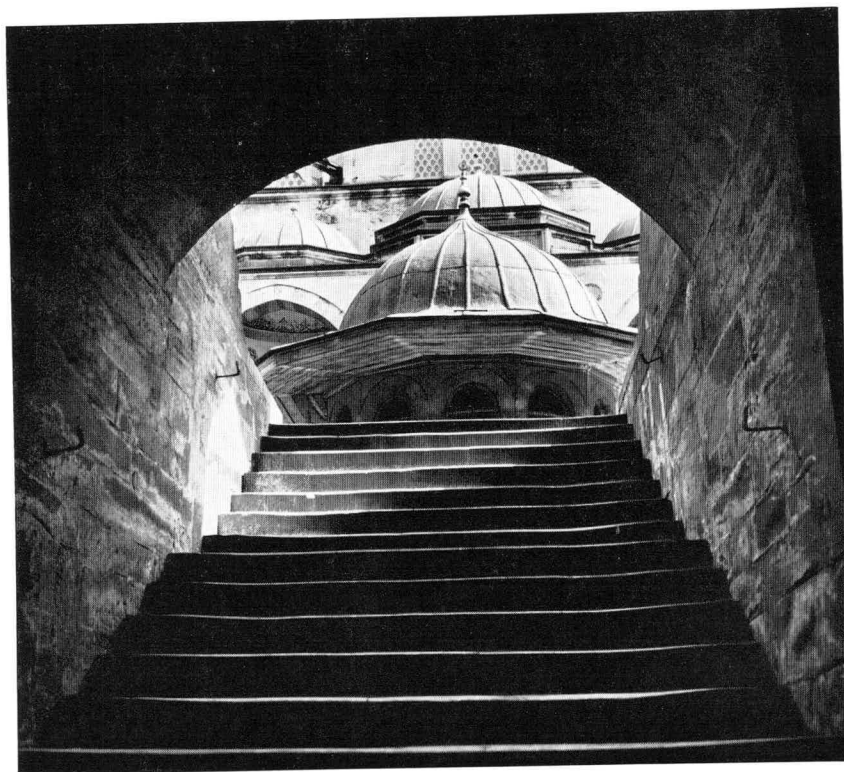


FIG. 2.—THE STAIRWAY TO THE COURTYARD OF THE MOSQUE.



FIG. 4.—THE ARCADE OF THE COURTYARD.

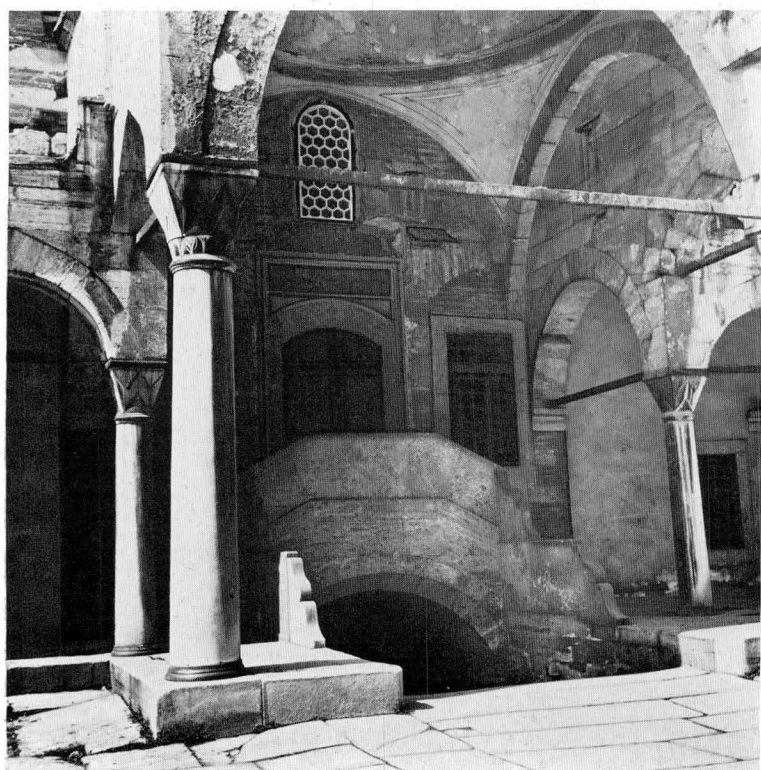


FIG. 5.—THE BAY IN FRONT OF THE CLASSROOMS.

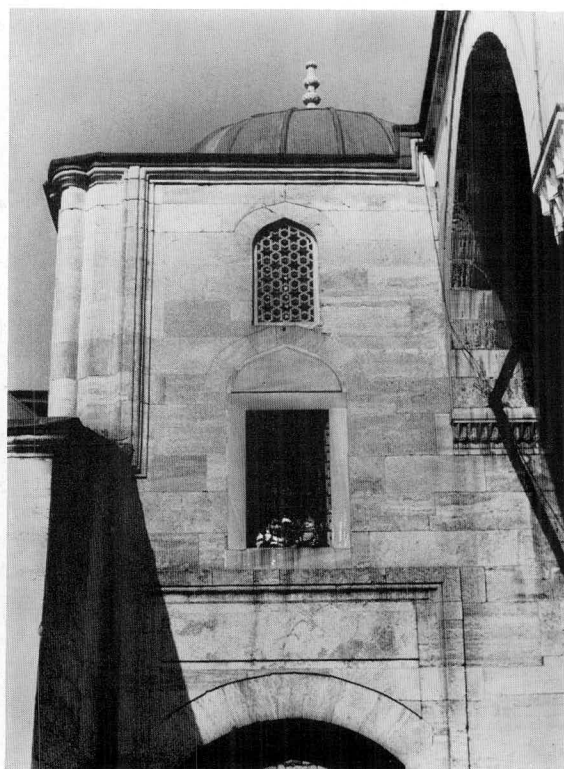


FIG. 6.—THE PAVILION OVER THE SIDE ENTRANCE.



FIG. 7.—THE ŞADIRVAN IN THE COURTYARD.

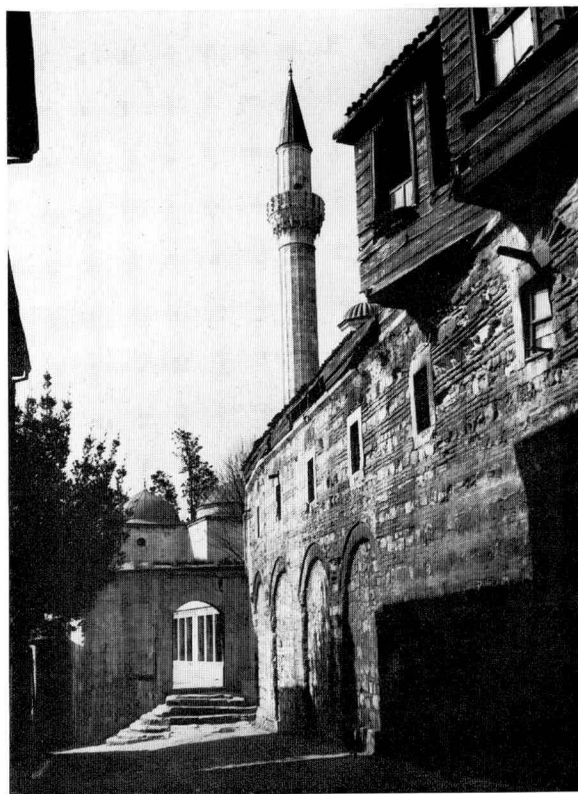


FIG. 8.—SECONDARY GATEWAY FROM THE SOUTHWEST CORNER LEADING TO THE COURTYARD (TEKKE WALLS ON THE RIGHT).



FIG. 9.—THE MAIN FAÇADE OF THE PRAYER HALL.

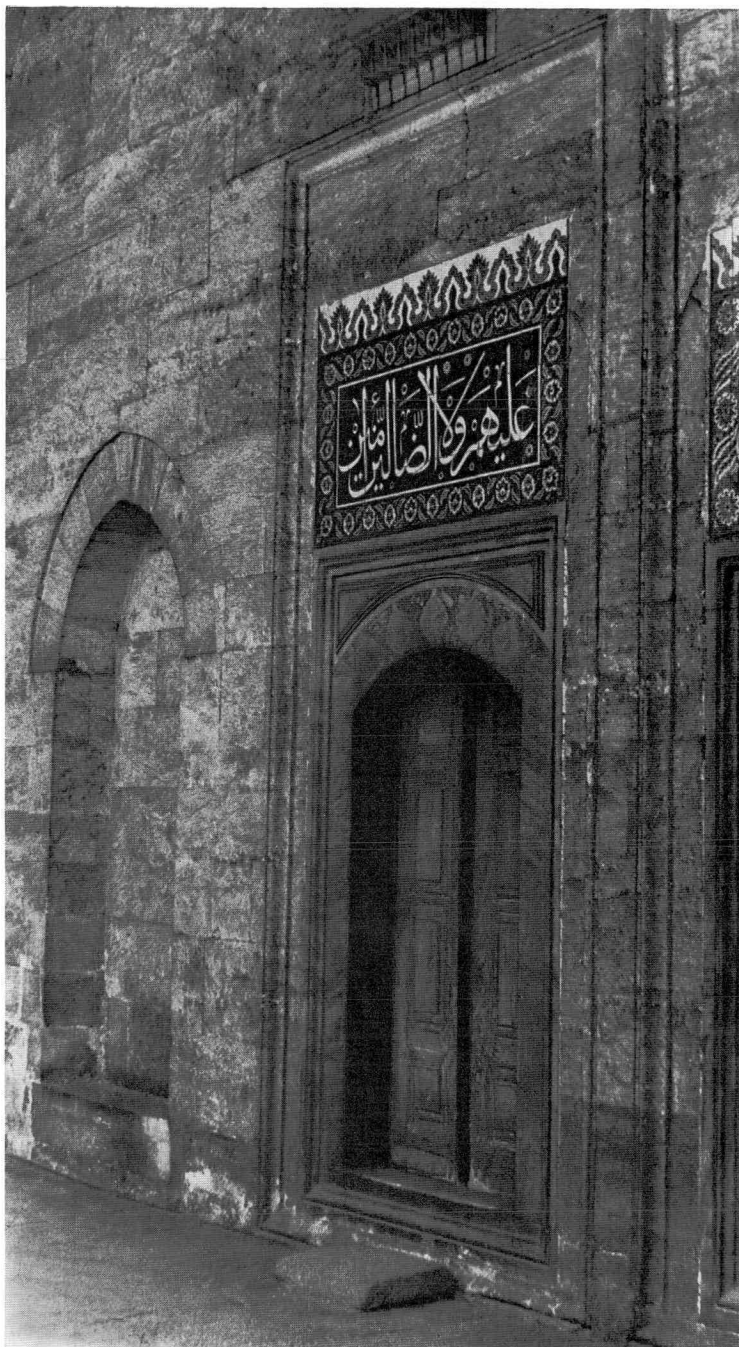


FIG. 10.—ENTRANCE TO THE GALLERIES FROM UNDER THE PORCH.



FIG. 11.—THE INTERIOR LOOKING SOUTH.



FIG. 12.—THE INTERIOR LOOKING NORTHWEST.

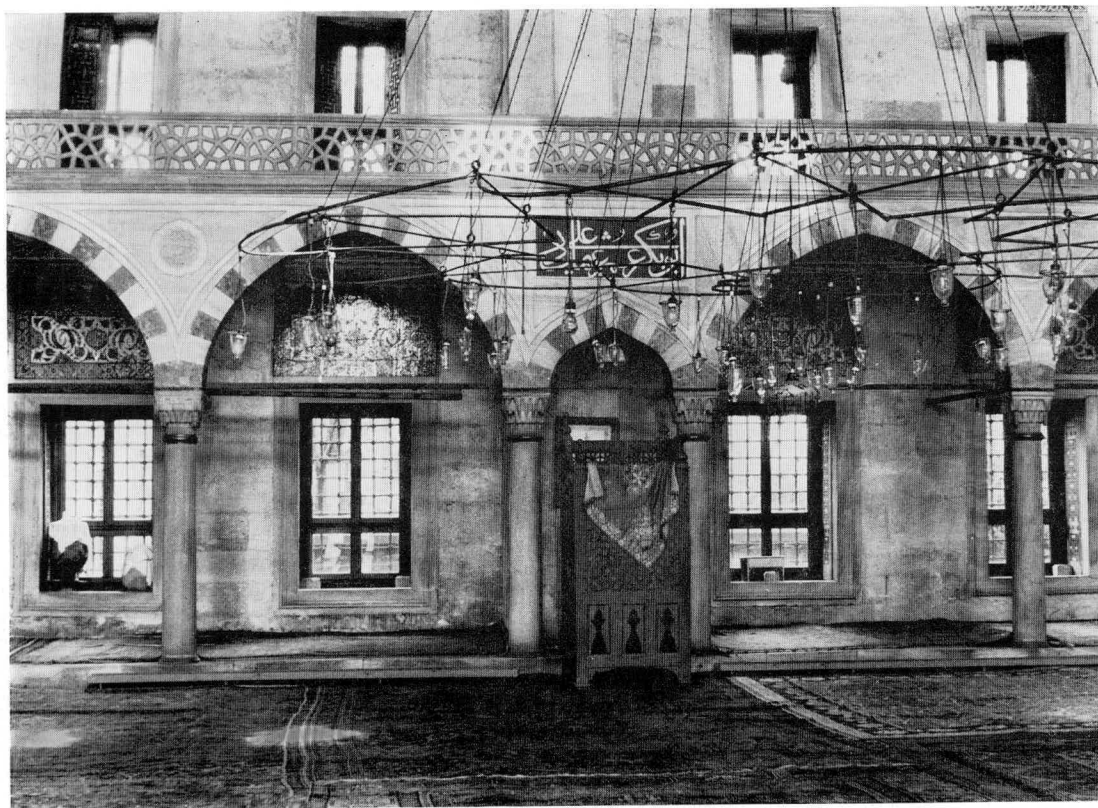


FIG. 13.—THE SIDE GALLERIES.

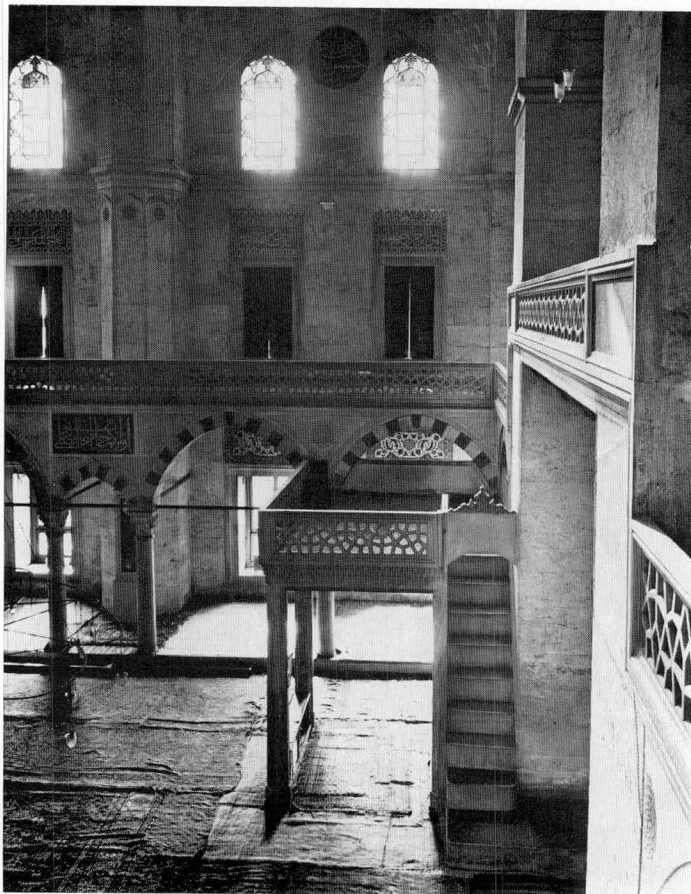


FIG. 14 a.—THE SIDE GALLERIES WITH MÜEZZIN MAHFELI.

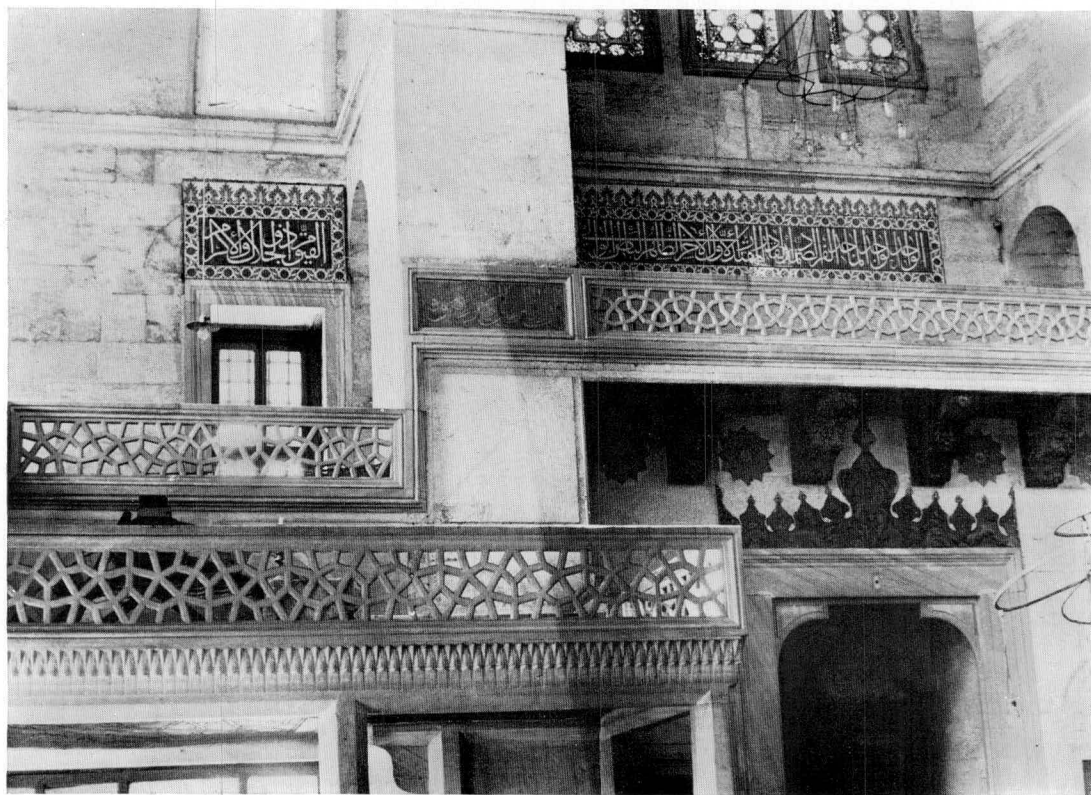


FIG. 14 b.—DETAIL FROM THE NORTHWEST GALLERIES.



FIG. 15.—THE MIHRAB WALL.

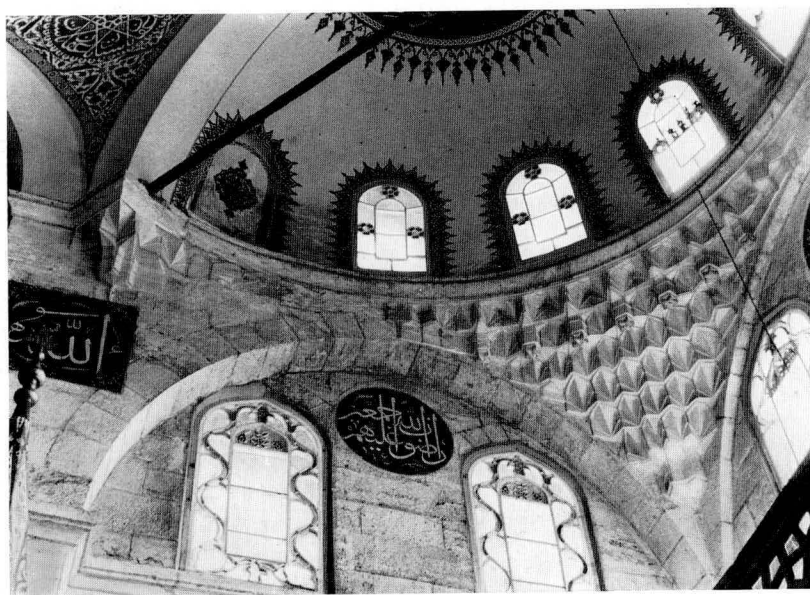


FIG. 16.—STUCCO MUKARNAS.

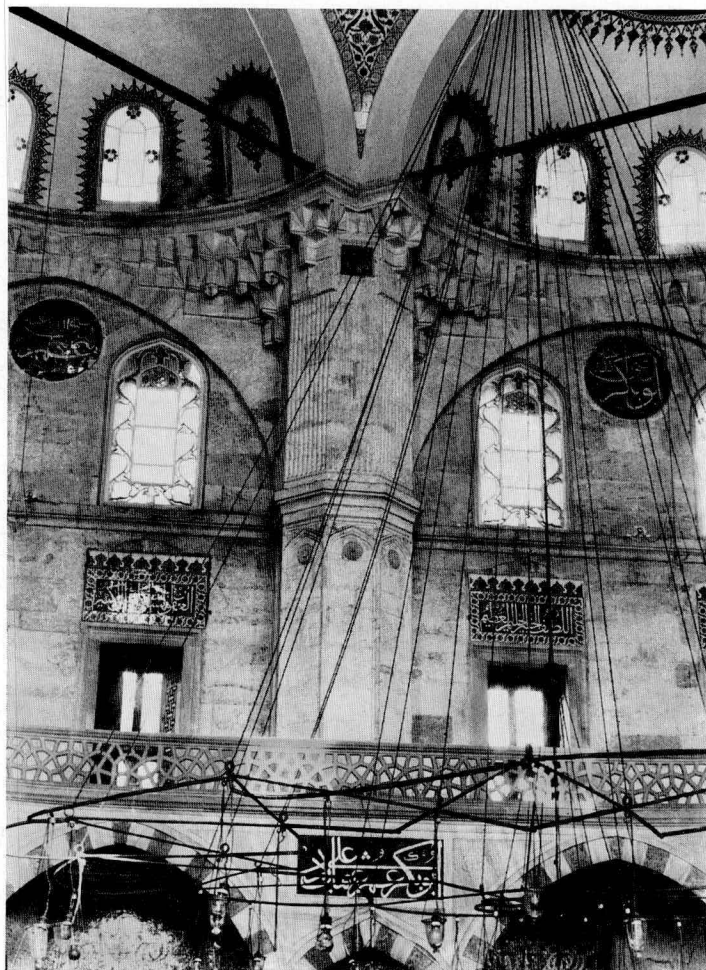


FIG. 17.—STUCCO MUKARNAS AND FAKE WINDOWS.



FIG. 18.—SOUTHWEST WALL OF THE PRAYER HALL.

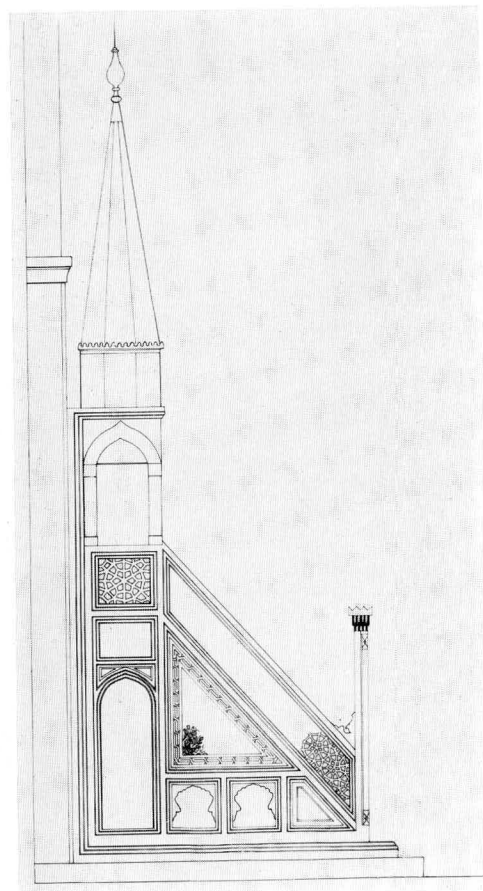
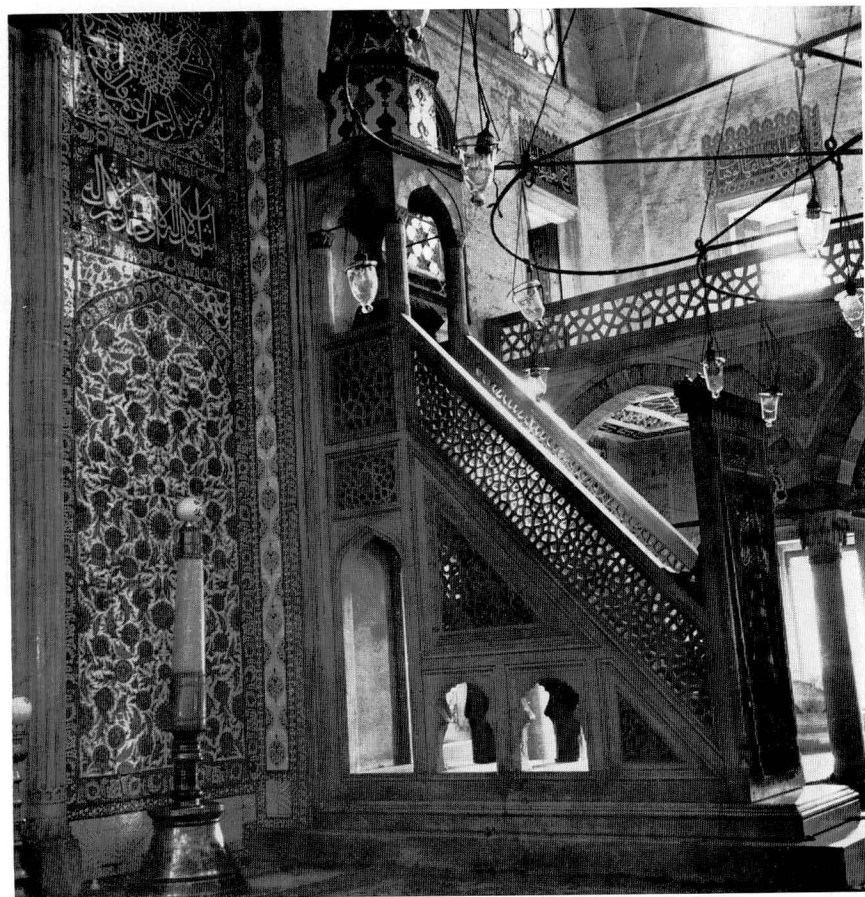


FIG. 19 a AND b.—THE MINBER.

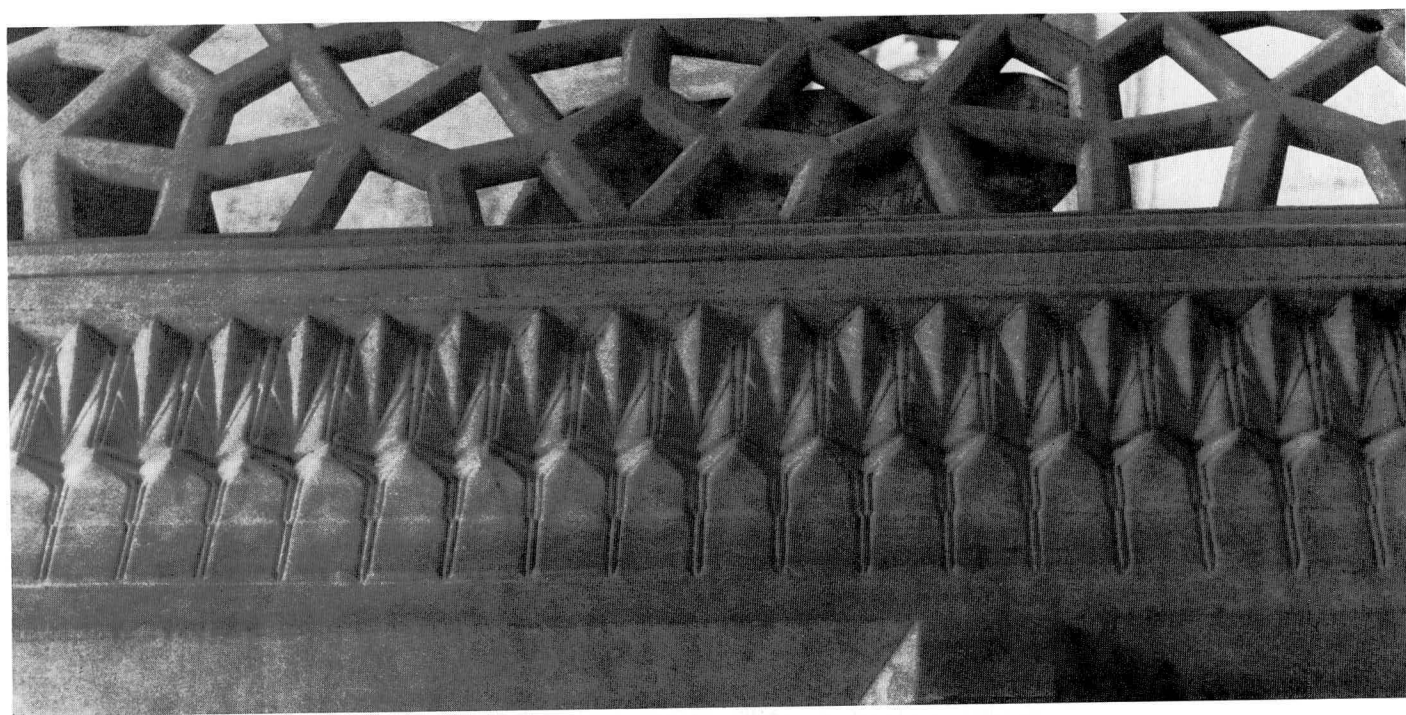


FIG. 20.—DECORATIVE BAND FROM THE MÜEZZIN MAHFELI.

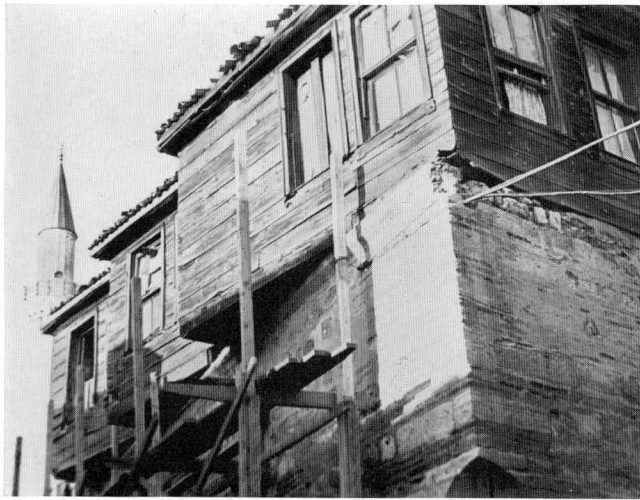


FIG. 21.—THE HOUSE OF THE SHAIKH.

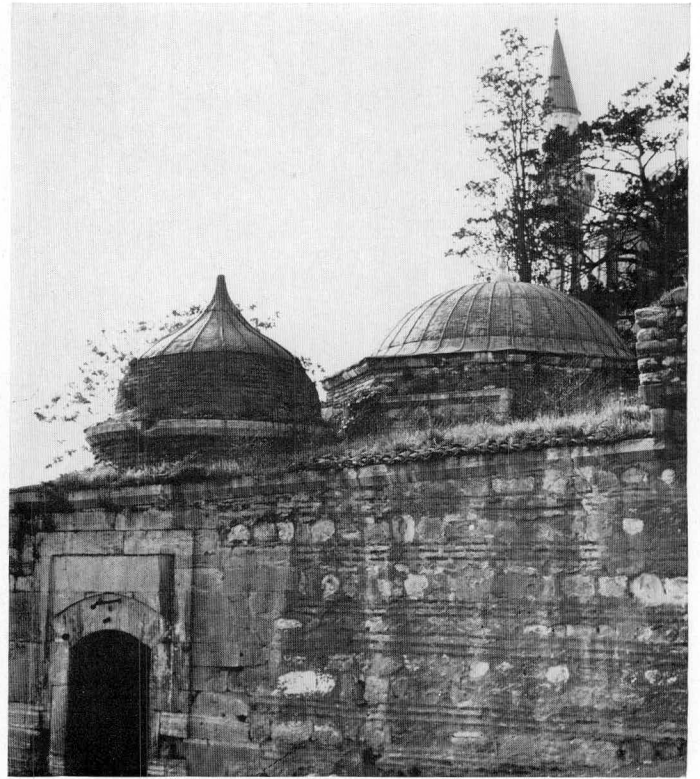


FIG. 22.—ENTRANCE TO THE TEKKE.



FIG. 23.—THE BURIAL GROUND BEHIND THE MOSQUE.

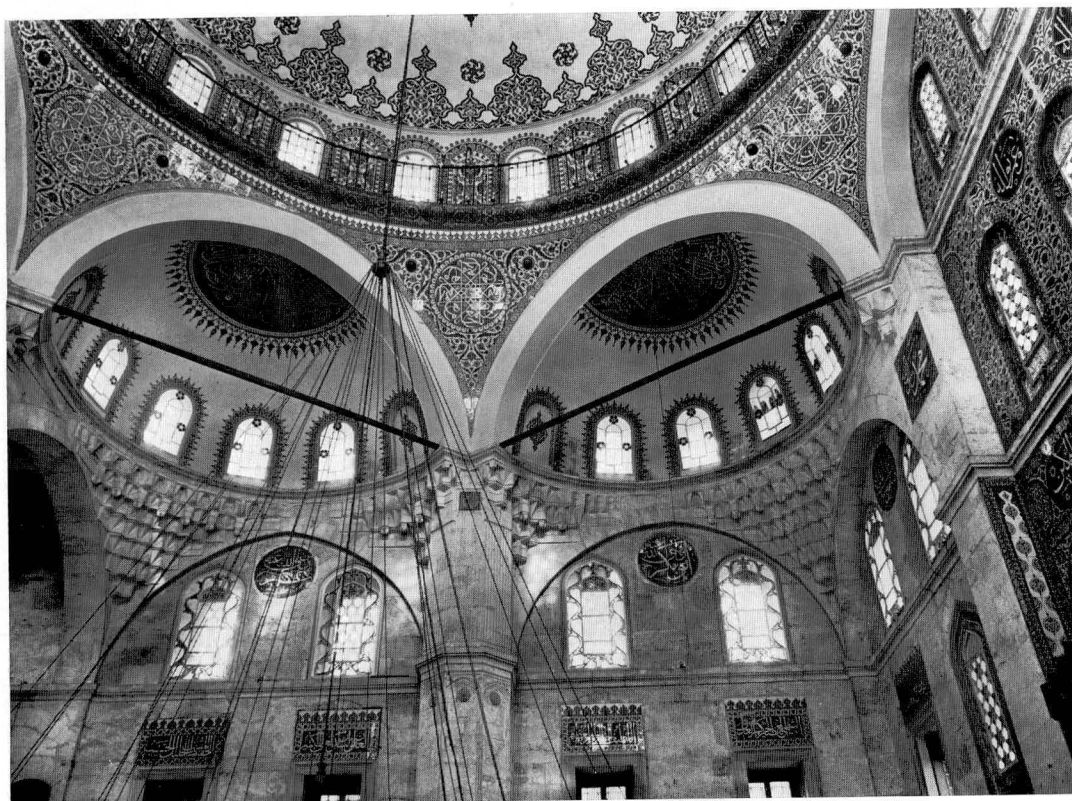
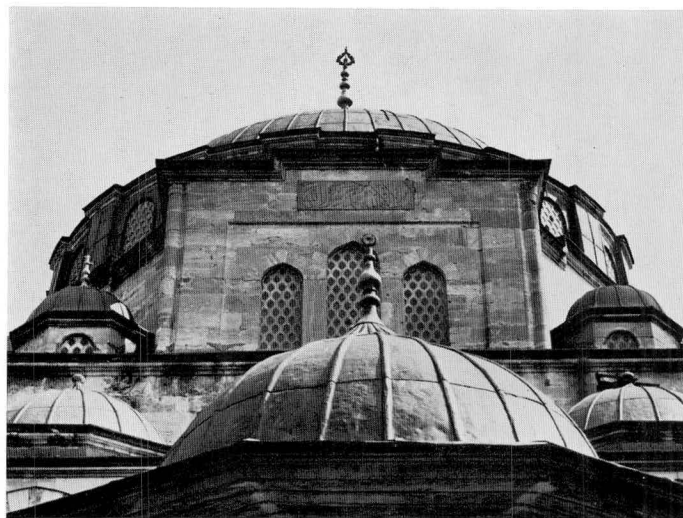
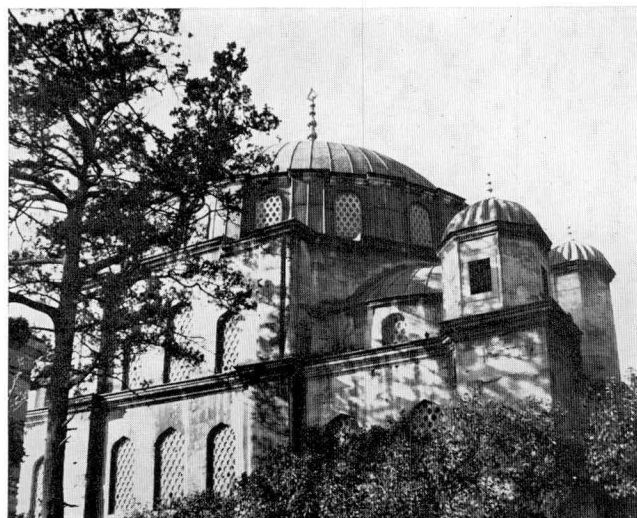


FIG. 24.—SEMI-DOMES.



FIG. 25.—CUPOLAS AND THE MINARET.



FIGS. 26 a AND b.—DETAIL OF THE COPERTURE.



FIG. 27.—FAÇADE OF THE MEDRESE.

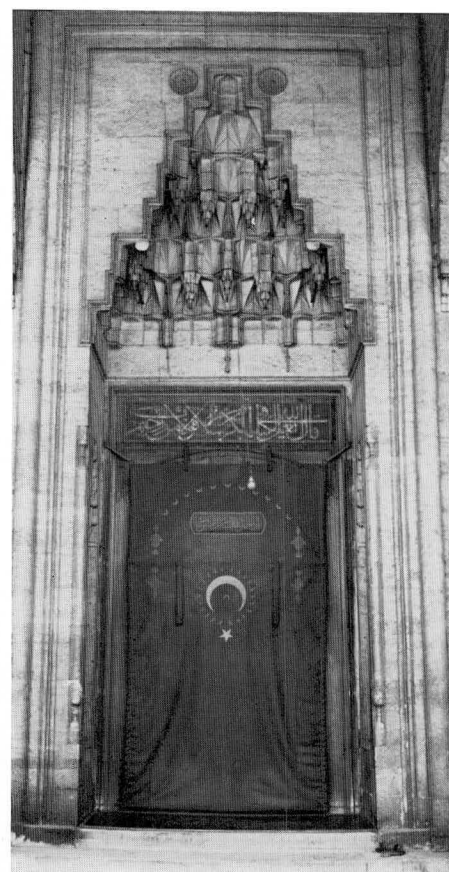


FIG. 28.—MAIN DOOR TO THE PRAYER
HALL; MUKARNAS.



FIG. 29.—FACADE OF THE MOSQUE PROPER (THE ATTIC).

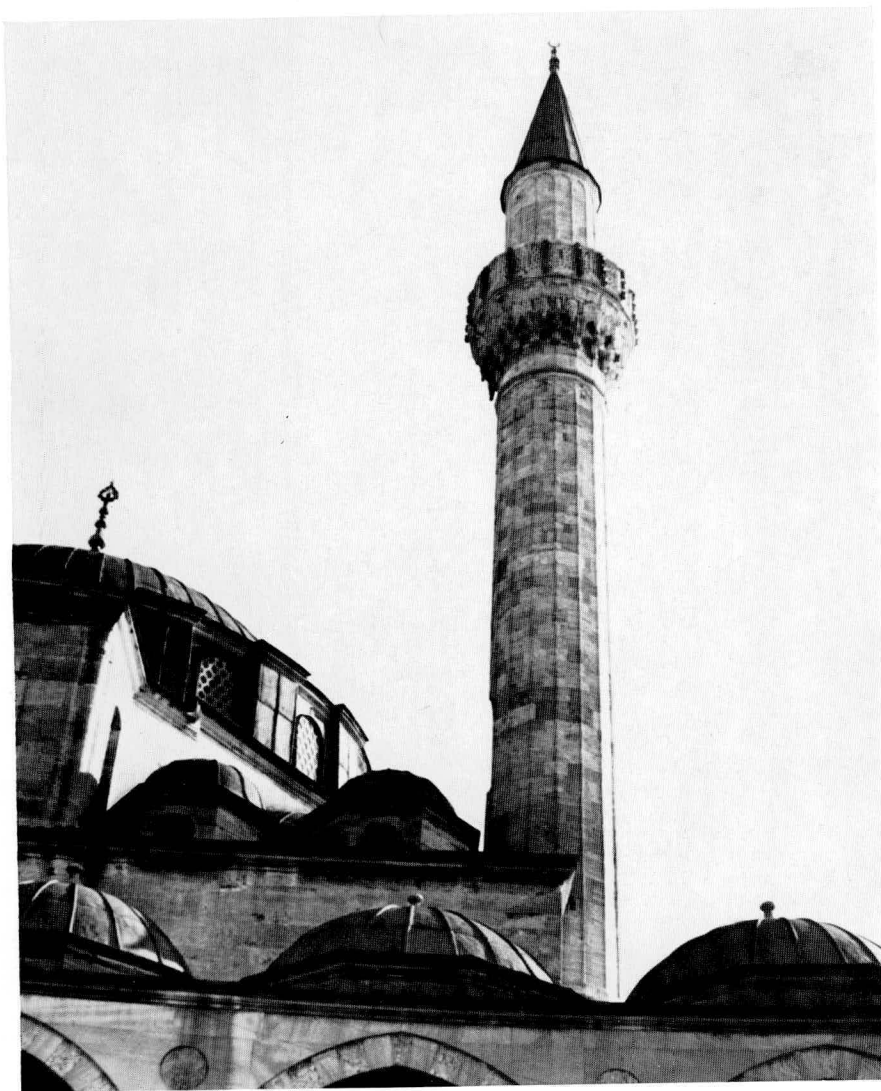


FIG. 30.—THE MINARET IN THE COMPOSITION.



FIG. 31.—THE MINARET (DETAIL).



FIG. 32.—WALL CONSTRUCTION.

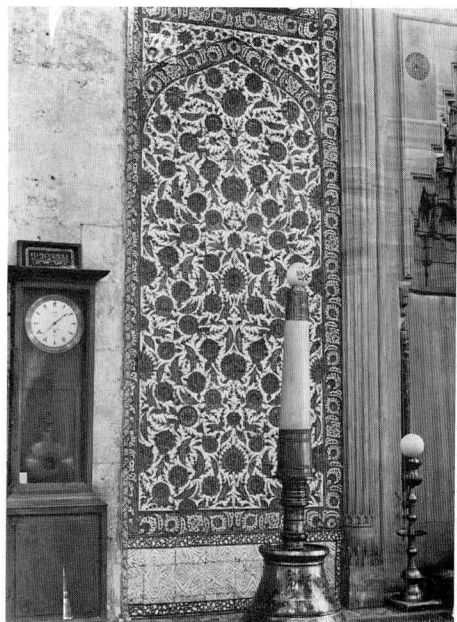


FIG. 33.—TILE PANEL ON THE MIHRAB WALL.

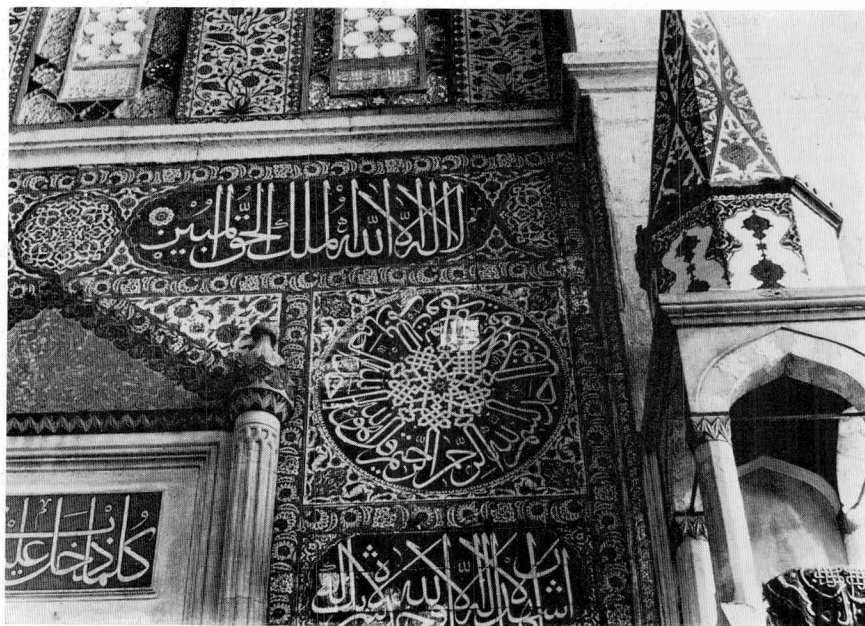


FIG. 34.—TILE MEDALLION ON THE MIHRAB WALL.

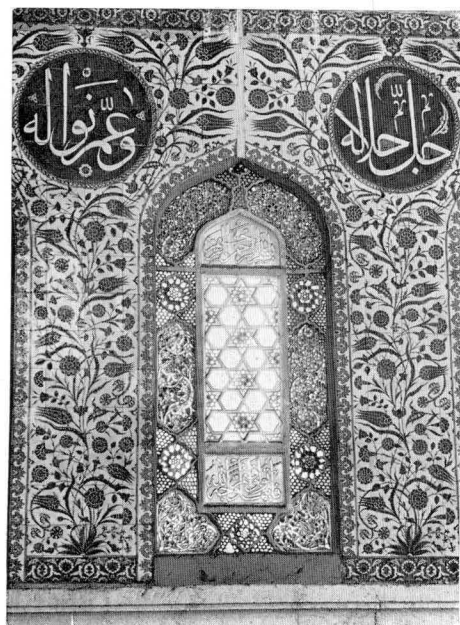


FIG. 35.—TILE DECOR ON THE MIHRAB WALL.

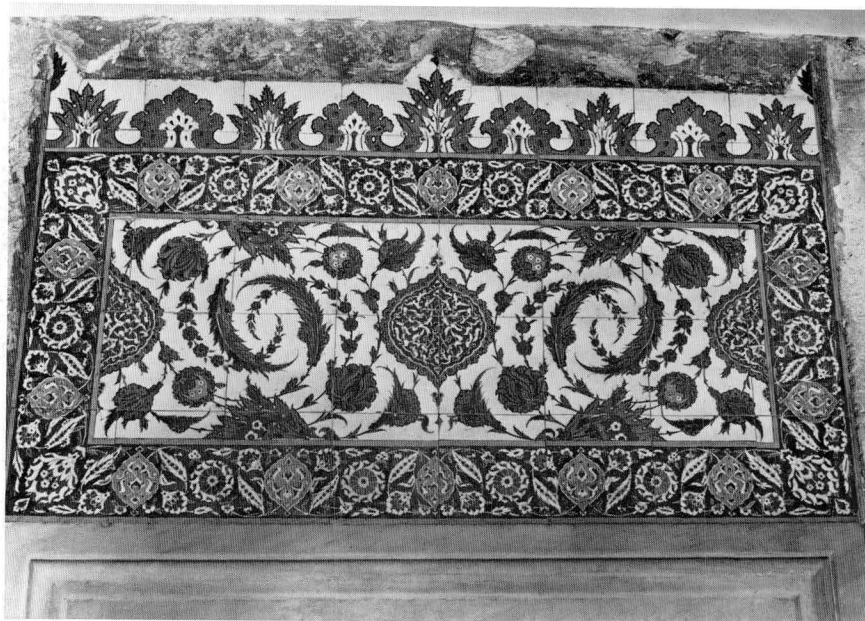


FIG. 36.—TILE PANEL OVER THE WINDOW OF THE SOUTHWEST WALL OF THE PRAYER HALL.

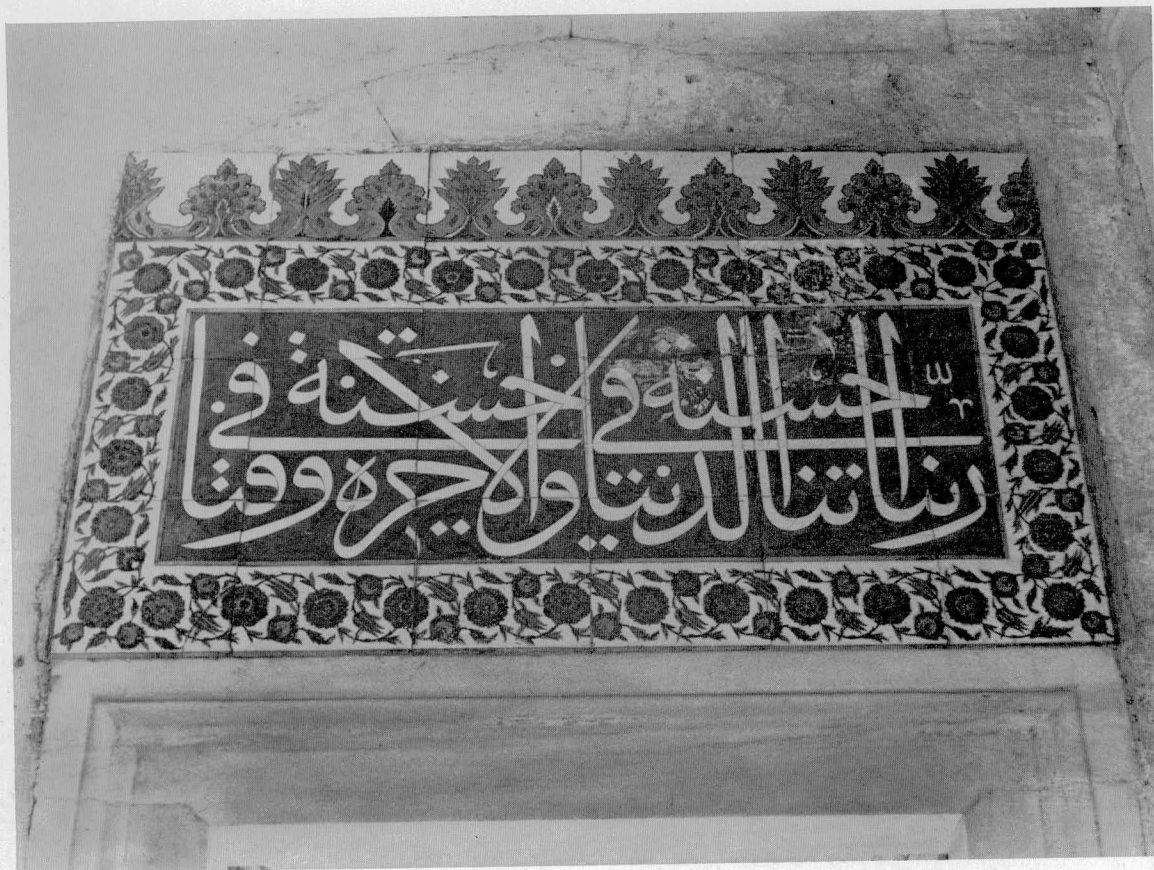


FIG. 37.—INSCRIPTION PANEL OVER THE WINDOW OF THE SIDE WALL OF THE PRAYER HALL.



FIG. 38.—DETAIL OF TILES ON THE MIHRAB WALL.



FIG. 39.—THE GALLERY OVER THE MAIN ENTRANCE.

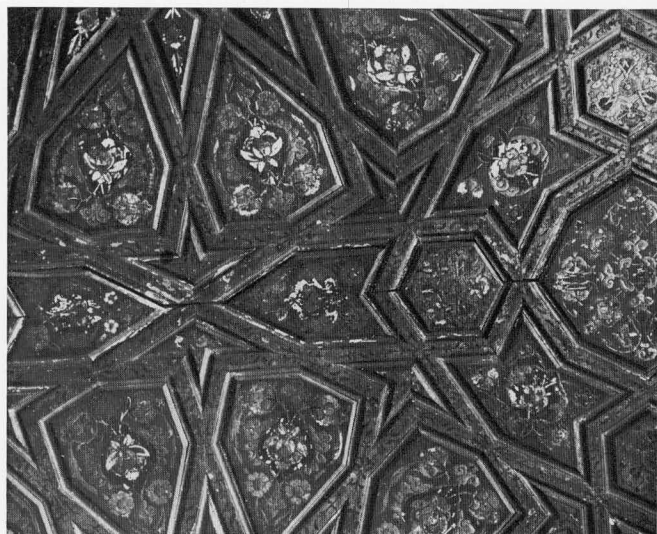
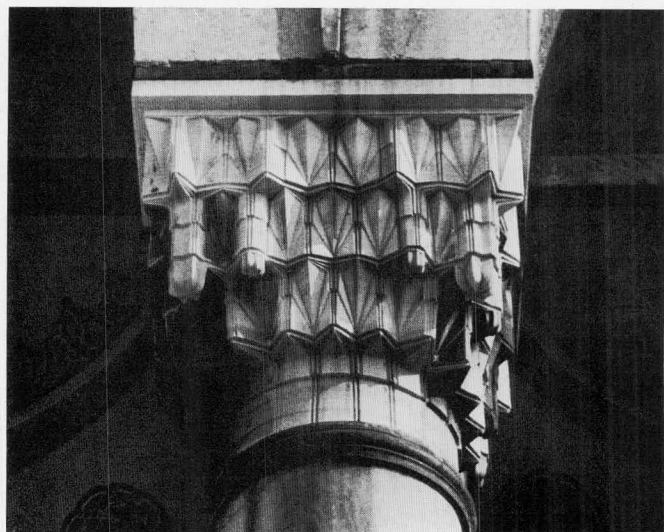
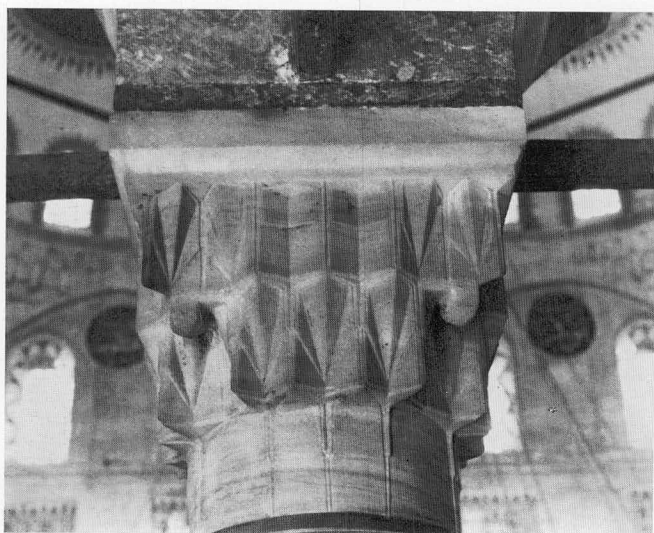


FIG. 40.—PAINTINGS UNDER THE MÜEZZIN MAHFELI.



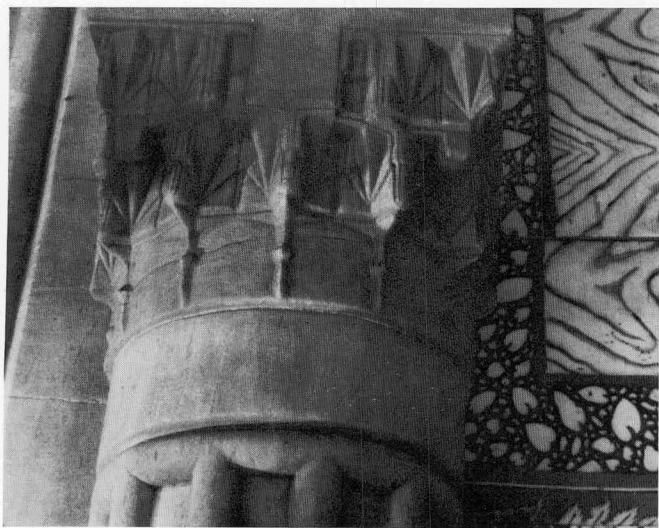
a



b



c



d



e

FIGS. 41 a, b, c, d and e.—CAPITALS.