THE MOSQUE OF SULEYMAN I.
ITS SECULAR AND SACRED ICONOGRAPHY
AND THEIR POSSIBLE SOURCES

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ABSTRACT

THE MOSQUE OF SULEYMAN I: ITS SECULAR AND SACRED ICONOGRAPHY AND THEIR POSSIBLE SOURCES

By

Carol Garrett Fisher

The following thesis deals with the political and sacred iconography of the mosque of Suleyman the Magnificent in Istanbul. This mosque was built in 1550-1557 by the greatest of all Ottoman architects, Sinan, as the royal mosque for Suleyman the Magnificent whose reign marks the apex of Ottoman power. The mosque embodies the ideologies of these men and the temper of the times. As such it is worth a close study.

Suleyman's rule represents a culmination of a political ideology which can be traced to Fatih, the conqueror of Constantinople. Fatih saw himself as the leader of the Turks, as the Muslim religious leader, and in addition, he saw himself as the conqueror of Byzantium and its heir. "He saw in all three titles, the titles of Khan, Ghazi and Caesar, gates leading to dominion over the whole world."[1] Unlike the western world, the position was an intermingling of sacred and secular. This particular combination of roles is what gives the classical mosques

of Sinan their special Ottoman character. Süleymaniye is a culminating point in classical Ottoman mosque architecture and, in this thesis, its iconography is examined and related to the Ottoman concept of political rule.

From the fourth century Constantinople had been a seat of great political power. When Fatih took the city in 1453, he had already conquered the rest of Byzantium, and was fully aware of the symbolic importance of the capture of Constantinople. Furthermore, within Constantinople, Hagia Sophia seems to act as an important part of the symbolic whole. Tursun Bey, Fatih's secretary, records that he went directly to Hagia Sophia upon entering the city and converted it to a mosque. He writes that it is "a sign of Paradise . . . If you seek Paradise, Oh you Sufi/the topmost heaven is Hagia Sophia."[2] Süleymaniye reflects the importance of Hagia Sophia as Holy Wisdom. It is a part of what Louis Massignon calls "The Byzantine mirage in the Arab mirror."[3] The influence of Hagia Sophia's dome-in-square construction, the symbolic function as a cosmic house, the use of light as symbolic of wisdom and possibly the function of Mary as the Throne of Wisdom in the apse mosaic are related to Süleymaniye in the following thesis.

There are, however, important differences between the two buildings. The differences are pointed out and reflected in the fact that the mosque is symbolic of Islam par excellance. They are concerned with the axial orientation of the gate, doors and mihrab, the decorative elements of calligraphy, tiles and stained glass, the composition of the mihrab area, and the symbolic concept of light.

Sinan, in his position of Janissary to the Sultan, was a member of the Bektasi sect of Dervishes, a Sufi order. He was thus acquainted with some of the Sufi or mystical Islamic thought that was a strong current in Ottoman Islamic thought. This mystical mode of thinking, therefore, may have entered into some of Sinan's plans for his mosques if only indirectly. In the last chapter of the thesis, some of the mystical thought that Sinan knew is set forth and examined. Further, this thesis attempts to connect Sufi thought with the traditional Turkish emphasis on astronomy, mathematics and geometry, all of which were commonly taught within the same curriculum in which Sufi thought was taught.

In short, the thesis is an attempt to show how these elements mesh to form a coherent iconographical

program and an important architectural unit that embody the philosophies of Suleyman and Sinan.

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[1]H. Inalcik, "Rise of the Ottoman Empire," Cambridge History of Islam, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1970, p. 297.

[2]B. Lewis, Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire, Oklahoma, 1963, p. 4.

[3]O. Grabar, "Islamic Art and Byzantium," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 18 (1964), p. 88.

THE MOSQUE OF SÜLEYMAN I: ITS SECULAR AND SACRED ICONOGRAPHY AND THEIR POSSIBLE SOURCES

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çok teşsekererederim.

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INTRODUCTION

> When God's compassion closed the dome
> with light all around, the decoration
> was completed with great beauty.[1]

The question of Islamic art history and its iconography is fascinating and largely unexamined. Although generally regarded as a unified field by westerners, Islamic art is extraordinarily diverse.[2] Geographically it covers the areas of Islamic conquest from Spain to India with the inclusion of parts of Africa and possible influences upon Buddhist and Hindu art in China and Japan. Chronologically, it covers thirteen hundred years from about 632 A.D. to the present, and stylistically it has incorporated and been influenced by--as well as itself influencing--the art of these areas and times. Research has been difficult in many of these areas because of varying political situations and the unfamiliarity of documents written in Middle Eastern languages such as Persian, Arabic and Ottoman Turkish. The Koran itself was, for years, taught only in Arabic. In addition, as Grabar has pointed out, for much of the history of Islamic art there is a great need for more archaeological finds and information.[3]

In many cases the traditions from which forms of Islamic art are derived are still unknown and, quite literally, not uncovered.

There is one largely unexplored area of Islamic architecture which has been widely described but little discussed and for which there is a wealth of documentation and information: the classical mosques of Istanbul. Built in the late fifteenth, the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries at the height of the glory of the Ottoman Empire, they offer an interesting view of Ottoman Islamic thought and architecture at the time Italy was undergoing its Renaissance and Baroque eras, England was under the rule of Henry VIII, and Charles V held his empire.[4] Many extant written records about these mosques can serve as a basis for speculation on sources, styles and ideas incorporated in these buildings.[5]

For the purposes of this thesis I propose to study in depth only one mosque, that of Süleymaniye Camii built on the third hill of Istanbul in 1550-1557 A.D. by Sinan for Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. Of the classical mosques of Istanbul, Süleymaniye is the culmination.[6] It was a royal mosque built for the great grandson of Mehmet Fatih, conqueror of Constantinople. This thesis will focus on the mosque proper rather than the Külliye or surrounding complex of buildings. I am

particularly interested in the milieu from which the iconography of secular and religious thought embodied in the architecture and decoration of the mosque arose.

There are a number of reasons why several sources of influence contributed to the mosque's style. First, the Koran has "no statement which would define the physical character of a masjid or which would attribute to it any sort of architectural or symbolic characteristic."[7] Without an original "model," the mosque was particularly open to outside influences. Grabar writes there is a slowly building tradition of mosque architecture which from the very beginning incorporated elements of surrounding civilizations.[8] Second, elements from these sources probably serve as both secular and sacred symbols. Halil Inalcik says of Fatih that he saw himself as the leader of the Turks (Khan), as a Muslim religious leader (Ghazi), and as the conqueror of Byzantium and its heir (Caesar). "He saw in all three titles, the titles of Khan, Ghazi and Caesar, gates leading to dominion over the whole world . . . His conquests make it clear that his first aim was to revive the Byzantine empire under his rule."[9] His great grandson, Süleyman, was trained in this tradition. A man of exceptional talent, his reign was the height of the Ottoman Empire.

Süleymaniye took shape against this background of traditions of Byzantium, Ottoman Turkey and its

imperial court, and Islam. This peculiar combination of traditions is what gives the classical mosques of Sinan, above all Süleymaniye, their special character and meaning.[10]

Aside from works such as E. B. Smith's The Dome and Architectural Symbolism of Imperial Rome and the Middle Ages; l'Orange's study entitled Studies in the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World; L. Hautecoeur's Mystique et Architecture: Symbolisme du Cercle et de la Coupole; Lehman's article "The Dome of Heaven"; Soper's "The 'Dome of Heaven' in Asia," and Lethaby's Architecture, Nature and Magic, all of which present sound reasons and a broad background for undertaking an iconographical study, written materials pertaining to this particular topic are sparse although qualitatively often excellent.[11] Literature falls into several categories pertaining to Süleymaniye. First, in general discussions of Islamic art there are especially important works by, among others, the late Louis Massignon. Such articles as "Les methods de realisation artistique des Peuples de l'Islam" are knowledgable and poetic discussions of the philosophy behind various Islamic decorations.[12] Oleg Grabar has written explanations of Islamic art substantiating with care the early Islamic traditions in art and suggesting their possible sources.[13] Richard

Ettinghausen discusses Islamic art in relation to history, literature, and religious traditions.[14]

More specifically in connection with Ottoman Turkey, Oktay Aslanapa in his Turkish Art and Architecture gives an overview of Ottoman Turkish art and its forerunners. The site description of Süleymaniye within this is brief but accurate and the floor plans are clear.[15] The floorplans and site descriptions of A. Gabriel, Mamboury, Walsh and Sumner-Boyd and Freely are correct and important.[16] Behçet Ünsal, professor of the History of Architecture of Istanbul University, and Ulya Vögt-Göknil have published good surveys of Turkish architecture. Ünsel's work on Turkish Islamic architecture includes the Seljuks, while Vögt-Göknil's is exclusively on Ottoman architecture.[17] Ünsel writes (most importantly) from within the traditions of the Turks and argues strongly for the existence of Middle Eastern traditions within Turkish architecture. Vögt-Göknil presents excellent site descriptions and, although touching only briefly on philosophical and religious implications, does a fine job of placing Suleymaniye's entire külliye in its context in society. Goodwin, in the same vein, presents a lifetime of scholarship on Ottoman architecture, placing a wealth of information on iconography in the footnotes alone.[18] However, the enormity of their tasks have allowed none

of these three authors to go deeply into any one monument. For the sixteenth century one may look forward to the forthcoming volume of Ayverdi. He has to date, however, only reached 1481 in his monumental discussion of Turkish architecture.[19] Thus a close study of the iconography of Süleymaniye is still to be done.

Among other works, three are of especial importance to this thesis. Evliya Celebi, a Turkish gentleman and traveler, has left a seventeenth century first-hand description of this mosque.[20] Secondly, Edward Lane, writing in the nineteenth century, has one of the best accounts of Muslim religious practices.[21] Finally, some of the building accounts are extant for the Süleymaniye. Ömer L. Barkan, in a first volume, lists those concerned with the erection of the building and promises a second volume dealing with the decoration.[22] He states that there are ninety-nine such defters in the Topkapi Saray Library in Istanbul, but he adds that any royal orders, or fermans such as exist for the building of the Blue Mosque and which may exist for Süleymaniye have either been destroyed or else not found at this writing.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Said of Süleymaniye in Celâl-Zade Mustafa-Tabakatül-memalik. See Ö. Barkan, Süleymaniye Cami ve imareti insaati. Cilt I, Ankara, 1971, p. 55.

[2]R. Ettinghausen, "Interaction and Integration in Islamic Art," Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization, ed. Gustav E. von Grunebaum, Chicago, 1955, p. 5.

[3]O. Grabar, The Formation of Islamic Art, New Haven, 1973, Chapters 1 and 7.

[4]It is interesting to see here that in 1571 according to a study by Professor Charles Tilly, University of Michigan, Statistics of the Urbanization of Europe, unpublished, Istanbul's population was 300,000 while London in 1569 registered 75,000; Venice in 1577 was 120,000, Bruges in 1580 was 40,000 and Paris in 1600 was 200,000.

[5]The Başbakanlik Archives or Topkapi Saray Library, both in Istanbul, might yield even more data in the form of old Ottoman documents, i.e. payrolls, fermans issuing specific orders, or manuscripts if a more extensive study were undertaken.

[6]G. Goodwin, A History of Ottoman Architecture, London, 1971, p. 215 ff. sees it as a culminating point in Sinan's one line of investigation. After this, i.e., in Selimiye, he feels that he moves beyond and into new lines of thought.

[7]O. Grabar, "The Architecture of the Middle Eastern City from Past to Present: The Case for the Mosque," Middle Eastern Cities, ed. Ira Lapidus, Berkeley, 1969, p. 29.

[8]O. Grabar, The Formation of Islamic Art, Chapter 5.

[9]H. Inalcik, "Rise of the Ottoman Empire," Cambridge History of Islam, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1970, p. 297.

[10]Ibid., Inalcik greatly stresses this mixture of history and its effect on Ottoman character.

[11]E. B. Smith, Architectural Symbolism of Imperial Rome and the Middle Ages. Princeton, 1956. _____, The Dome: A Study in the History of Ideas, N.J., 1971. H. P. l'Orange, Studies in the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World, Oslo, 1953. Hautecoeur, op. cit. K. Lehman, "The Dome of Heaven," Art Bulletin, XXVIII (1945). A. Soper, "The 'Dome of Heaven' in Asia," Art Bulletin, Dec., 1947.

[12]L. Massignon, "Les Methodes de Realisation Artistique des Peuples de l'Islam," Syria, II (1921), pp. 47-53 and 149-160.

[13]O. Grabar, "Islamic Art and Byzantium," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 18 (1964). _____, "The Architecture of the Middle Eastern City from Past to Present: The Case of the Mosque," Middle Eastern Cities, Ira. M. Lapidus, ed. Berkeley, 1969. _____, The Formation of Islamic Art, Yale, 1973. _____, "The Islamic Dome," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, 22 (1963).

[14]R. Ettinghausen, op. cit. _____, and Grace D. Guest, "The Iconography of a Kashan Luster Plate," Ars Orientalis: The Arts of Islam and the East, Vol. 4 (1961). _____, "The Spirit of Islamic Art," The Arab Heritage, Nabeh A. Faies ed., Princeton, 1948.

[15]O. Aslanapa, Turkish Art and Architecture, N.Y., 1971. A. Gabriel, "Les Mosquees de Constantinople," Syria, VII (1926), pp. 353-419.

[16]E. Mamboury, The Tourists Istanbul, Istanbul, 1953. H. Sumner-Boyd and J. Freeley, Strolling Through Istanbul, Istanbul, 1972. Walsh, Constantinople and the Seven Churches of Asia Minor, London, n.d.

[17]B. Ünsal, Turkish Islamic Architecture, London, 1959. U. Vögt-Göknil, Living Architecture: Ottoman, Fribourg, 1965.

[18]Goodwin, op. cit.

[19]E. Ayverdi, Osmanli Mimarisinde: Vol. IV: Fatih Devri: 855-886 (1451-1481), Istanbul, 1974.

[20]Evliya Efendi, Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa in the Seventeenth Century. Trans. von Hammer, London, 1834.

[21]E. Lane, The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians, London, 1860.

[22]Ö. Barkan, op. cit.

CHAPTER II

SITE DESCRIPTION[1]

For the mosque of Süleyman the Magnificent, Sinan chose the third hill along the Golden Horn in Istanbul. As Vögt-Göknil points out, this was "the most domianant area of the city." She continues:

> . . . the mosque rises in isolation, set in gardens and surrounded by low walls. Sinan placed the other buildings opposite, where they run parallel to the gardens. The medical school and alms kitchen are opposite the main entrance of the mosque; the hospital and the carvanseray are on the corner to the right of the entrance. A medrese is placed on both sides of the street. Only the mausoleums of the Sultan and his wife, Hasseki-Hurem, are in the immediate vincinity of the mosque in the back garden.[2]

The quibla wall has a south-east axis to place it in the correct position toward Mecca. Thus the northwest entrance is on the side opposite the harbor, town, and the Sultan's harem. Sinan erected a number of buildings around which one must detour, thus creating an avenue and enhancing the effect of the approach to the mosque. This is even more true today as one approaches from the harbor, through the streets of the Spice Bazaar and climbs a steep and cobblestoned street to the summit of the hill upon which Süleymaniye is situated. If one approaches from the side

near what is today Istanbul University, one literally bursts upon the grandeur of the mosque from a maze of streets and old wooden buildings. These two basic avenues are indicated by a woodcut by Melchoir Lorich (Plate 1) done three years after the mosque's completion. It reinforces the idea that Sinan must have taken into account the effect of elevation and removal from the tangle of ordinary life. The thin, pointed and soaring minarets emphasize the elevation even more.

Of Süleymaniye, Grosvenor says:

> . . . towards the conclusion of his reign this mosque was undertaken by Souleiman, not only as a thank-offering to God, but to eternize the recollection of his brillant conquests. It specially commemorated the capture of Belgrade, of Rhodes from the Knights of St. John and of Bagdad, . . . three strongholds regarded as the northwestern, central, and eastern bulwarks of the Empire.[3]

He adds that it was built with materials from Egypt, Asia, and Greece with a large part obtained from the Church of St. Euphemia at Chalkedon and the ruins of the Constantinople Hippodrome.[4]

The mosque is situated between two enclosed areas: the one behind the mosque is a garden containing the previously mentioned turbes (mausoleums) and the one in front is a courtyard with an entrance on each side and columns of porphyry, marble and granite, which is reminiscent of Justinian's atria. Grosvenor describes it in the following way:

Plate #1

Süleymaniye Cami, Istanbul
After a woodcut by M. Lorich, c. 1560

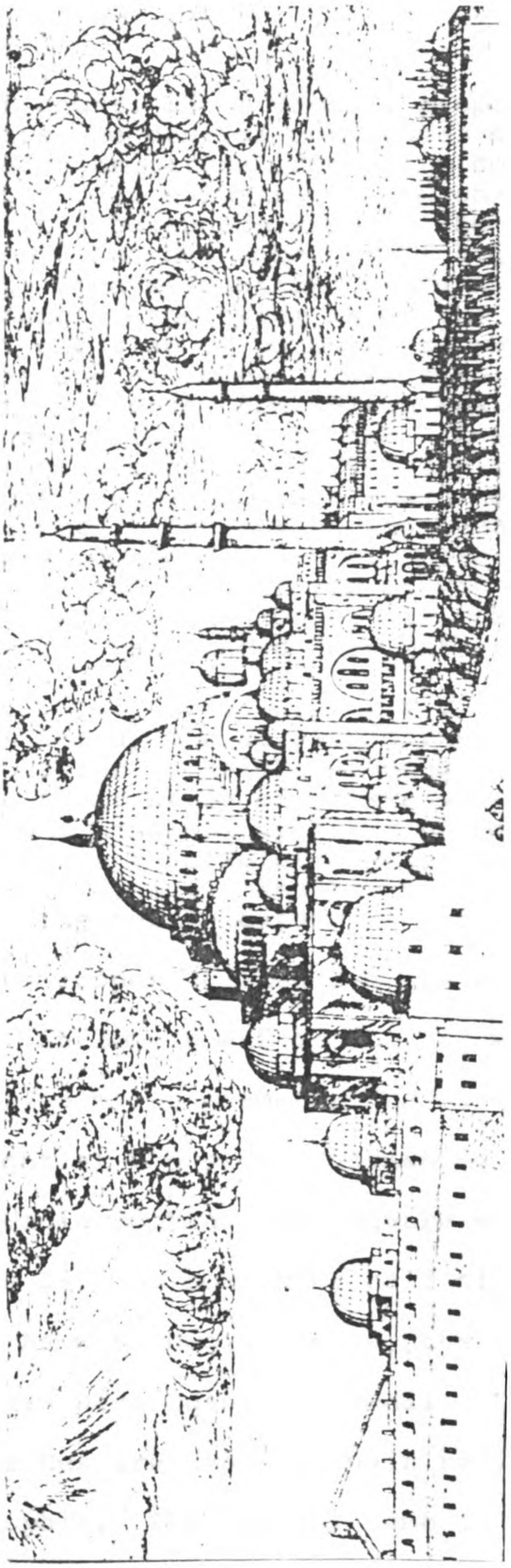


Plate 1

> The harem, or court, is of unusual proportions. Of recent years the central monumental door and the hardly inferior lateral doors are commonly kept closed . . . 24 columns of reddish granite and porphyry in a colonnade support the domes of the portico. Another dome, still higher, rises over the ornate fountain in the middle. All the pavement of the harem is of the whitest marble except one slab of porphyry to which the interest of legend attaches. This slab, because of its unusual fineness, the sultan designed for a place of honor before the mihrab. A zealous Greek stone-cutter secretly carved the cross upon it, hoping that the mystic sign would convert the Moslem worshippers. The act having been discovered, the workman was beheaded . . . his head in falling struck the stone and bespattered it with blood. The slab, defiled, and no longer fit for employment in the sanctuary, was placed here with the cross beneath . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Four minarets stand, one at each corner of the harem. They differ in height--though all are lofty--and in their style of workmanship. The ten galleries of the minarets by their number are intended to indicate that Suleiman was the tenth sovereign of his dynasty, and he was born in the first year of the tenth century of the Hegira.[5]

The mosque proper (Plates 2-5) is nearly square measuring 57.5 m. in length and 58.5 m. in width. The central dome is 27.5 m. in diameter and 53 m. (or twice its diameter) in height at the crown surpassing all others in the city except Hagia Sophia. The square encompassed by the four piers is 26.5 m. square or half of the total area of the mosque.[6] As with Hagia Sophia, the two half domes on the central axis have identical radii. On the east and west two great arches are exposed again reflecting the sides of Hagia Sophia. The central dome is supported by

Plate 2

Side view of Süleymaniye

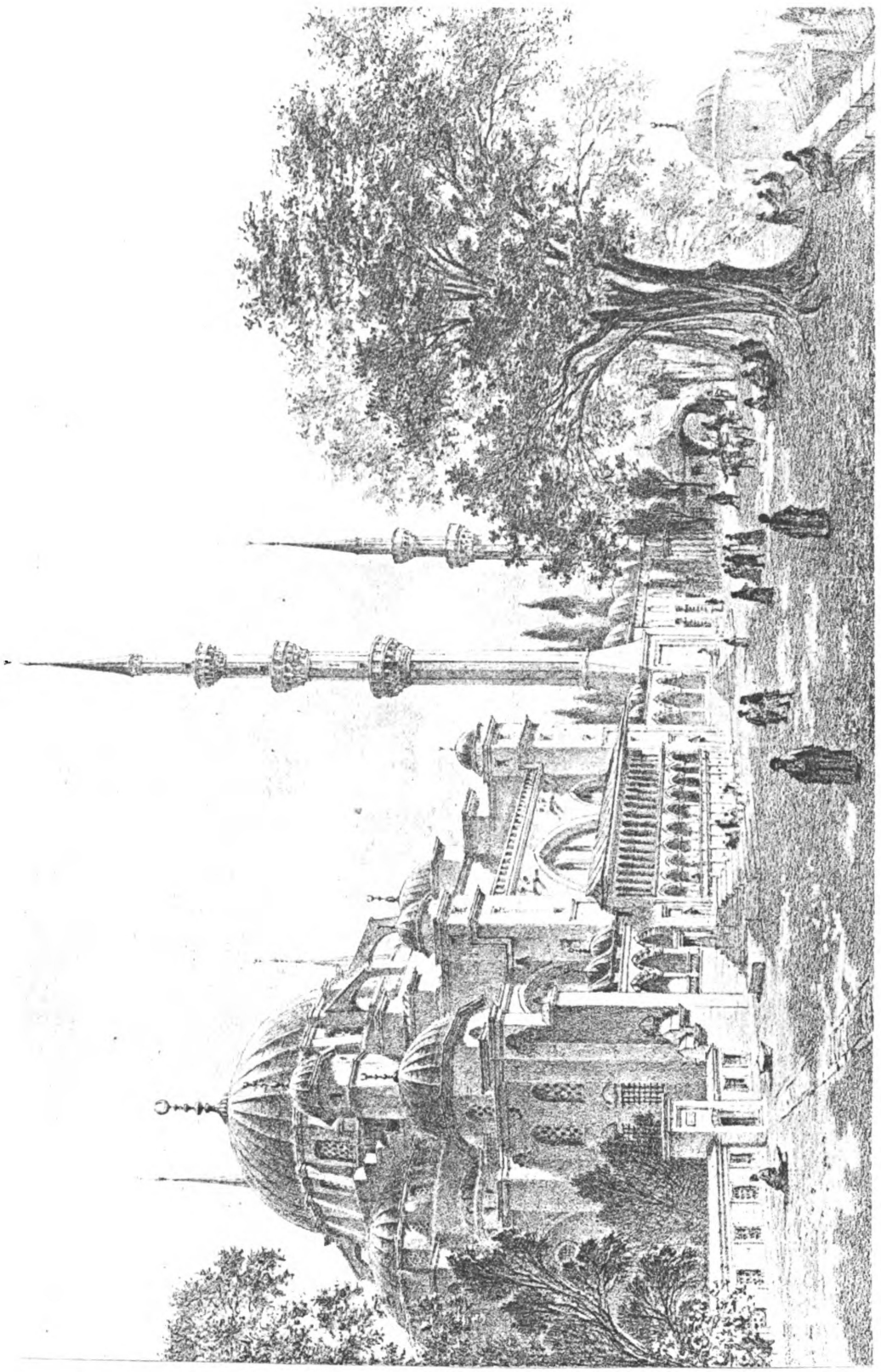


Plate 3

Rear view of Süleymaniye

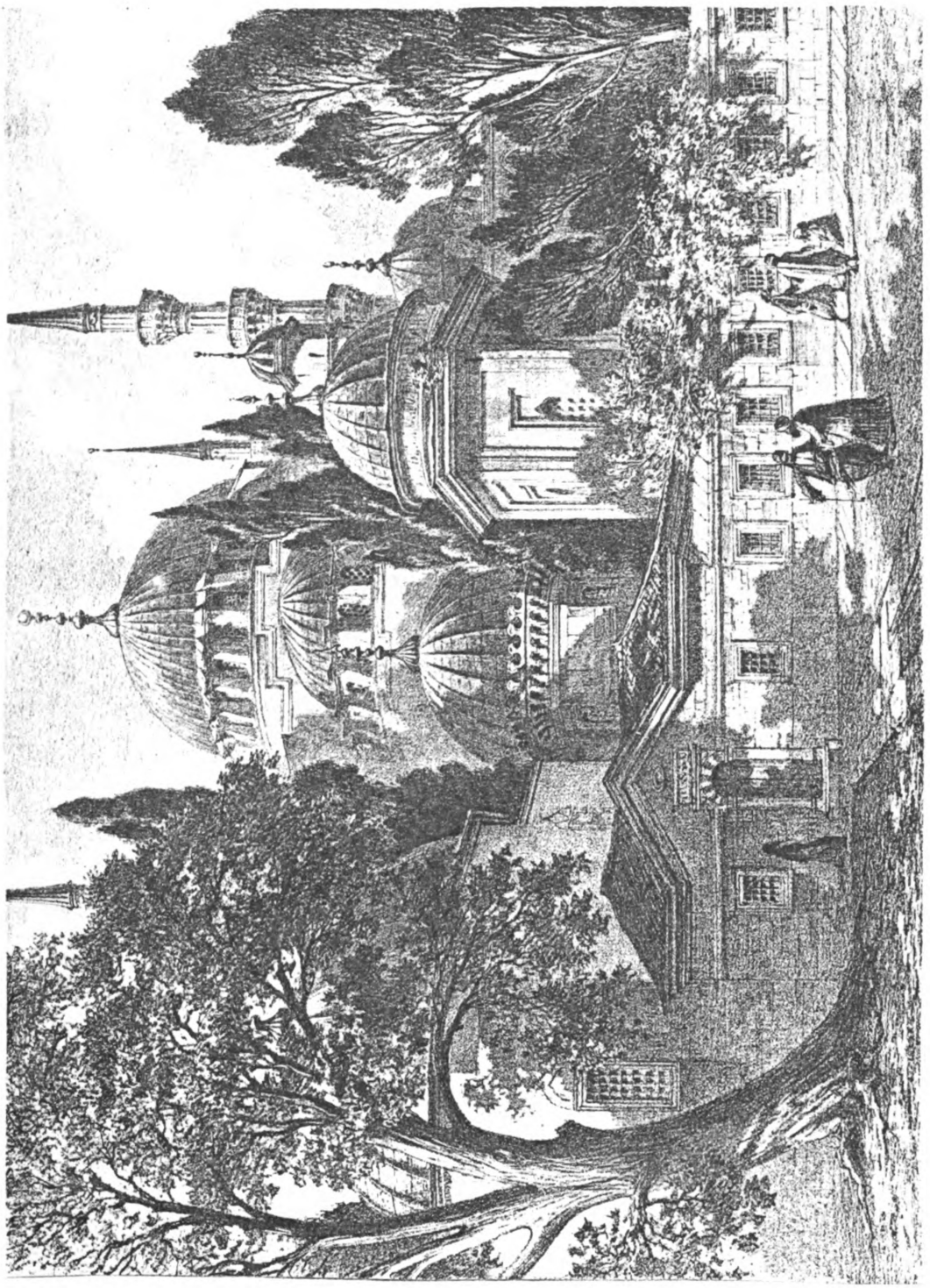


Plate 4

Courtyard of Süleymaniye

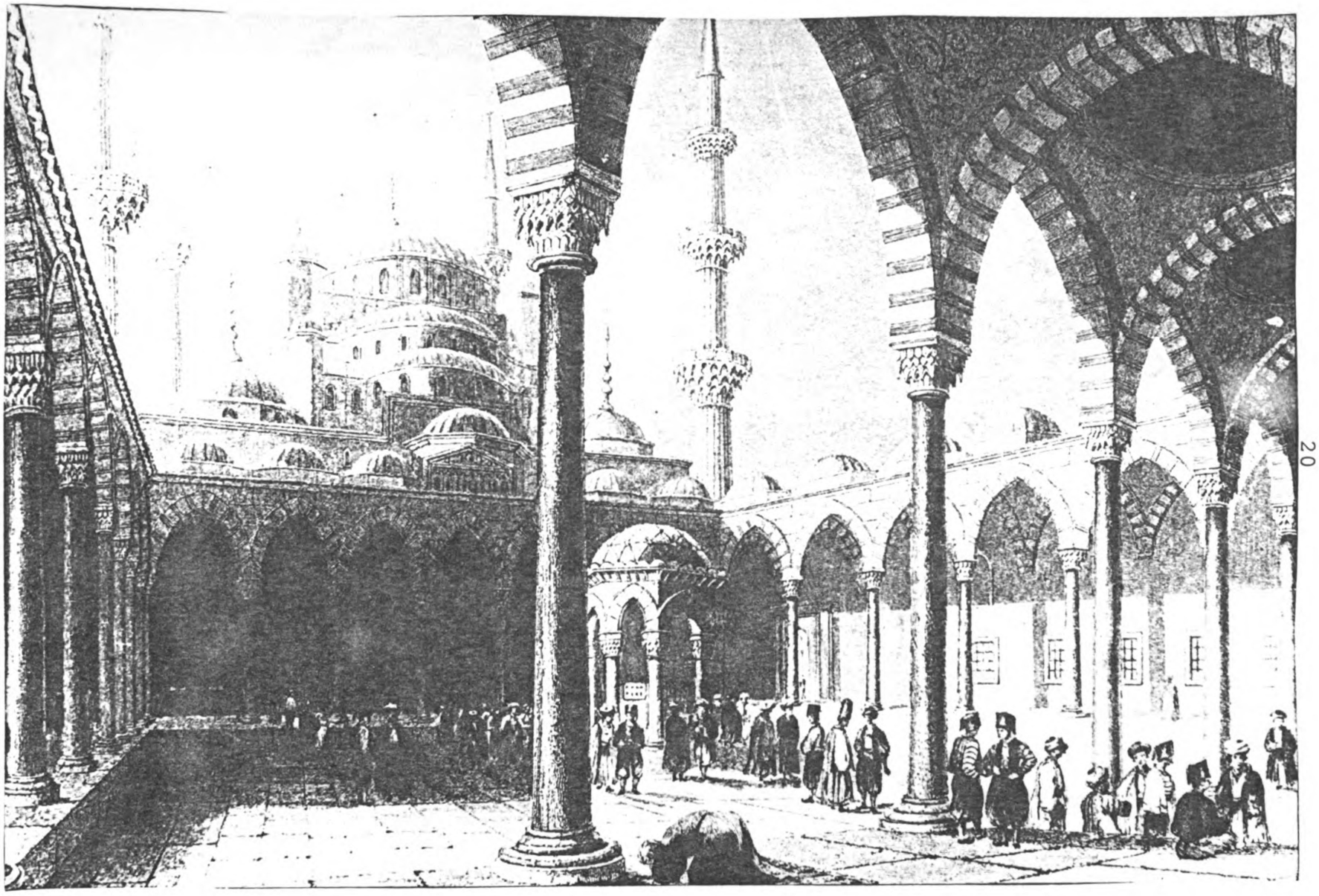
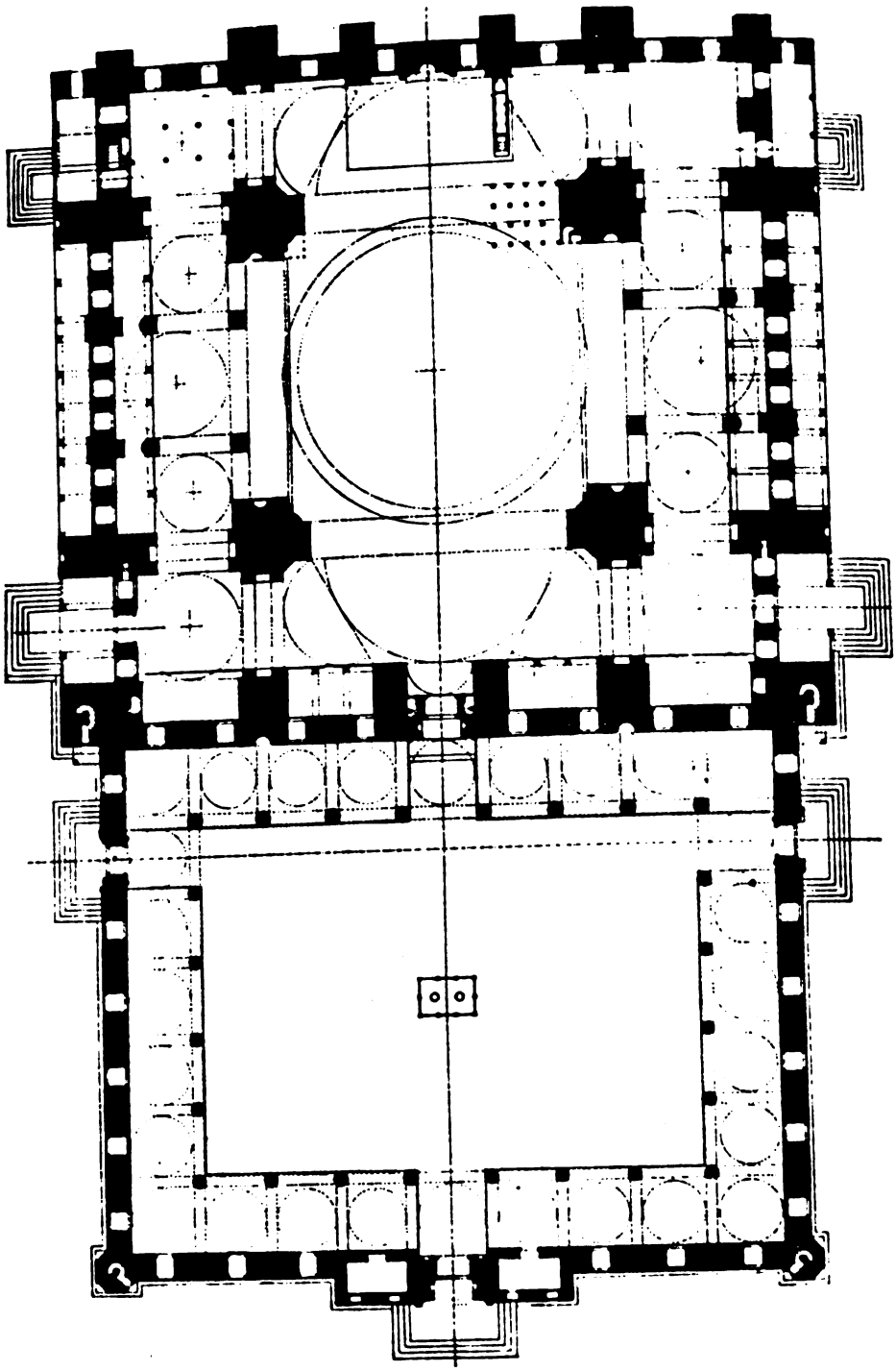


Plate 5

Plan of Süleymaniye



11. Plan of Süleymaniye Mosque, Istanbul

Plate 5

pendentives carried on four gigantic piers ninety feet in circumference. Goodwin notes that the buttresses

> . . . receive the thrust from the four major piers inside, which carry the pendentives that take the weight of the dome and part of that of the semi-domes across the great arches of the aisles and nave.[7]

Transitions from the surfaces of the domes to arches and walls are in some areas covered with stalactites.

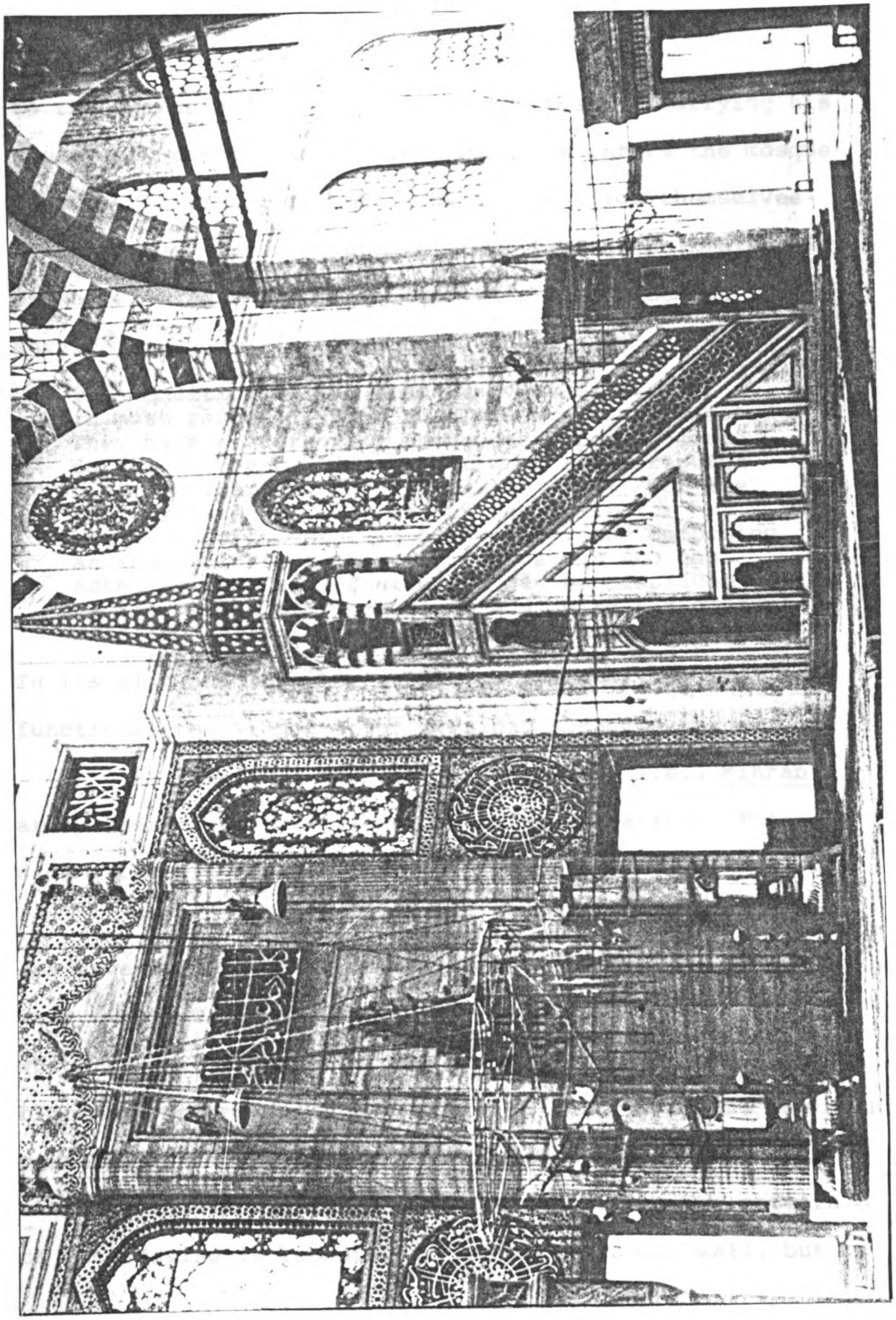
The eastern and western side "aisles consist of five domed bays. These domes are of unequal diameters."[8] In connection with the varying sizes of these domes, Ünsal noted that Sinan seemed to avoid perfect symmetry but presented instead a "harmony of proportions" within individual units with domical proportions of 1:2; arches of 3:5 (width/height) and of 5:8.[9]

The mihrab or prayer niche is located in the southern kible wall, in the direction of Mecca. The iman or leader faces this during prayer. It is coaxial with the main door, courtyard and entry gate. To the right of the mihrab is the mimber, or pulpit, from which the profession of faith is read on Friday. The kürsü, or preacher's chair, is to the left. From this the preacher addresses the congregation.[10] (See Plate 6)

Although a Muslim is called to prayer five times a day, it is at noon Friday that the large community prayer service takes place. At Süleymaniye, the worshipper goes to the mosque and performs his ablutions, according

Plate 6

Interior of Süleymaniye



to the prescribed ritual, in the courtyard. Carrying his shoes sole-to-sole in his left hand, he enters the mosque to join others for prayer. The people align themselves on the prayer mats in parallel rows facing the kible wall, or Mecca. The Imam or leader then leads them in the service. However, as Lane points out:

> The condition of the Imams is very different, in most respects, from that of Christian priests. They have no authority above other persons, and do not enjoy any respect but what their reputed piety or learning may obtain for them: nor are they a distinct order of men set apart for religious offices, like our clergy, and composing an indissoluble fraternity; for a man who has acted as the Iman of a mosque may be displaced by the warden of the mosque, and, with his employment and salary, loses the title of Imam . . .[11]

In its plan and furniture, Süleymaniye fulfills its functional requirements for a Friday mosque service.

On the floor near the prayer area, i.e., Mihrab area, there is a traditional one step elevation. The side areas are also raised.

On the south side of the building two huge buttresses have been fully exposed in order to keep the kible wall flat. This pair brackets a pair half their size which takes the thrust of the southern semi-dome. Further, blocks of masonry rise two-thirds of the way up the southern corners. The corresponding blocks on the north side are incorporated into the bases of the minarets. The pattern of buttressing is repeated on the north facade wall, but

this time brought within the mosque in order to allow for an uninterrupted facade and portico. Many feel the result is to cramp the entrance way.

On each side of the building, two buttresses have been incorporated into the walls and project nearly equally on the inner and outer sides. As Sumner-Boyd and Freely note, the projections are masked

> . . . on both sides by building galleries with arcades of columns between the buttresses. On the outside the gallery is double with twice the number of columns in the upper story as in the lower; on the inside this is a single gallery only.[12]

The number of arches in the lower story is eight and there are sixteen arches in the upper story. These spring from stalactite capitals. On the exterior between these buttresses on the lowest level are twenty-one water taps for ablutions.[13] The galleries thus protect the worshipper while making his ablutions in bad weather.

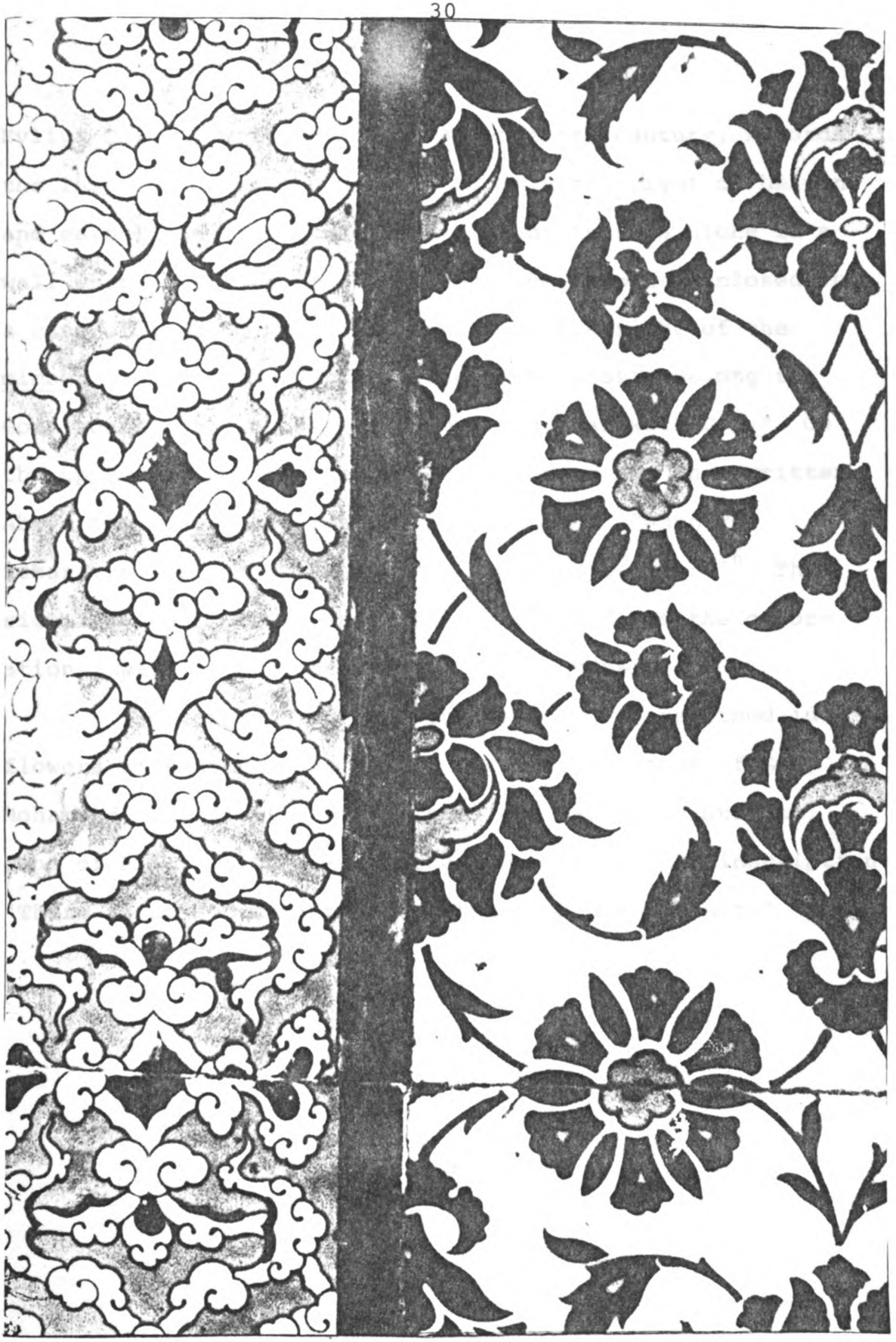
Decoratively, the interior is "severely simple." Three entrances give access from the front: the royal entrance is to the southeast; the northern one opens from the courtyard, axially aligned with the main gate and the mihrab. It originally gave access to a main route from town as well as to the Süleymaniye hospice. The northwest side door acts as an entry from the shops and tea houses across the street. In addition, there are two entrances on either side of the kible wall.

Large windows stretch nearly to the floor. These are often placed in sets of two or three. Additional light comes from the side window screens within the east and west arches and the thirty-two windows around the base of the dome. In all, Mamboury counts 138 windows.[14] Thus, with the exception of the softened light of the stained glass in the mihrab area (done by the glazier Sarhoş [the Drunkard] Ibrahim), the building is evenly filled with natural and diffused light at all levels. Large wheels of oil lights are suspended from the ceiling and are lighted at Ramazan--the holy month of Islam--during the night services.

The tiles near the mihrab area are from the famous Iznik kilns and are of leaf and flower motifs in turquoise, deep blue and red on a white ground (Plate 7). There are also two tile inscription plaques in disk shapes which may have been designed by Ahmet Karahisari.[15] The mihrab and mimber are of Proconnesian marble and the doors, window shutters and kürsü are of carved wood inlaid with ivory and mother of pearl with an interlocked wheel motif. The inscriptions throughout were probably originally done by Ahmet Karahisari, one of the most famous of Ottoman calligraphers, and his pupil, Hasan Celebi, and are in Arabic, the language of the Koran. Goodwin notes that these were greatly restored after the earthquake of 1766.

Plate 7

Detail of Süleymaniye's tiles.
Courtesy of Keskin Color, Istanbul



Evliya Celebi, writing in the seventeenth century, records the inscription in the dome as "God is the light of heaven and earth; the similitude of his light is as a niche in a wall wherein a lamp is placed, and the lamp is enclosed in a case of glass." Over the window to the right of the mimber is the text "Verily, places of worship belong to God; therefore, invoke not anyone together with God." On the upper windows the "excellent names of God" are written. Above the mihrab appears the inscription: "Whenever Zakariyya went into the chamber [mihrab] to her."[16] The significance of these inscriptions, as well as the decorations, will be explored later in this thesis.

The texts in the pendentives "are transformed into flowers of sixteen petals" and record the "names of God, Mohammed, the first four caliphs, and Hasan and Huseyin, sons of Ali . . ."[17] Above the main gate is the inscription: "There is no God but God and Mohamet is his Prophet."

FOOTNOTES

[1]I have used the following sources for this description of the mosque: (a) my own notes made in the summer of 1973; (b) Sumner-Boyd and Freely, op. cit., pp. 220-233; (c) Vögt-Göknil, op. cit., pp. 51-54; (d) Grosvenor, op. cit., pp. 666-672; and (e) Goodwin, op. cit., p. 53.

[2]Vögt-Göknil, op. cit., p. 53.

[3]Grosvenor, op. cit., p. 666. This reasoning, however, is not reiterated by any original sources and should probably be further validated, although it could well be true.

[4]Again, this is unvalidated by original sources but is repeated by other authors. He further adds that Suleyman gave Sinan the order to imitate Hagia Sophia. Confirmation of this may finally be found in fermans in the Turkish archives, but which I frankly doubt feeling that although the floor plan resembles Hagia Sophia, it was Sinan who played with this reflection of Byzantine imperial grandeur. Further, his fascination with Justinian architecture is reflected in his other Istanbul mosques where he uses cross in square plans, octagonals, and variations on domes. His mosques of Şehzade, Mihrimah, Rustem Paşa and Sokullu Memet Paşa could be examined in relation to this. Most puzzling is his reversion to the Anatolian-Seljuk type of multi-domed mosque in Piyale Paşa Camii, an interesting mosque which is presently in bad repair and which he completed at the end of his life. All writers are aware of his interest in Justinian-like plans. Vögt-Göknil, op. cit., p. 100 and Unsal seem to see it as a working through of these with modifications "to free himself from the patterns." I feel this doesn't suffice; either there is less to it than this, i.e., different architectural forms interested him as forms for experimentation, or more to it, i.e., the older types were important for--perhaps symbolically--some ideas of religious or political power which he was trying to express or which were popular in Turkey at the time.

[5]Grosvenor, op. cit., p. 667. Sumner-Boyd and Freely, op. cit., p. 222 also write:

> The western portal of the court is flanked by a great pylon containing two stories of chambers; these, according to Evliya, were the muvakkithane, the house and workshop of the mosque astronomer."

I could find no mention of this in Evliya. If it exists, it would be of great interest in the theory that the domes and stalactites reflect astronomical and geometric ideas of the time and the Islamic tendency to tie these to religious thought. de Boer also makes the point (T. J. de Boer, The History of the Philosophy of Islam, London, 1903, p. 7) that because of rapidly developed scientific knowledge of astronomy, especially in Babylonia, there existed for years the "discovery of the harmony of the All in the unity and steadiness of the movement of the heavens. This became paired with a detached observation of nature, especially of the life and fate of man and the feeling that where comprehension ceases, resignation (or submission as the word, Islam literally means) takes over. The ancient near east then provided many of the elements found in Islam as reflected in Süleymaniye."

[6]Goodwin, op. cit., p. 231. He adds: "these measurements conform absolutely to the symbol of the perfect circle in the square and it is so satisfactory a definition of space that it dominates the complexities which modulate the rigid form of the rest of the mosque. . . . The underlying formula based on sixteen units has been noted as has the use of the half in order to introduce a new rhythm based on three, a number for which, as we have seen, the Renaissance had a deep respect."

[7]Ibid., p. 225.

[8]Many see this as a Turkish adaptation of Byzantine ideas. Ünsal, op. cit., p. 24, however, notes that "the Byzantines had found the model for their half dome in the buildings of ancient Rome and Syria, and the Turks, before they had reached Byzantium had seen this form in Syria and used it in their own buildings."

[9]Ibid., p. 91. G. Mathews, Byzantine Aesthetics, London, 1963, p. 27 notes that the Byzantines preferred working proportions of 6, 3, 2, or 1. This again may be a difference from the basic "Hagia Sophia philosophy" in Süleymaniye. Süleymaniye's are numbers which are given Pythagorean importance and which Philo-Judeas, (Philo, Vol. I, London, 1939), among others, often refers to. Perhaps Arabic translations of earlier Greek writings and an

examination of Judaic tradition will yield more meaningful information.

[10]Ibid., pp. 376-377.

[11]Lane, op. cit., p. 84.

[12]Sumner-Boyd and Freely, op. cit., pp. 222-223.

[13]Goodwin, op. cit., p. 227.

[14]Mamboury, op. cit., p. 411. On the subject of stained glass he adds: "Ottoman stained glass does not resemble the European. While the latter is set in grooved lead [which] enclosed the pieces of glass, the former is entirely set in plaster. This is worked in the form of a sheet the dimensions of the window. After reducing it to a thickness of 2 cm., on all parts to be decorated and arranging a framework and the lines of division, thickened to 4-5 cm., the craftsman sketches out his design on the plaster, being very careful to give the walls of these partitions a slope from above below of about 30-40°. This work finished, he adds to the outer face pieces of coloured glass which he fixed with plaster. . . . Generally windows with handsome stained glass have a second glass outside, with hexagonal, circular or rectangular designs. The decoration of the stained glass is always floral, geometric or calligraphic; the glass is never painted."

[15]Goodwin, op. cit., p. 237.

[16]Evliya Effendi, op. cit., pp. 75-77. He also adds, rather confusingly, "This mosque has five doors. On the right, the Imam's; on the left the Vezir's, beneath the imperial gallery and two side doors. Over that on the left is written (Kor. xiii.24), "Peace be upon you, because ye have endured with patience! How excellent a reward is Paradise!" Over the opposite gate this text: "Peace be upon you! Ye are righteous; enter in and dwell in it forever!" Beneath this inscription, on the left hand is added: "This was written by the Fakir Karahisari." He also states that above the "southern gate" (the one leading from the courtyard to the bazaar area?) is written "I direct my face unto him who hath created the heavens and earth: I am orthodox." Due to the lack of explication of right and left, this is unclear.

[17]Goodwin, op. cit., p. 345.

CHAPTER III

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE OTTOMAN TURKS

Süleyman, the patron of this mosque, was the great grandson of Mehmet Fatih, Mehmet, the Conqueror of Constantinople. He was the fourth Ottoman sultan to rule from Istanbul. He controlled a territory which spread into Europe through all of Greece, Bulgaria, Jugoslavia and "to the gates of Vienna"; in the north his territory contained the Crimea; it encircled most of the southern Mediterranean areas including Egypt, and present-day Algeria, and extended in the east as far as the Caspian Sea, Tabriz, Azerbaijan and Kuweit.[1] It contained, in other words, much of what had been Byzantium.[2]

Süleyman was descended from Osman who is said to have ruled from 1299-1326, and from whom the Ottoman Turks took their name. In the years following Osman, the Ottomans moved out over Anatolia and rapidly conquered most of the remains of the Byzantine Empire.

More than one hundred years later, early in the morning of May 29, 1453, a "new and young Sultan," Mehmet, known later as Fatih, or the Conqueror, launched the

final assault on the walls of Constantinople. Bernard Lewis writes:

> Of the once great and teeming city, only a remnant survived, shrunken and depleted, with a population of barely fifty thousand. . . . but the mighty triple landwalls still stood, and behind them, the last legions of the Roman Empire prepared their defense. . . . in the early light of dawn, the Sultan sent his elite troops--his body guard, his archers and lancers, and the twelve thousand men of the corps of Janissaries.
>
> The first of them to gain a foothold on the wall was a giant Janissary called Hasan. He was felled by a stone, overpowered, and killed; but others followed him. Meanwhile, Turks had entered the city through the neglected Circus Gate and within fifteen minutes tens of thousands of them had penetrated the defenses. Among the anguished and exhausted Greeks, the cry arose, 'Healo he polis--the city is captured . . .'
>
> Some hours later, the Sultan himself entered the city, riding on horseback through the gate now called Topkapi with an escort of high dignitaries and a Janissary guard. He rode to the great Church of the Holy Wisdom . . . where he dismounted and entered. There he summoned an Imam, who went up into the pulpit and intoned the Muslim creed: 'I testify that there is no God but God. I testify that our lord Muhammad is the Prophet of God.' The Greek cathedral had become a Turkish mosque. A vivid picture . . . is drawn by Tursun Beg, a veteran of the conquest, secretary to the Sultan's council, and one of the first Ottoman writers of literary prose . . .
>
> 'the Sultan, Mehemmed Gazi, with his scholars and his commanders, deigned to enter . . . while the congregation of angels in heaven uttered praises, and caused the sound of the verse 'These are the gardens of Eden; enter them endowed with eternal life' to reach the ears of mortal men . . . he then expressed a desire to see the church called Aya Sofya, which is a sign from Paradise:
>
> If you seek Paradise, Oh you Sufi,
> The topmost heaven is Aya Sofya.'[3]

Halil Inalcik says of Fatih that he saw himself as leader of the Turks, as a Muslim religious leader, and as the conqueror of Byzantium and its heir. "He saw in all three titles, the titles of Khan, Ghazi and Caesar, gates leading to dominion over the whole world. . . . His conquests make it clear that his first aim was to revive the Byzantine empire under his rule."[4] Taking into consideration Bernard Lewis' description of the fall of Constantinople, it seems probable that Ottoman rulers considered Constantinople and especially Hagia Sophia a symbol of the Byzantine Empire.[5] Expansion of the empire continued. In 1514, Sultan Selim I the Grim extended the territory. He entered Tabriz and sent back seven hundred artisan families to be installed at Iznik (formerly Nicea), now about a half day's drive from Istanbul.[6]

Against this background Süleymaniye was begun. As has been pointed out, there existed no "original" model for it. It was a mosque which would gain in meaning from the traditions surrounding the lives of those building it.

FOOTNOTES

[1]For detailed maps see H. Inalcik, The Ottoman Empire, trans. N. Itzkowitz and C. Imber, London, 1973, Chapter 4, and Pritchard, A Historical Geography of the Ottoman Empire, Leiden, 1973.

[2]The name Turk had been recorded for many centuries before this. It is found recorded in 6th century A.D. Chinese annals. (B. Lewis, Istanbul and the Civlization of the Ottoman Empire, Oklahoma, 1963, Chapter II). Lewis points out: "These early Central Asian Turks were no mere barbarians. They already possessed a written language, and important groups among them were affected by the religions of the civilized world, including Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorian Christianity." After a variety of invasions including ones by the Seljuks who conquered Baghdad in 1055 and the Mongols who broke the Seljuk power in Anatolia, one group of gazis, that of Osman, appears in the thirteenth century in Anatolia.

[3]Ibid., p. 4. As will be noticed, various authors use varying translations in the spelling of Mehmet. For my own use, I have adopted the accepted contemporary Turkish transliteration.

[4]H. Inalcik, "Rise of the Ottoman Empire," Cambridge History of Islam, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1970, p. 297.

[5]Evliya Efendi, op. cit., p. 101. "One day at one of these assemblies of learned divines and historians, mention was made of the description of the old town of Constantinople. Sultan Murad said: 'Though so many countries and residences have been minutely described by geographers and historians, yet this my residence of Constantinople remains undescribed.' The Mufti, Yahya Efendi, the son of Sekeria Efendi, who was present, answered: 'My Emperor, in the Koran this noble town of Constantinople is mentioned by the verse: 'Have the Greeks not been vanquished in the lowest ground?' The builder of this spot marked out in the Koran was first Süleiman (Solomon), then Alexander Zulkarnin, who lived 882 years before the

Prophet; it was then repaired by thy great ancestor Mohammed II, and then at your own order, my Emperor, by Lala Beiram Pasha, when you undertook the expedition of Erivan. It is in order to glorify this town and its inhabitants that the Prophet delivered these words. 'They shall conquer Constantinople, how good a Prince its Prince, what good troops its troop.' Travellers call this great capital, the splendour, the power, the magnificence, the excellent town, of which the Koran says: 'Have the Greeks not been vanquished?' (Please note that he is also called Evliya Celebi.)

[6]G. Migeon, "La Ceramique Ottomane de Constantinople et d'Anatolie au XVI siècle," Manuel d'Art Musulman; Arts Plastique et Industriels, Paris, 1927, p. 222.

CHAPTER IV

BYZANTINE INFLUENCE

Byzantine influence was historically present and keenly felt. A quick perusal of Süleymaniye's floor plan (Plate 5), as well as references in every guide book, reveal the similarity between Hagia Sophia (begun c. 527 A.D.) (Plate 8) and Süleymaniye (begun 1550 A.D.). Süleymaniye seems to be based on the plan of Hagia Sophia but without an apse.[1] It is close to Constantinian centralized floor plans, being nearly square: 57.5 m. x 58.5 m. As in Hagia Sophia, there is a gigantic pendentive dome supported by four huge piers and buttressed on the main axis by two semi domes of the same radii as well as a series of wall buttresses. As in Hagia Sophia a series of windows ring the dome, although at Süleymaniye the number is thirty-two rather than forty. The walls on the sides of the longitudinal axis also act as window screens (Refer to Plates 6 and 9). Grosvenor notes:

> The arrangement of larger and smaller semi-domes, the ranges of triple windows with their noble arches, the superimposed colonnaded porticos, the receding segmental vaults, are constant reminders of its grander prototype . . .[2]

Plate 8

Floor plan of Hagia Sophia

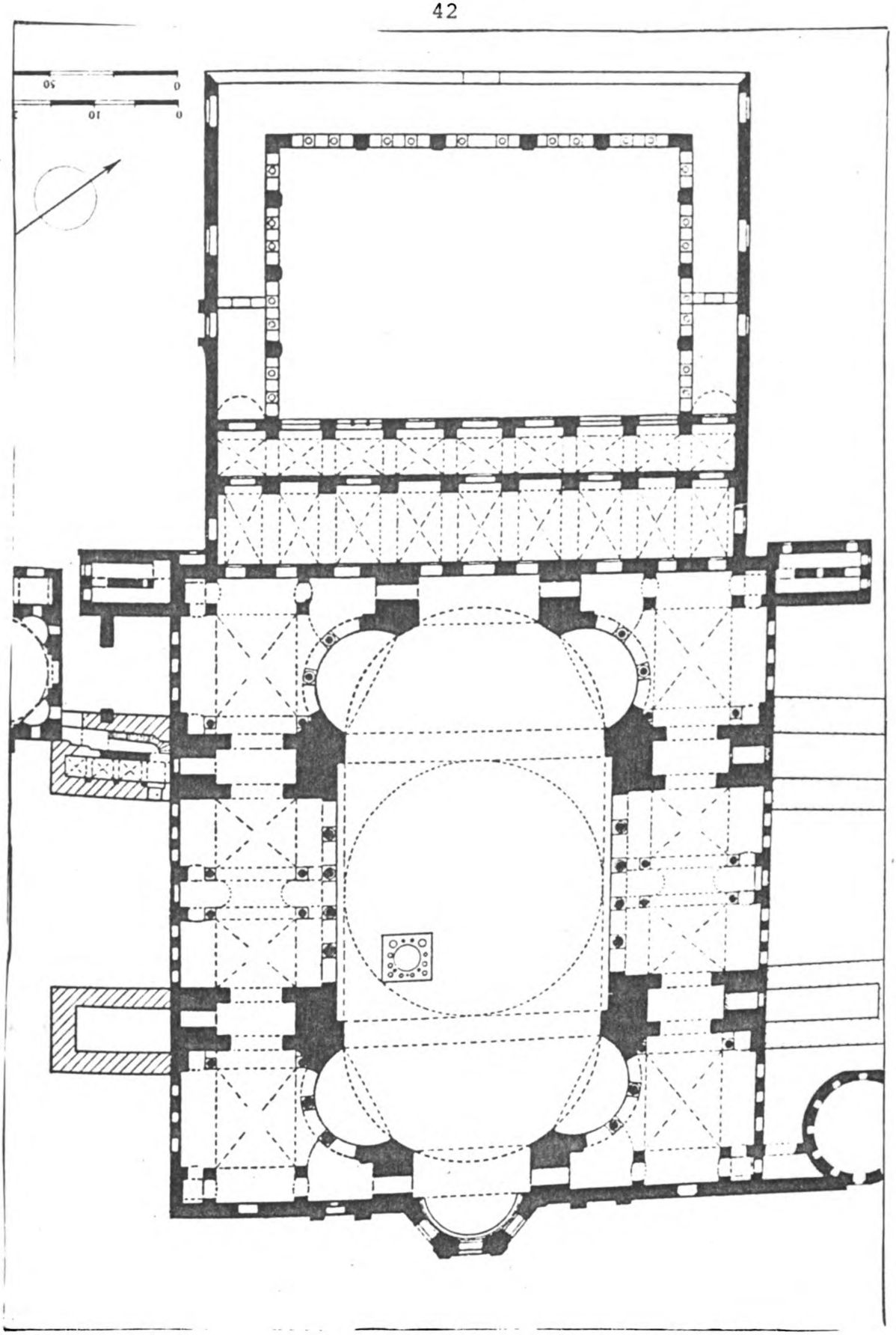
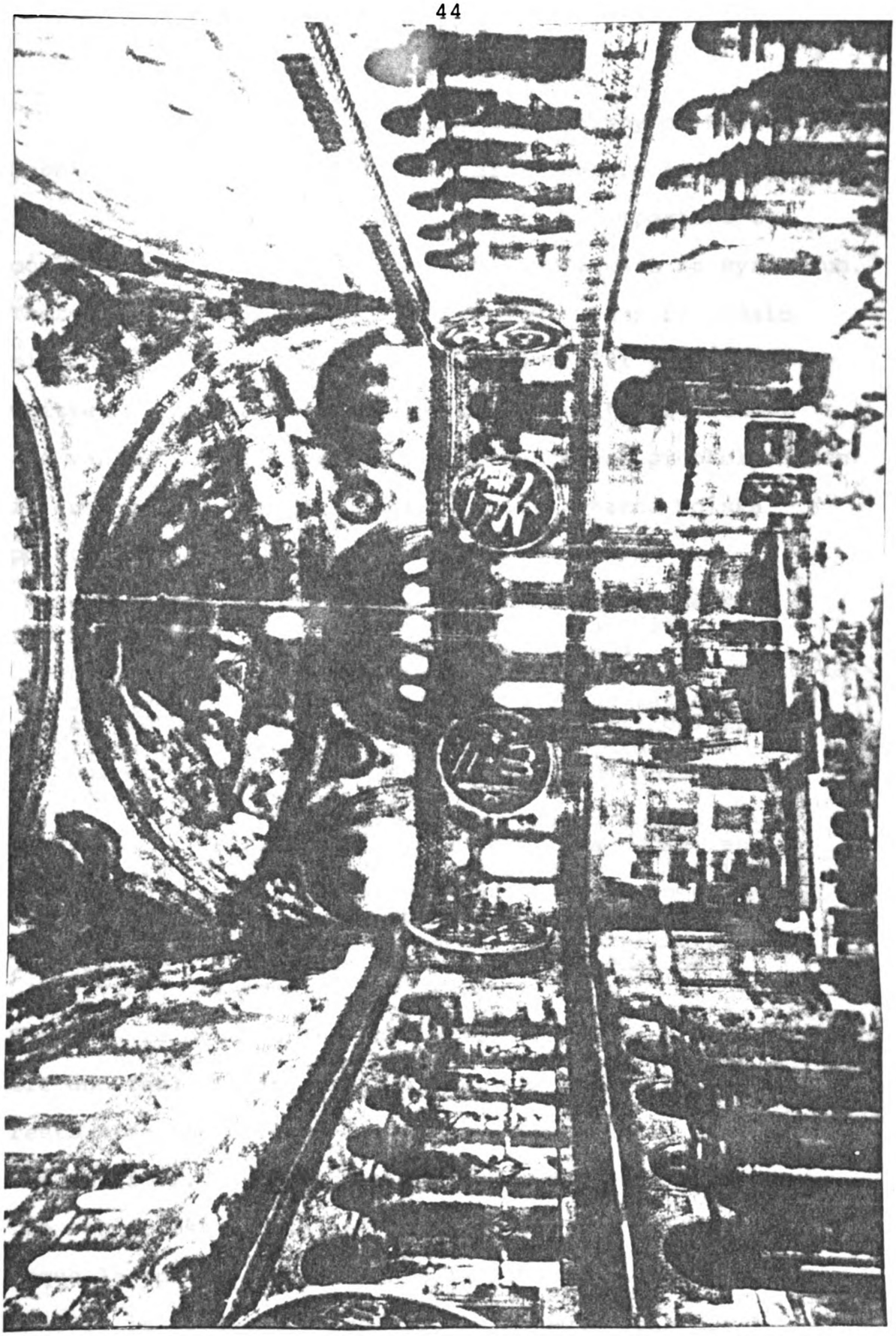


Plate 9

Interior of Hagia Sophia.
Courtesy of Keskin Color, Istanbul



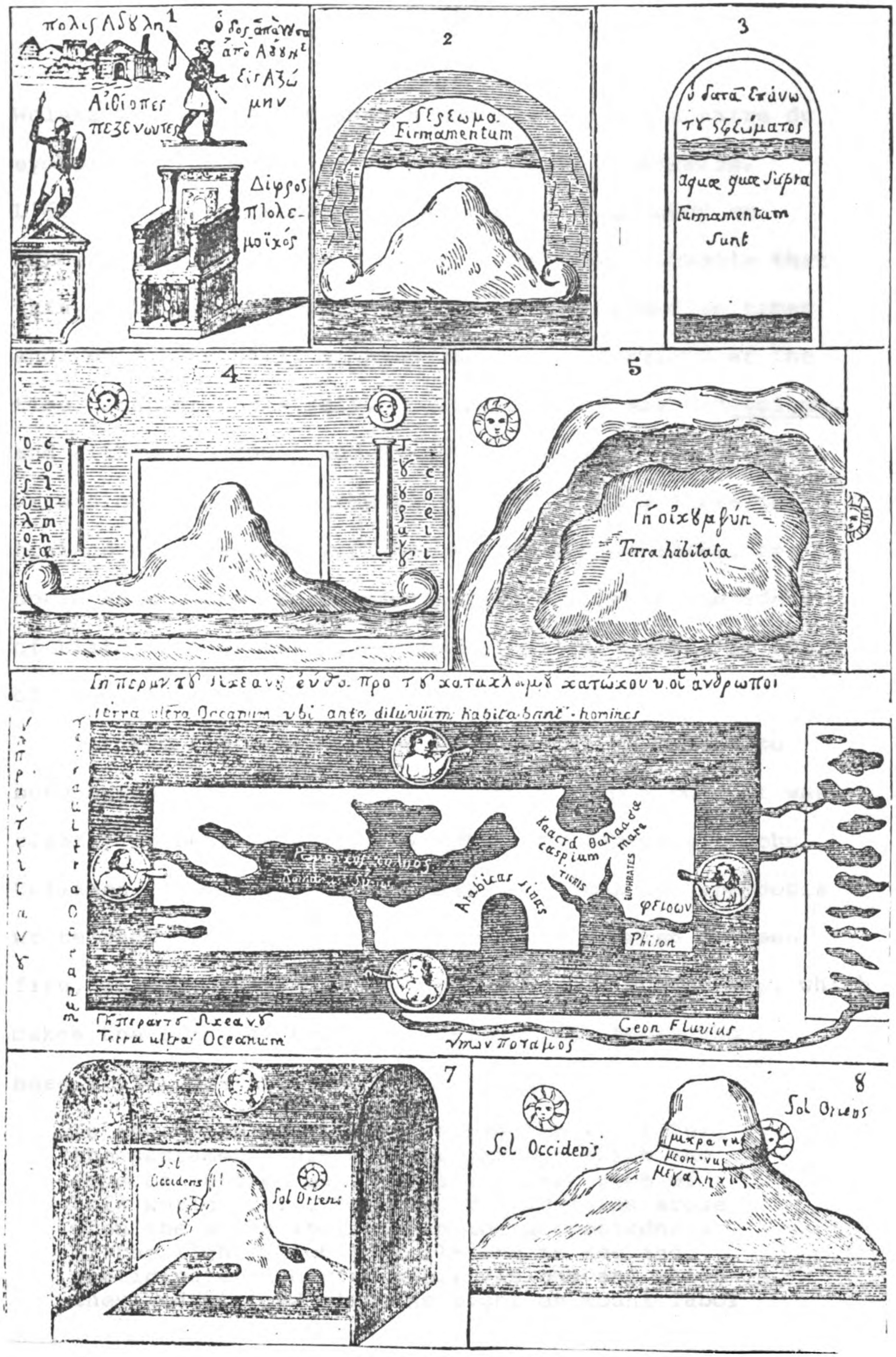
In addition, some of the iconography of Hagia Sophia and, of Byzantine church architecture in general is suggested. In this connection, it is important to consider the symbolism of the dome and square in Byzantium.[3] There is some evidence for the presence here of Judaic elements. Cosmas Indicopleustes (Plate 10) provides written evidence of a Torah Shrine-like, two storied, and vaulted image of the Universe which was probably known in Justinian's time at Constantinople. Wanda Wolska points out:

> Chaque representation de l'arch ou de la chasse n'evoque pas necessairement, chez les Juifs, l'idée du kosmos. Les formes examineés ici étaient pour eux avant tout des symboles du judaisme. Le sense cosmique, bien que latent, ne prend du relief que dans des cas particuliers. Il en va autrement pour Cosmas. La forme d'un mur arrondi au sommet eveille pour lui, essentiellement, l'image du monde.
>
> [Thus it is for him, reduced to a geometric form; it is a sign] . . . enfermer sa pensée en une figure concrete, il passe du symbole à l'illustration et transforme l'image sacreé en croquis explicatif d'un livre de science alexandrin. Le dessin étudié ici tient, à la fois, de l'iconographie juive et des habitudes graphiques des savants hellenes.[4]

She then reiterates the schematization of form as Hellenistic and feels it is probable that the basis for the ideas rests with the Greeks, for Plato attributes to the earth a cubic form.[5] Hautecoeur says that for the Pythagoreans "Le sphere est considereé le plus beau des solides parceque la sphere est la figure la plus identique à elle-même et la movement circulaire le movement parfait."[6]

Plate 10

Topographia Christiana of
Cosmae Indicopleustae


1
Αἰθίοπες
Δίφρος Πτολεμαϊκός
2
Firmamentum
3
Aquæ quæ supra Firmamentum sunt
4
5
Terra habitata
Terra ultra Oceanum ubi ante diluvium habitabant homines
caspium mare
Arabicus sinus
TIGRIS
EUPHRATES
Phison
Terra ultra Oceanum
Geon Fluvius
7
Sol Occidens
Sol Oriens
8
Sol Occidens
Sol Oriens

Wolska writes that "Cosmas n'est pas le seul a faire du symbole le fondement de la structure de l'universe. L'école syrienne represent, elle aussi, le monde en forme d'edifice a deux etages."[7] It seems probable that this symbolism had continued throughout Byzantine times and would have still existed and been understood at the time Constantinople fell. Further, Sinan was a devsirme, and although Goodwin and Stratton both point out that he was only chosen on the second cut and was therefore trained as a Janissary rather than a palace slave, he could have conceivably become acquainted with the ideas of Plato from either Byzantine or Arabic sources at one of the palace schools.[8]

The Platonic concept of light is important to both Byzantine and Ottoman structures. This concept was clearly present in Byzantium until the conquest. John Callahan records that St. Gregory of Nyssa in Cappodocia wrote that "In the same way we can distinguish between fire, which has the power of giving light, and a lamp, which makes the light of the fire available to those who need it."[9] Gustave von Grunebaum wrote:

> In the words of Nikolaos Kavasilas (d. 1370), the sacraments are windows through which the rays of justice enter into the dark room of this world. . . . Dogmatic difficulties arose when the monks insisted on the uncreatedness of the light which they claimed to see and participate in during their visions and which they indentified with the light on Mount Tabor

> in which Christ had been transfigured. This uncreated light is strongly reminiscent of the uncreated Word, the Koran, of the Muslims; both doctrines are examples of 'emotional' or experiential theology and both touch in their own way, on the problem of oneness of the divine essence . . . It is characteristic of the underlying attitudes of Western and Eastern piety that, in Islam, the advocates of the uncreated Koran, and, in the Byzantine Church, the advocates of the uncreated Tabor light carried the day . . .[10]

In sum, it seems that the concept of the light as a symbol of God and the dome-in-square as the symbol of the heavenly cosmic house would have been known in connection with Hagia Sophia in 1453. Perhaps the presence of light and the cosmic symbolism in both Byzantium and Ottoman Islam occur as a result of a common ancient source, but the question is unimportant in this case since the famous building of Hagia Sophia was close at hand and to a degree Sinan clearly refers to it and uses it.[11]

What are his reasons for this reference? There seem to be two main ones: First, Sinan, a Janissary or member of the Sultan's elite praetorian guard, and therefore part of what could roughly be called the corps of engineers, was intending to put up a royal mosque of a grandeur equal to that of his sultan. Although there was a ready tradition of mosque architecture of the dome-in-square type in the Middle East (including Bayazit Camii in Istanbul), as well as the presence of other well-known centralized structures such as the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Hagia Sophia was by far the largest example,

was intact, and the nearest at hand.[12] It was a building which reflected imperial patronage and embodied the imperial and religious power of a great empire. These were the very ideas which Sinan wished to convey.

Secondly, this political or secular significance could offer another explanation. Grabar has said:

> Byzantium was the one world Early Islam most wanted, and failed to conquer . . . But above all, it was so because, to the Islamic and especially to the Arab Middle Ages . . . Byzantium, . . . partook of that mysterious aura which at given periods of history has endowed certain cultures and countries with a prestige or artistic genius . . . Therein, more than in any precise artistic motif, lies what the late Louis Massignon, in an eloquent article, has called the 'Byzantine mirage in the Arab mirror.'[13]

For the Byzantines, Constantinople and within it Hagia Sophia, acted as a model of both Imperial power, a second Rome, and symbolically of the Holy City Jerusalem. Later, as the previously mentioned details of Fatih's conquest show, Constantinople and Hagia Sophia, were of extreme importance to the first Sultans of Istanbul. Sinan quite probably proposed the plan for the mosque based on Hagia Sophia, but it seems equally certain that it was greeted warmly by Süleyman as a symbol of Byzantine days of glory, perhaps even symbolic of Constantinople. As has been noted, Fatih saw himself as Khan, Ghazi, and Caesar, and his "conquests make it clear that his first aim was to revive the Byzantine empire under his rule." Süleyman

followed in this tradition and the tradition provides support for his acceptance of a plan based on Hagia Sophia. Süleyman's interest in the implications of Hagia Sophia might be compared, roughly, to Charlemagne's interest in the Palatine Chapel at Aachen. Its sources are in Byzantine centralized church plans and the desired inference was that Charlemagne was the equal of Constantine and Justinian.

Finally, the idea of the "Holy Wisdom" as the highest truth was a common element in both Byzantine Christianity and Islam.

The mosque, however, differed from Hagia Sophia in several important ways. Hilary Sumner-Boyd and John Freely note:

> Up to this point the plan follows that of Hagia Sophia, but beyond this . . . all is different. Between the piers to the north-northwest and the south southeast triple arcades on two enormous monolithic columns support the tympana of the arches. There are no galleries here, nor can there properly be said to be aisles, since the great columns are so high and so far apart as not really to form a barrier between the central area and the walls; thus the immense space is not cut up into sections . . . but is centralized and continuous. The method Sinan used to mask the huge buttresses required to support the four central piers is very ingenious--he has turned what is generally a liability . . . into an asset . . . On the north northwest and south southeast he incorporated the buttresses into the walls of the building, allowing them to project about equally within and without. He then proceeded to mask this projection on both sides by building galleries with arcades of columns between the buttresses.[14]

The site descriptions note the construction of outer galleries as well as the inner ones between the buttresses which are placed on the east and west. It seems important, however, that, with the exception of the Sultan's box, these galleries are not specifically intended for worshippers as they may have been in Hagia Sophia. At Süleymaniye, the worshippers would first fill the main floor area in parallel rows facing the kible wall, or Mecca. The women remain for the most part on the side or in the rear, and the latecomers can make use of the porch.

In addition, Süleymaniye lacked a clergy and thus a clerical hierarchy and was only a place, according to Islam, for each individual to meditate on God. There were no formal processions and thus no orientation toward them as might be found in basilical naves, of which Hagia Sophia is a variation. There is no intercessor for any man, and thus the only orientation at Süleymaniye is to the kible wall.[15]

The plans (Plates 5 and 8) indicate the lack of (1) a narthex as in Hagia Sophia, (2) the column screens or aisle veils as well as (3) the two rooms flanking the apse. The absence of these elements eliminates the sense of hidden recesses, mystery and the play of light against shadow and open against closed areas. It opens up the entire floor area. Some feel this was a result of a less

refined scheme; others see it as a purposeful revolt against Byzantine style. The latter seems unlikely in light of the floor plan. An answer may be found, rather, in the long-standing traditions derived from Zoroastrianism where light and dark are forever locked in mortal combat and therefore cannot be conceived of as working together harmoniously.[16] This avoidance of complexity may also be seen as a positive adjustment of the structure to its function as a mosque, a point to be discussed in the next chapter.

Another difference between the mosque and Hagia Sophia is found in the extension beyond the wall of the apse area in the church. Only a vestige of this remains in the placement of the semi-circular mihrab niche within the kible wall.

The roofing of the side areas to the east and west is also different. Whereas both buildings use the square and pendentive dome for the central construction as well as the two half domes of equal radii, Sinan chose to substitute the dome-in-square construction (which Grabar sees as a long-standing tradition in Middle Eastern mosque architecture) for the vaulting of Hagia Sophia's side aisles.

The decoration is vastly different. The reasons for this will become apparent later, but for the moment

suffice it to say that Hagia Sophia's mosaics and acanthus leaf column capitals are replaced by ceramic tile, painted calligraphy and stalactite capitals. Where marble is used it tends to be predominately white rather than the multi-colored marble of Hagia Sophia.

In sum, Süleymaniye is, for the most part, a unified and open area which is filled with a neutral light as contrasted to the play of light and shadow and closed recesses against open as found in Hagia Sophia. Its floor space acts as a seating area for the Muslim worshippers who are led in prayer by the Imam who faces the empty mihrab at the head of the worshippers and in full view of them. In contrast, in Hagia Sophia, the aisles and galleries acted as spaces for the worshippers, whose viewing of ceremonies was almost always partially obstructed. The central area functioned here as a place for the processions and ceremonies of the patriarch and the emperor--ceremonies, again, which were often obscured from the viewer.

FOOTNOTES

[1]A. Fevret, "Les tatars de Crimée," Revue du monde musulman III (1907), pp. 94-95, states that the mosque in Eupatoria in the Crimea, the Ceima Camii was constructed in 1550 after a model of Hagia Sophia. It should be remembered that Süleyman's land stretched into the Crimea. O. Aslanapa, op. cit., p. 75, sees the Turks of Anatolia as the first within Turkish architecture to "attack the problem of the dome" with "complete mastery in all its various aspects and to develop it to its fullest extent." It seems possible that their geographic proximity to the domed solutions in some of Byzantium's greatest buildings could have been of help in solving this problem. On the other hand, he notes the construction of the Blue Mosque in Tabriz by the Karakoyunlu Jihānshāh (1436-67) in 870/1465. This is a large-scale domed building on a centralized plan and built in an area for which the Ottomans had great artistic respect and from which they took many artisans as well as ideas (see the section on tiles). He further details the 1970 excavation of the Great Mosque at Van which dates from roughly the same time or possibly the late fourteenth century (e. 1380-1400) and was completely destroyed in 1913. Although a centralized plan, this dome rested on stalactite squinches and was supported by the mihrab wall and five piers. Finally, the presence of smaller centralized mosque plans as well as Bayazit II Cami in Istanbul cannot be ignored. However, Bayazit's central dome was small--17.5 m. in diameter--which would have created a very different effect from that of either Süleymaniye or Hagia Sophia. (See G. Goodwin, op. cit., pp. 112-131 and p. 169). Thus while these stand as possible precursors, the basic centralized floor plans of Justinian seem to remain closest in type to Süleymaniye.

[2]Grosvenor, op. cit., pp. 667-668

[3]While I feel that Hagia Sophia and the Byzantines and, more removed, the Greeks were the most immediate source of this idea of a cosmic house with a dome of heaven, the Turks in their vast history in Central Asia cannot have helped having this idea in their heritage. There is always a close tie with the far east and certainly

there is a clear one from the time the Ghaznevid sultans make their conquest of the Punjab. It was from these same Ghaznevid dynasties that the Seljuks, and via the Seljuks, the Ottomans were to take building techniques, vocabulary and iconography. This and the fact that before the Ghaznevides, Buddhism was the religion of the Uighar Turks before their conversion to Islam (c. 870) and that "Buddhist religious literature had a brilliant development in Uighur language" (O. Aslanapa, op. cit., p. 40), make it possible to accept E. Diez's proposal that "Uighur stupas of the Buddhist period influenced the considerable heightening of the domes of Islamic monuments." (Ibid., p. 74). One further suspects that these eastern influences can be seen at times in Seljuk and Ottoman building iconography. The use of a domed central court with a four part eyvan certainly was significant to Buddhist and Hindu rulers as a symbol of the ruler seated at the center of the world and under the Wheel of the Law. This reappears in Istanbul. G. Goodwin, op. cit., p. 137 writes: "The Cinili Kiosk at Topkapi Saray . . . is a plan which recurs at Fatihpur Skiri where Akbar's throne was placed in the center of the four cardinal points--to symbolize his being the Viceregent of Vishnu--under an eight-ribbed dome which represented the Wheel of the Law. The square plan represented the four corners of the world. . . . Mehmet II Fatih clearly respected the work of Timur and was in communication with Central Asia." Hautecoeur points out the imperial and religious use of the umbrella in Dionysiac rites as they enter Asia; in its use also in Assournazirpal, Assourbanipal and India (Hautecoeur, op. cit., p. 20). He further notes that in Egypt "le temple est le symbole de monde; comme l'a montre Moret, le sol de l'edifice est la Terre, les colonnes sont les vegetaux, la plafond le ciel" (p. 61); "Les peuples nomades comparaient le ciel à une tente" (p. 64); "Les psaume 103 dit que Dieu etend le ciel comme une tente" (p. 64). It is interesting here to note also a "person connected" use of this image when Omar Khayyam, a Muslim mystic writes concerning himself and his poetical name which means Tentmaker, "the shears of Fate have cut the tent ropes of his life." Thus the poetical device of person as sort of micro-cosmic house could be inferred (Omar Khyyam, Rubiyat, p. xi). "Les Hebreux designent le tabernacle comme la tênte sous laquelle l'arche fut placeé" (p. 64); Hittites "attribuent le même nom à l'interieur du temple." He speaks of the Zodiac, of Dendera, dating from the Ptolemies as a circle "celeste s'inscrit dans un rectangle et porte sur les diagonales et sur les axes par les genies et les divinites" (p. 62). Tesit Atabinen, Les Characteristics de l'architecture Turc, Paris, 1938, p. 17, goes so far as to say that the

dome of Hagia Sophia derives along with the Istanbul mosques from early Anatolian or Altaic types and not from Byzantium at all. C. E. Arseven, Türk Sanati Tarihi, Istanbul, n.d., pp. 335-336, says that Süleymaniye was in no way influenced by Hagia Sophia but rather from an earlier Turkish tradition. Lehmann, op. cit., also expresses many of the above views and cites the Dome of Heaven in Quseir Amra as an early Islamic example.

[4]W. Wolska, La Topographie Chretienne de Cosmas Indicopleustes: Theologie et Science au VI siècle, Paris, 1962, p. 128.

[5]Ibid., p. 133.

[6]Hautecoeur, op. cit., p. 65.

[7]Wolska, op. cit., p. 136. She also adds that some knew of this in Persian doctrines but feels it goes too far to identify it with Chaldean doctrines although she sees the interdependence of Babylonian, Biblical and Egyptian cosomologies in it.

[8]Goodwin, op. cit., p. 199, and A. Stratton, Sinan, N.Y., 1972, pp. 13-18. On the other hand, this imagery occurs elsewhere. The Encyclopedia of Art in talking of Irano-Buddhist schools writes that Zoroastrian fire temples led to the development of "kiosk types" of mosques where domed space was preceded by an anteroom known as the lewan. In their section on Greco-Buddhist Style they discuss the fire temple of Surkh Kotal in Bactria where the "roof is supported on four columns placed in the corner of the fire altar." Lethaby, op. cit., p. 114 writes: "to the old Chinese, Heaven is round, the earth is square."

[9]J. Callahan, "Greek Philosophy and the Cappadocian Cosmology," Dumbarton Oaks Papers 12 (1958), p. 39. This lamp idea is important later in the discussion of mosque niches and light symbolism.

[10]G. von Grunebaum, "Parallelism, Convergence and Influence in the Relations of Arab and Byzantine Philosophy, Literature, and Piety," Dumbarton Oaks Papers 18 (1964), pp. 109-110. He too goes on to comment on the strong Platonic elements in both.

[11]Grabar among others, sees influences of Sassanian fire temple construction: again everyone seems to refer to Syriac Church sources. Ettinghausen, "Interaction and

Integration in Islamic Art," op. cit., p. 118 says that when 'Abd al'Malik built the Dome of the Rock "he used the traditional plans of certain Syriac churches," and refers the reader to Creswell's Early Muslim Arch., I, pp. 70-78. Finally there is the search for other types of centralized structures specifically in the Roman tradition which may have served as original models. Goodwin, op. cit., p. 216 compares Sinan's and Alberti's viewpoints and draws some interesting parallels.

[12]Grabar, op. cit., p. 117 ff., proves this construction and its tradition in early mosque architecture as early as the late seventh century and suggests a basis in earlier Sassanian fire temples. Ettinghausen, op. cit., p. 108 writes that "the earliest standing building in Iran, the Mosque of Damghan, dating from the second half of the eighth century, still uses Sassanid construction forms and techniques, though the concept and purposes of the building and its plan are Arabic and Muslim."

[13]Grabar, "The Architecture of the Middle Eastern City from Past to Present: The Case of the Mosque," op. cit., p. 29. Grabar, "Islamic Art and Byzantium," op. cit., p. 88. Here he goes on to say that the documentation of the growth of Islamic iconography and precise Byzantine sources are woefully lacking.

[14]Sumner-Boyd and Freely, op. cit., pp. 222-223.

[15]Interestingly, this quibla wall and mihrab may be long in a tradition which derived from the Torah Shrines in the Galilean type of Synagogues. G. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, Vol. I., N.Y., 1953, p. 209, writes: "That type is the basilica, oriented with its facade and its worship toward Jerusalem. The orientation was quite unlike the orientation of a Christian Church, however, where the main front with its three doors is at the opposite end of the sanctuary . . . In the synagogue the main entrance with its usual three doors itself was on the end of the building toward Jerusalem, and the sacred enclosure was directly in front of these doors, or of the central door . . . Worship was thus directed simultaneously toward the sanctuary, the main front with its three doors and toward Jerusalem. . . . The structural 'front' then was normally blocked off by a screen to make what has all the appearance of a adyton, a chamber inaccessible to any but those officiating.

[16]S. Cammann, "Cosmic Symbolism on Carpets from the Sanguszko Group," Studies in Art and Literature of the Near East in Honor of Richard Ettinghausen, N.Y., 1974, p. 187.

CHAPTER V

THE REFLECTION OF ISLAM[1]

In order to fully assess the ideas discussed so far, it becomes necessary to consider Süleymaniye in terms of its function: its use as a house of worship for Islam. Louis Massignon, one of the greatest of the writers on Islam, has referred to the "Byzantine mirage in the Arab mirror" and this seems true of Süleymaniye encased in its Byzantine shell. Islam, the Word of Allah, as revealed through Mohammed and explicated in the Koran, is influenced by Judaism and Christianity.[2] It includes their teachings and respects the Old Testament prophets and finally recognizes Christ, as the last and greatest prophet in the line before Mohammed. Mohammed, living in the early seventh century, received the last and purest word of God. Louis Massignon has said that underlying Islam is the idea that:

> Dieu tire les ficelles comme dans le spectacle du Guignol. C'est pour cela que, par example, il n'y a pas des drames chez eux. La drame, pour nous, est dans le coeur-meme des personnages, dans leur liberte, mais cette liberte, pour les musulmans, est conditionnee par la volonte divine et il ne sont que des instruments. Il y a bien du drame chez eux, mais c'est au theatre de marionettes.[3]

Sinan, in his position of Janissary to the Sultan, was a member of the Bektasi sect of Dervishes, a Sufi order. He was thus acquainted with some of the Sufi or mystical Islamic thought that was a strong current in Ottoman Islamic thought.[4] Fatih's councilor-scribe--an establishment person if ever there was one--makes a specific reference to the Sufis in his description of the entry into Constantinople and the taking of Hagia Sophia. Further, in writing of Sufi orders, Hamilton Gibb writes:

> Among the Ottoman Turks in Anatolia and Europe the most characteristic order was another 'rustic order,' that of the Bektashis. This which was said to be an offshoot of the Yesevis and was fully established by the end of the fifteenth century, was a peculiar syncretism apparently connected on the one side with esoteric Shi'ism and on the other with a good deal of popular Christianity and Gnosticism. The Bektashis went much farther than other orders in regarding the outer ceremonies of Islam as unimportant and negligible; and in their rituals there were some remarkable analogies to those of Christianity. . . . The Bektashi order acquired enormous prestige through its association with the Ottoman janissaries. . . .[5]

Therefore, the mystical element which incorporates the idea of estatic revelation was always an attractive one and seems to play a part in Ottoman Islam.

The mystics emphasize the idea of light. Tritton wrote:

> Closely connected with mysticism is the doctrine of illumination; it is neo-Platonism expressed in terms borrowed from the dualism of light and darkness . . . There is a greater east, the

> world of intelligences or pure lights, and a lesser east, the world of souls. The intelligences rise in the eastern horizon of God and the souls in that of the intelligences. Finally it [the souls and intelligences] meets at 'the gate of gates' the first intelligence, the giver from which souls emanate, Gabriel. . . . The Light of Lights is at once the source of all being and all knowledge, both of which irradiate from it and the high, sees the high which lights it. The highest light is lighted by the rays of the Light of Lights.'[6]

The mystics placed an emphasis on the macrocosm for which man serves as a microcosm. They used not only metaphors of light, but also of the veil, the Way and the Throne as well as number symbolism to express their ideas:

> Traditional man in Islamic society lives according to Divine Law; in addition, the man with a special vocation seeks the Truth through the Way that exists as the inner dimension of the Law. The relationship between the Truth, the Way, and the Law is best expressed through the symbol of the circle. The Law is the circumference, the Way is the radii leading to the center, the center is the Truth. . . . The central postulate of the Way is that there is a hidden meaning in all things. Each thing has an outer form as well as an inner meaning.[7]

This was a philosophy, as Gibb points out, that was perpetually attractive to Turkish rulers.[8]

Both de Boer, and Massignon see the doctrine of atoms as another element which is important to Islam. This was derived from Greek natural philosophy to explain the transient existence of the world:

> What we perceive of the sensible world,--say these Atomists--is made up of passing 'accidents' which every moment come and go. The substratum of this 'change' is constituted by the (bodily) substances; and because of changes occuring in or on these substances, they cannot be thought of as

> themselves unchangeable. If then they are changable, they cannot be permanent, for that which is eternal does not change . . . Matter, as possibility, exists only in thought: Time is nothing other than the coexistence of different objects, or simultaneity in presentation; and Space and Size may be attributed to bodies indeed, but not to individual parts (Atoms), of which bodies are composed. . . . In themselves they are non spatial but they have their position and by means of this position of theirs they fill space. It is thus unities not possessing extension, but conceived as points,--out of which the spatial world of body is constructed. Between these unities there must be a void, for were it not otherwise any motion would be impossible, since the atoms do not press upon one another. All chance, however, is referred to Union and Separation, Movement and Rest.[9]

This, then is the background for the rest of the discussion. If Coomaraswamy is accepted when he states that "all traditional architecture . . . follows a cosmic pattern,"[10] then Nasr's proposition also seems plausible, i.e., that the "finite cosmos" (as perceived by the Muslim) "served as an icon to be contemplated and transcended," and that "Islamic art seeks to relate the multiplicity of forms, shapes and colours to the One, to the Center . . ."[11] In a similar vein, Massignon points out that the Islamic artist is not Pygmalion, he compares him rather to a "muscien qui serait algèbriste, . . .[who believes] simplement au passage d'un certain nombre de notes pour aboutir à des silences."[12] He says of architecture that "ce n'est qu'un fond, un fond pour la pensée, et l'art pour eux, passe dessus comme une espece de reflet."[13] Combining

these ideas and those already considered in the history of architectural symbolism as well as the aforementioned close connection of geometry, astronomy and astrology in Islamic traditional education,[14] it is now possible to view Süleymaniye in its Islamic context.[15] This Islamic context is one which is essentially Neo-Platonic in its idea that there is an underlying order or harmony--a mathematical structure to the universe.[16] Therefore, with Süleymaniye's plan of the square, four gigantic piers and dome in mind, it is important not only to accept its similarity to Hagia Sophia, but also to consider Burckhardt's statement:

> In speaking of his ascent to heaven (miraj) the Prophet describes an immense dome made of white mother of pearl and resting on four corner pillars, on which are written the four parts of the Koranic formula: 'In the name--of God--the Compassionate--the Merciful,' and from which flow four rivers of beatitude, one of water, one of milk, one of honey and one of wine. This parable represents the spiritual model of every building with a dome. Mother-of-pearl or white pearl is the symbol of the Spirit (ar-ruh), the "dome" of which encloses the whole creation.[17]

Nasr also believes that the concentric spheres act as "a most powerful and efficient symbol for the states of being which man must traverse to reach Being Itself . . ."[18] Within Süleymaniye it is interesting to remember the squareness--or earth--symbolized by the number four surmounted by domes of various sizes. That these domes indicate states of being seems quite possible when one

takes into account these words of the mystic Shihab Al-Din Abu Hafs Al-Suhrawardi (632/1234):

> The hearts of those who seek to draw near to God come nearer and nearer and ascend through the heavenly spheres, and with each sphere to which they ascend, they leave behind them something of the darkness of self, until they pass beyond the heavens and stand before the Throne of God, and then all thought of self passes away in the radiant light of the Divine Majesty and the darkness of the self disappears in the light of the heart.[19]

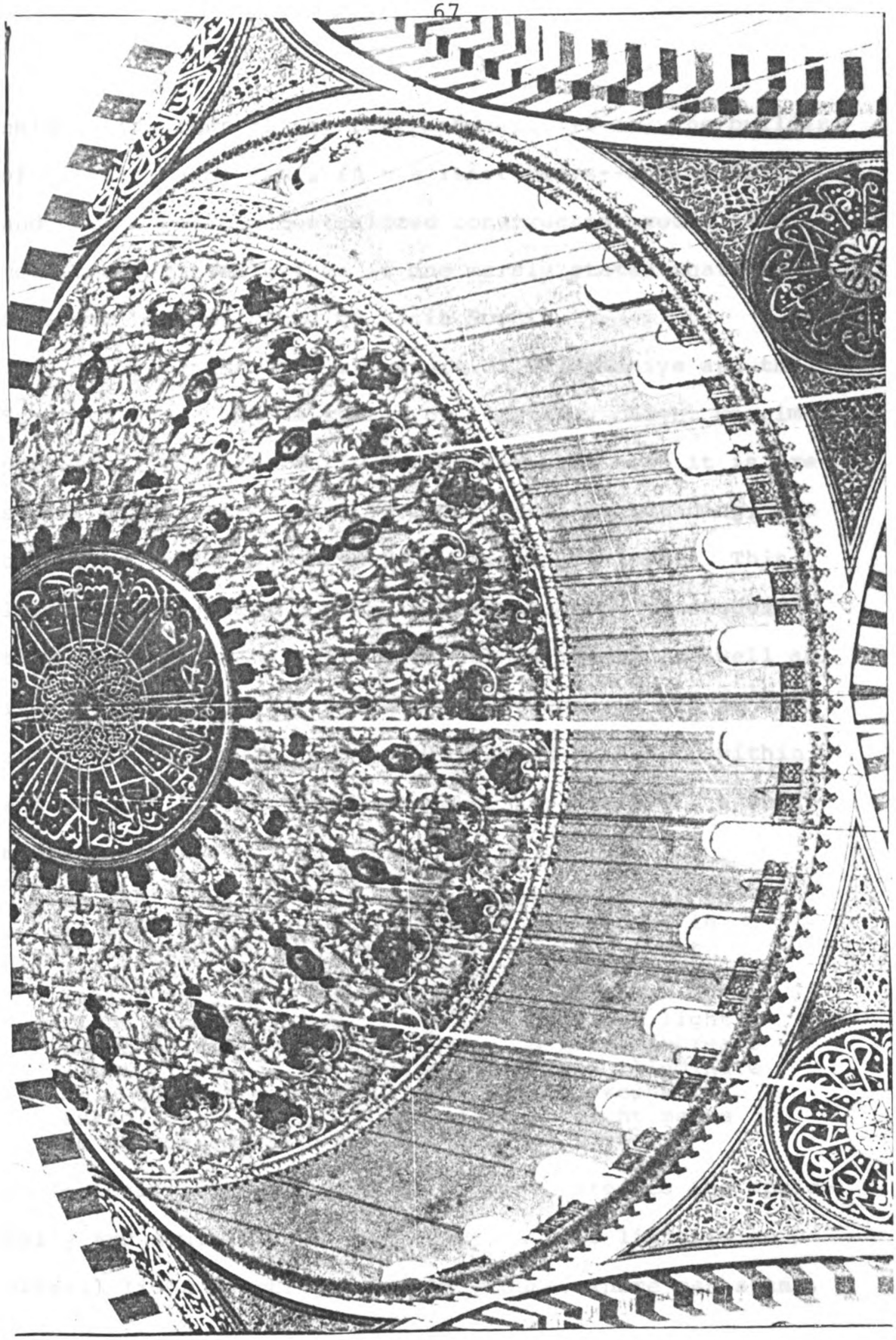
In the center of the building rises the largest dome of all (Plate 11). This dome symbolically stands for the idea of the Reality beyond all, the Breath or the Word. It is reinforced here by the Surah or Verse of Light written (and probably restored) in its top:

> God is the Light of the heavens and the earth,
> the likeness of His Light is as a Niche
> wherein is a lamp
> (the lamp is a glass
> the glass as it were a glittering star).[20]

Therefore, it seems clearly established that Süleymaniye functions as a cosmic house, a symbol which has evolved from a long tradition, but which has specific Islamic reference. In view of this and of Grabar's statement that the earliest type of mosque architecture was a hypostyle-square bay type which could be enlarged at will by adding a unit, one could suggest that Süleymaniye is a variation of this type.[21] Sinan could have used the technical knowledge gained from a study of Hagia Sophia and perhaps of early Istanbul mosques such as Fatih to

Plate 11

Central dome of Süleymaniye



enlarge the central bay for emphasis. If so, the building of Piayale Pasha Camii in his later years--a nine bay, and domed, yet non-centralized construction would seem more understandable than if one merely states that he followed the influence of Hagia Sophia.

Related to the structure of Süleymaniye and the Surah of Light is the system of lighting. Light was important also to the early Christians, but here it is presented differently since it comes into the building, not only from above, but also from the ground level. This less elevated light source is perhaps meant to suggest that light from God comes from within oneself as well as from without; for God is in the microcosm of man as well as in the macrocosm, and revelation is from both within and without.[22] Abu Talib Al-Makki (c. 386/996), a Sufi mystic, prays:

> Oh God, give me light in my heart and light in my tomb, and light in my hearing and light in my sight, and light in my feeling, and light in all my body, and light before me and light behind me. Give me, I pray Thee, light on my right hand and light on my left hand and light above me and light beneath me. O Lord, increase light within me and give me light and illuminate me. These are the lights which the Prophet asked for: verily to possess such light means to be contemplated by the Light of Light.[23]

So logically, in Süleymaniye, as contrasted to the apsidially and domically lit Hagia Sophia, the light is an overall light starting from the ground, where men stand,

as well as from above. This light is more or less even and diffused, since the "veils are removed," indicating the light with which one may be filled as opposed to the complex interactions of light and shadow of the Christian mystery in Hagia Sophia. In addition, there are no curtains or screens to establish a tension of open and closed areas; this absence of curtains or screens seems analogous to the often reiterated Koranic idea of a lack of "veil" or direct access to God through Islam. As with the Byzantines, however, the light is also a light of God the Logos, and the light of Divine Justice and Truth.

It is interesting to see in Süleymaniye the association of the color white with light. At the ablution, a Muslim prays: "O God, whiten my face with thy light, on the day thou shalt whiten the faces of thy favorites."[24] The ground of the tiles incorporated by the mihrab is white. The ground is furthermore opaque and the rugs were probably woolen, as opposed to the Byzantine use of refracted light in their mosaics, brocades and marble. There is the sense of being thrown back once more upon the light within; the unreality and surface quality of the visible world is reinforced.

The mosque is oriented in the direction of Mecca. The great central gate, the front portal, and the mihrab are all aligned on this central axis and are identical

with one another in design. Thus a straight line is formed from the street to the mihrab. Grabar has noted an axial nave cutting across other naves as one of the five oldest symbolic parts in mosque architecture. He suggests a source in palace architecture. The nave suggests:

> . . . a throne room with an aisle for attendants and a place for the throne in a niche preceded by a dome. Existing texts do indicate that, on some occasions, royal guards lined up on the axial nave while the prince performed his function as imam.[25]

He feels it is reminiscent of Early Christian basilicas. Perhaps this is another place where Süleymaniye acts as a culmination of a tradition for Sinan has kept this axial orientation while opening his space to a greater and more effective degree than probably was possible in the Cordoba or Damascus mosques.

In this century, the Gestalt psychologist Koffka pointed out that "every line splits singularity into plurality"[26] to the human eye. On man's level in Süleymaniye the world or mosque is divided by this axis into a plurality of parts within the square form. This is resolved into unity above in the 360° circumference of the dome--the circle symbolic of unity.

The suggestion of the central axis as the Path or Way spoken of by the Sufi should not be overlooked. Abu Sa'id B. Abi'l Khayr (c. 440/1048) wrote that "Thy Path,

wherein we walk, in every step is fair . . .[27] and the opening chapter of the Koran reads "Lead us O Lord, in the right path."[28] In the chapter of the Koran called An'am, Allah says: "This is the true path, follow it."[29]

Lastly, the axial orientation with the gate, door and mihrab could be regarded as a miniature of Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca required of every good Muslim. One moves from the outer world into the model of the cosmos and toward the niche which acts both as the Throne of the Word and as the gateway or door to God or Revelation.[30]

Evidently Sinan intended the worshipper to connect the gate, the door and the mihrab together in his mind as stations along the Path to Reality. The same kind of symbolism is found in certain contemporary Persian rugs, known as the Sangusko Group of Carpets. In an extremely interesting article, Schuyler von R. Cammann, points out the symbolism contained in these rugs.[31] He says that they were produced in the first two and one half reigns after the Safavid Dynasty came to the throne in 1502 (this makes them almost contemporaneous with Süleymaniye). It was a dynasty which encouraged the Sufi thinkers. In describing the first rug, he writes:

> In the middle of all this, we find a large central medallion, set off from the background, and distinguished as being situated on a higher level, by a narrow, serrated band of white. At the center of this medallion there is an

> open void in white, one of the brighest elements on the whole carpet, which obviously stands for the traditional 'Sun Gate,' that entry into topmost Heaven, which also marked the path of the Cosmic Axis. In Old Asian thinking, the Axis of the Universe was conceived to be an imaginary pillar or post extending through the 'Three Worlds.' It had its base at the bottom of the Underworld, extended up through the World of Men (often passing through some sacred mountain, such as Mt. Demavent) and on through the Dome of the Sky, 'up into the various layers of Paradise, to the very top of Heaven, where stands the throne of God.'[32]

Continuing on to another rug in this group, Schuyler von R. Cammann notes the displacement of entwined dragons from the center of one carpet to the <u>border</u> of another and says:

> There was a habit of transferring symbols associated with the inner Sun Gate to the Outer borders of a rug, with the express purpose of identifying the latter more precisely as being the outer Sky Door, the first entrance to Heaven. In their new location, the old symbols seem to have retained their former powers of protection and defense, because they were placed so as to face in and out, usually in a regular alternation. Those facing in were believed to be restraining the good, spiritual forces that might otherwise slip out and become dissipated; while those facing out were considered to be guarding any people who might be seated on the Paradise pattern, protecting them against evil . . .[33]

Finally he notes the continual presence of the multiple door idea: the Sky Door, the Sun Gate and "beyond that was the Throne."[34]

It is important for our interpretation of the doorways at Süleymaniye that the vertical concept of the

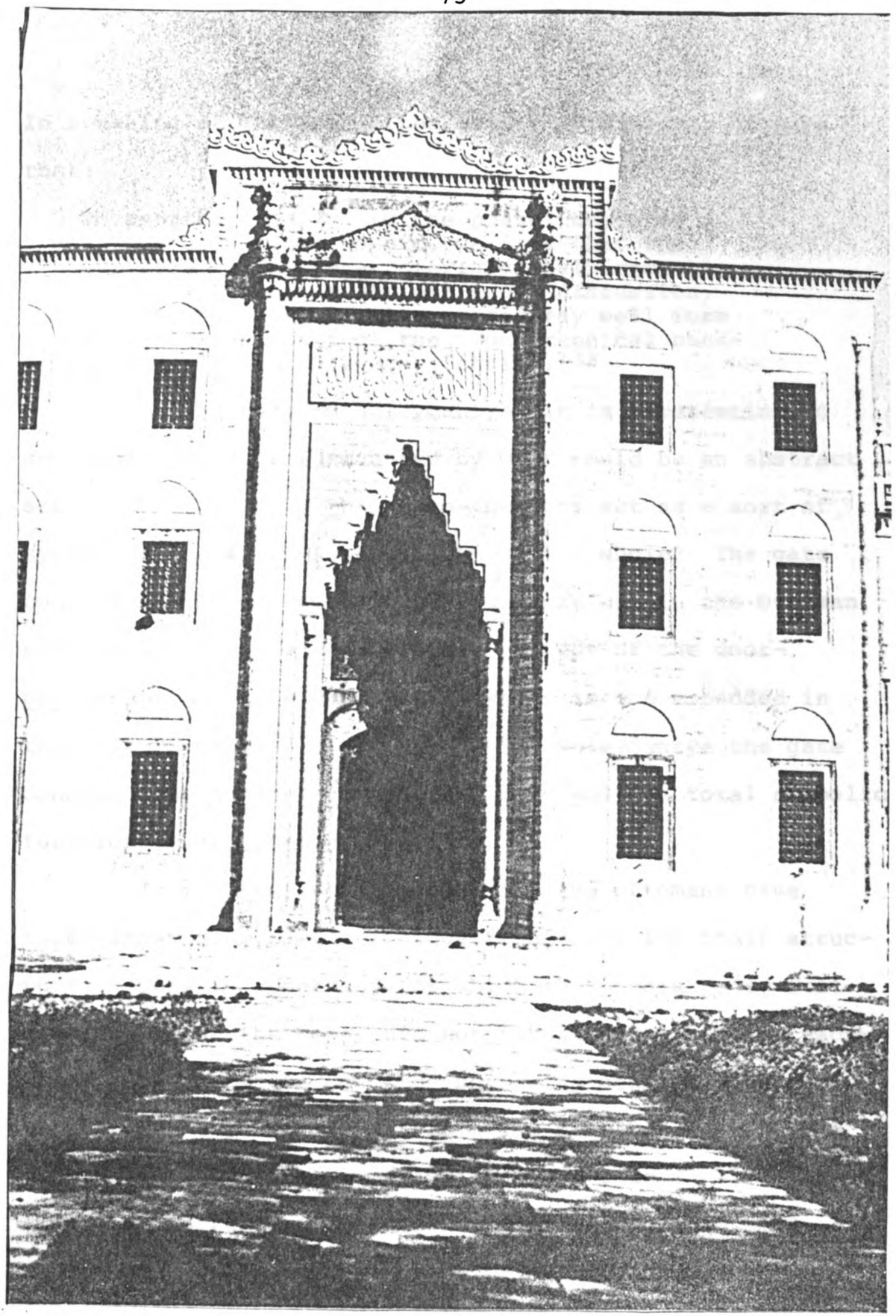
earth and heavens is read horizontally in this rug. Thus one can well consider whether these related gate designs might not be read as the Sky Door, or the outer gate separating the worshipper from the material world, the Sun Gate or portal which leads to the Cosmic House, and "beyond that, the throne" or the mihrab which, as will presently be seen, does in fact carry throne connotations. Within the mosque, the vertical symbolism is also present if one proceeds from the prayer rugs, through the assorted sizes of domes, "the various layers of Paradise" to the top-most central dome, whose calligraphy presents an interlocked pattern with a central abstract pattern. This is very similar to the Sanguzsko carpets' interlocked dragons or Sun Gate through with "stands the throne of God."[35]

No precise historical link between the carpets' symbolism and that of the mosque can be proved, but the analogy between them is clear. More exact information about the original rugs found in Süleymaniye would be of great value here; but given the information available, this horizontal and vertical interpretation of the Way seems quite likely.[36]

The gate design (Plate 12) may well have its origin in the ancient Near East. Goldman, in connection with Judaic architecture, notes the slow "transformation of a building with altars on its roof into an altar."[32]

Plate 12

Main gate of Süleymaniye



In speaking of the Beth-Alpha mosaic (Plate 13), he says that:

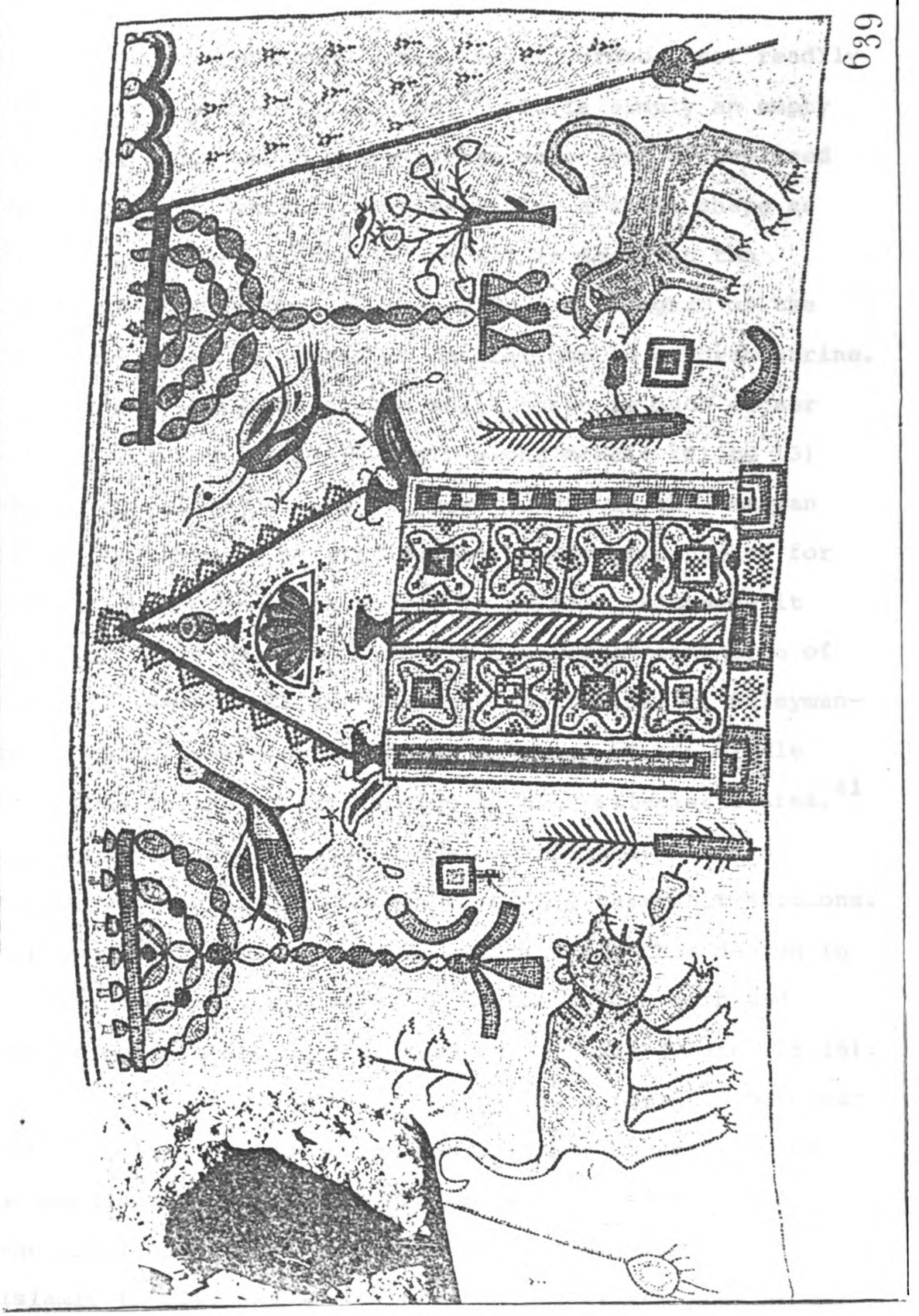
> To return, finally, to the portal depicted in the Beth-Alpha mosaic, we find that the oversize, hornlike acroteria closely resemble those of the altar shrines under discussion, suggesting that the altar motif may well form a significant part of the iconographical background for the synagogue 'shrine.'[38]

At the gate to Süleymaniye, it is interesting to see again the door surmounted by what could be an abstract set of horns. Could this gate then not act as a sort of symbol of the altar-like quality of the whole? The gate concept has been known to function this way in the Ottoman secular world where the symbolic concept of the door-porte-kapi as the symbol of the whole is one embedded in the culture of Ottoman Turkey.[39] At Süleymaniye the gate connotes the holiness of the building and its total symbolic function as an entry to Paradise.

It is interesting to see how the Ottomans have taken ideas from past religious traditions for their structures. This is something for which they undoubtedly felt a need because the Koran did not furnish them with a ready-made model. Nowhere does the borrowing seem more true than in the case of the mihrab. The mihrab does not seem to have played a particularly important role in early Islam and is really not necessary since the kible wall already indicates the direction of Mecca. As Grabar

Plate 13

Beth-Alpha mosaic



639

pointed out, it was many times, as at Cordoba, not readily visible from the entire mosque.[40] It is simply an empty niche which one could characterize as a sort of stylized shell shape or design. Interestingly, a shell shape as in Roman statuary niches (Plate 11) is found in the Cordoba Mosque (plate 12) and in Cosmas' diagram of the universe (Plate 10) based on decorations in a Torah shrine. Stylistically, Süleymaniye's shell shape is much closer to the Torah shrine of the Beth-Alpha mosaic (Plate 13) and to the niche for the Colossal Buddha in the Bamiyan Caves, Afghanistan (Plate 14), both honorific niches for a religiously important object or symbol. Although it seems probable that the symbolic meaning as some type of honorific niche remains the same, stylistically, Süleymaniye's niche is closer in design to those of the Middle East than to the ones belonging to the Hellenistic area.[41] Again perhaps similarity of design indicates Sinan's tendency to turn to Anatolian or Middle Eastern traditions. Perhaps the closest traceable ancestor for this design in Süleymaniye could be suggested in the Seljuk tomb and mosque portals and niches found in Anatolia (Plates 15-16).

The symbolism of the mihrab is a puzzle. No clear cut symbolism or source emerges. Rather it seems to be a blending of Hellenistic design and related meanings in the shell motif, and of Eastern Christian, Judaic, and Islamic thought and style. Burckhardt writes that he

Plate 14

Colossal Buddha Bamiyan Caves

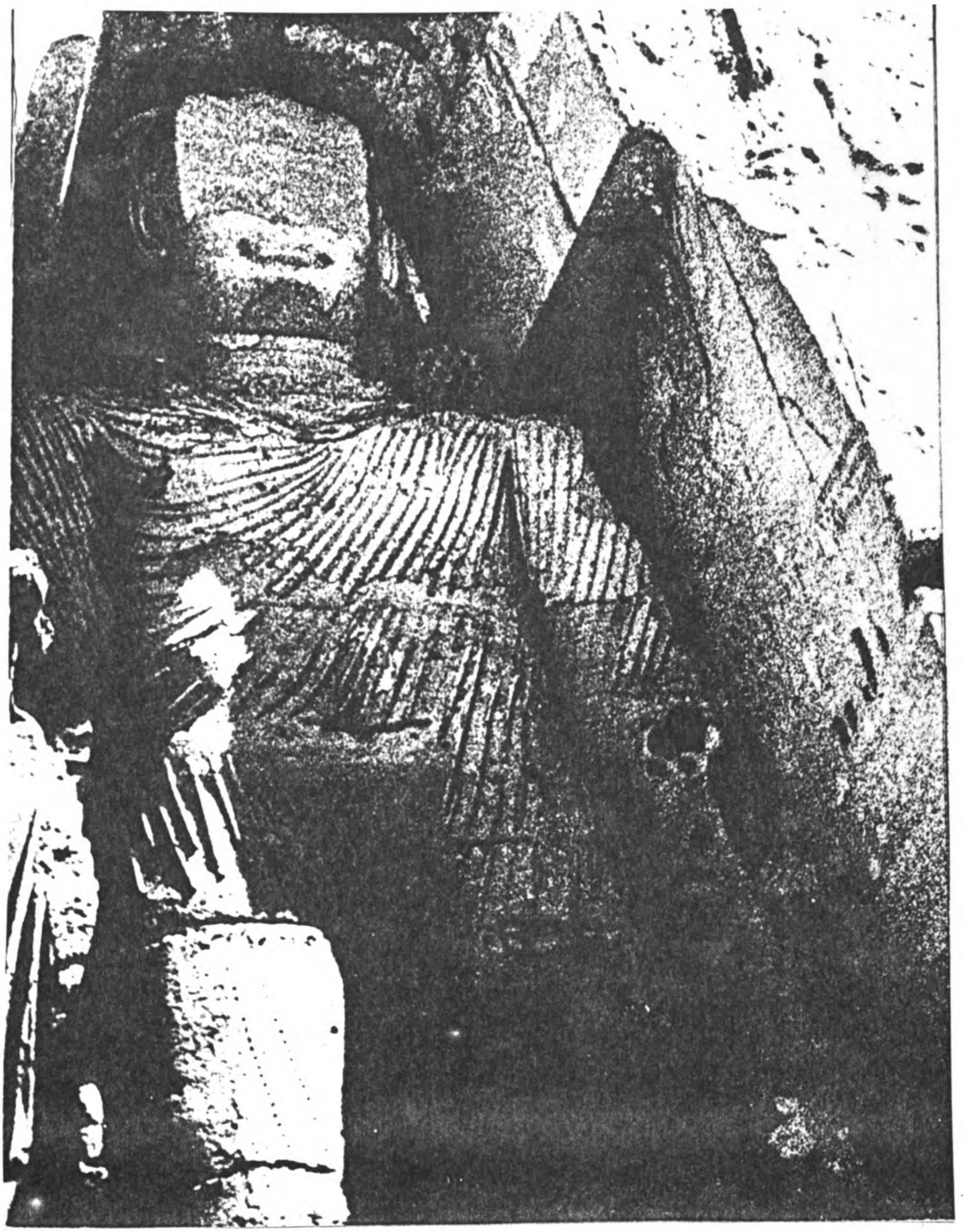


Plate 14

Plate 15

Plan of Kirsehir'de Cacabey Camii

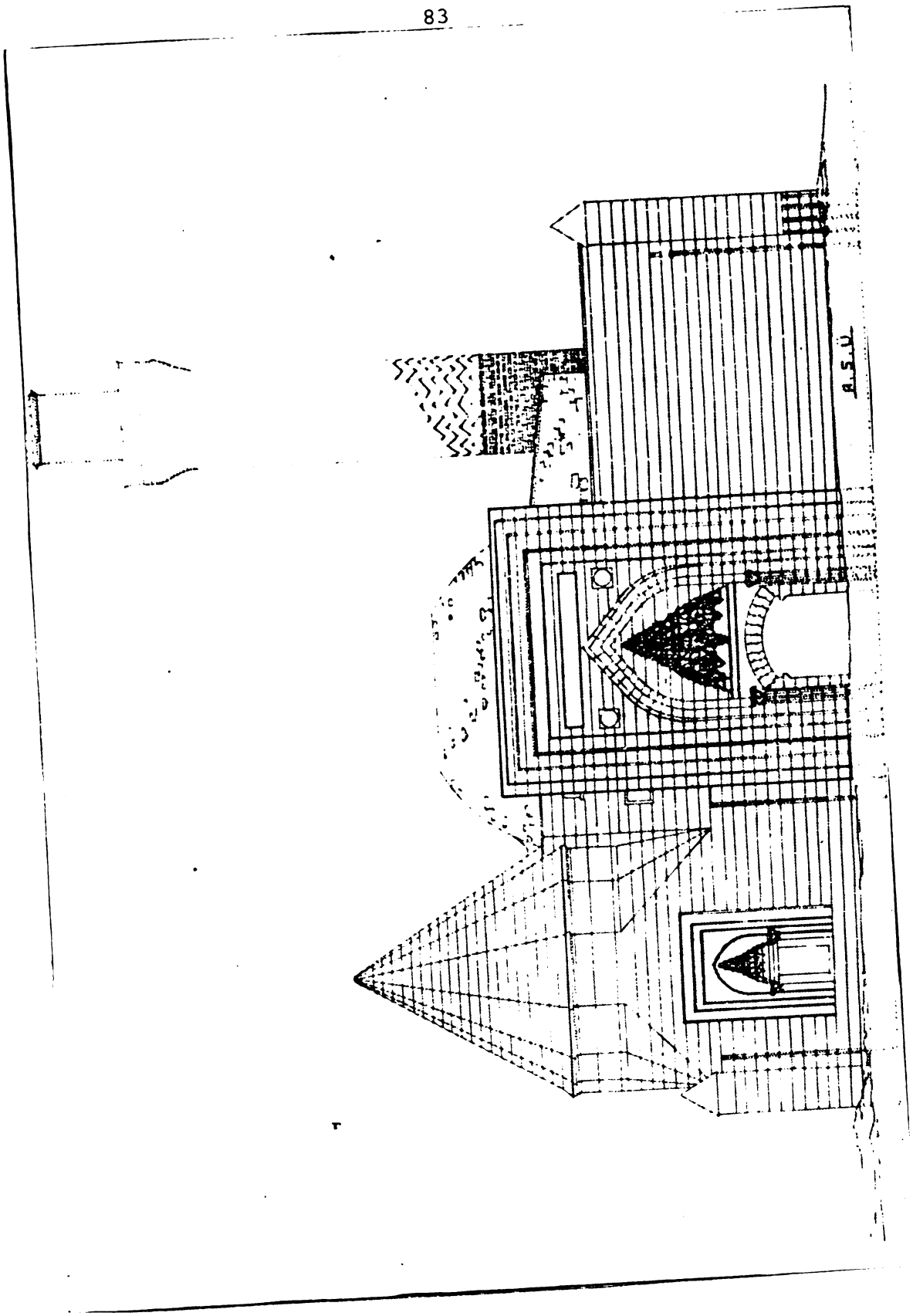

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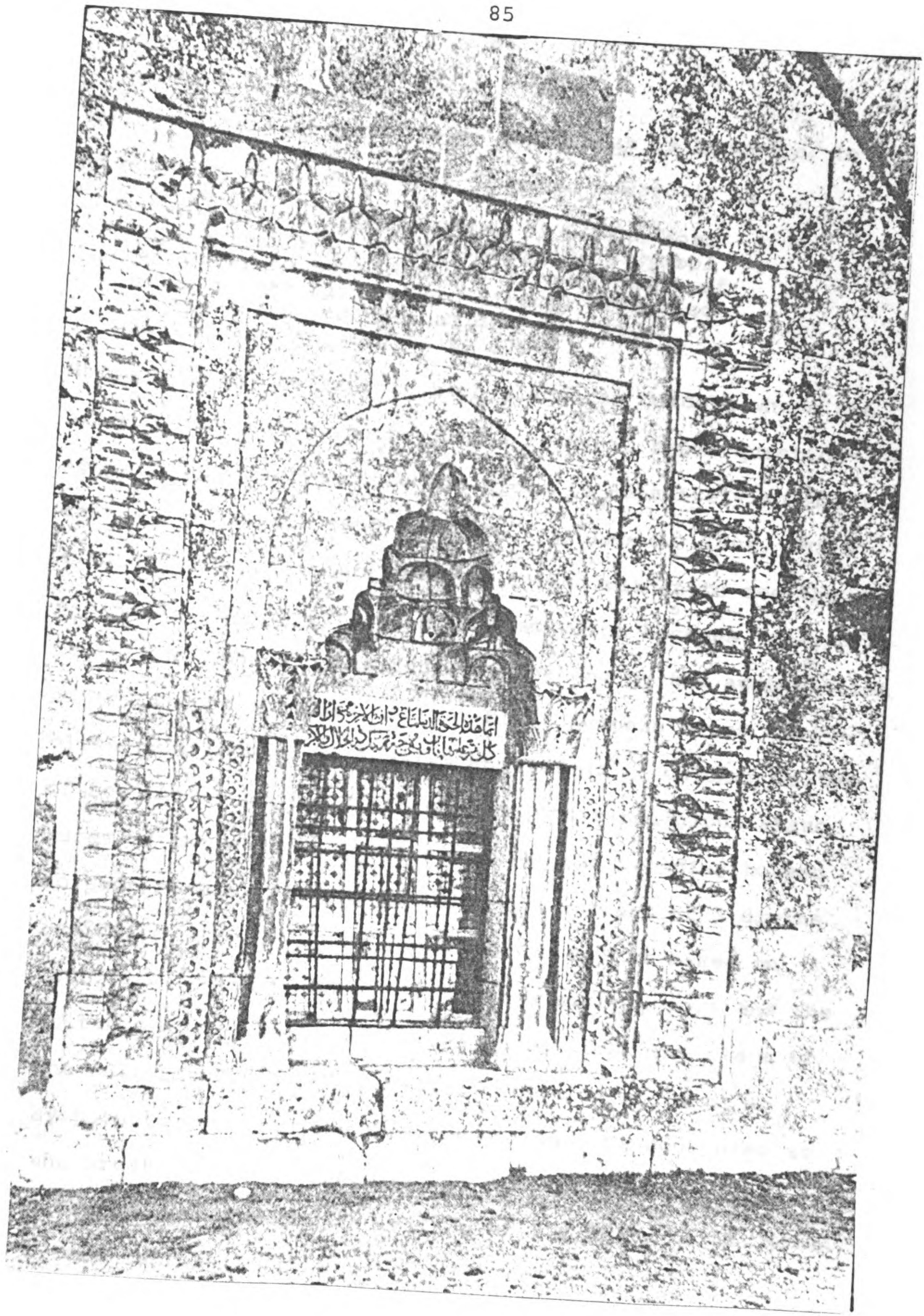
Plate 16

Window detail of Kirsehir'de
Cacabey Camii



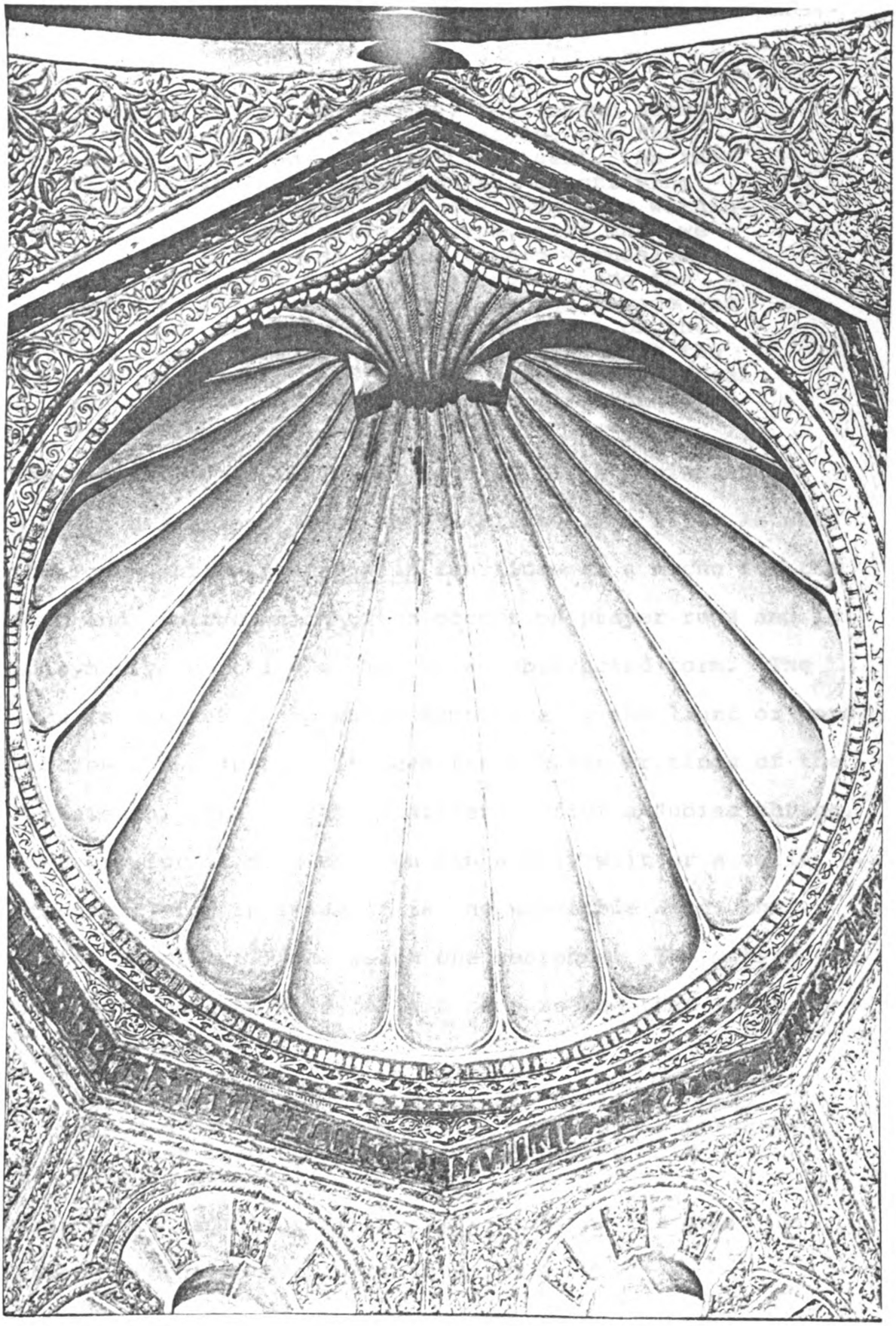
feels the primary function of the mihrab is acoustic, to re-echo the words of prayer directed toward it by

> virtue of its reverberation of Divine Word during Prayer . . . the mihrab is a symbol of the Presence of God . . . the miracle of Islam is the Divine Word directly revealed in the Koran and 'actualized' by ritual recitation.[42] (See Plate 17)

While this may be true in such places as Cordoba where the niche is virtually another small room, it seems questionable in Süleymaniye where the niche is relatively so small that a significant echo is quite improbable. Thus, while finding this point interesting, I tend rather to see the mihrab as a pot-pourri of symbolism which becomes truly Islamic but which gains depth of meaning by the accumulation of traditions attached to it. First Goitein notes the close relationship of Judaism and Islam.[43] Goldman writes of how the synagogue differed from other religious structures of the ancient world since (1) the building housed no cult statue, (2) the building did not act as a divine residence, and (3) it incorporated no ritual based on sacrifice. "Here YWWH could have no earthly form and the writings of the Pentateuch (the Torah) took the place of the cult image."[44] This Judaic tradition would be a sympathetic one for the Muslims who saw the beginning as the Breath of the Compassionate, the Word, the Divine Essence. Goodenough, in writing of old Jewish coins notes a Torah shrine:

Plate 17

Detail of Cordoba *mihrab*



> Standing within the facade, the design seems to me to represent not the Temple, but the sanctuary of Judaism, the Law itself. As the Torah shrine was put within the sanctifying facade in synagogues, so it stands here within the facade. In the early synagogues that we know the facade was turned toward Jerusalem, and worship was directed through it and the Torah to Jerusalem and God. As the facade was put upon the synagogue, so it was put on the coins to represent, with the shrine, what the Jews were madly revolting to protect, the Torah and the Covenant and the Jewish life the Torah epitomised.[45]

The similarity in design of several Torah shrines and mihrabs has already been noted (Plates 13 & 18). As with the Torah shrine, the mihrab functions as a niche for the Word and a niche which often occurs on prayer rugs and in Süleymaniye contains a lamp in an abstracted form. The lamp is the vessel by which symbolically the light or word becomes known just as it does through the writings of the Pentateuch. The mihrab is different from a Judiac shrine, however, for it does not contain a holy writ or a veil. It cannot, for in Islam it is the unseeable Word, the Divine Intellect[46] for which one searches. The mihrab does not contain veils for the same reason that it is fully lighted;

> Unlike the rulers of the world. He [God] opens the door and lifts the veil and gives His servants to enter into confidential intercourse with him through prayer.[47]

Grabar also admits that the mihrab may have a possible Jewish prototype but turns to Rome:

Plate 18

Examples of Greco-Roman Torah Shrine motifs

> But a more general explanation seems to me preferable, for the concave niche or the simple arch on two columns were one of the ubiquitous settings for an honored image throughout the classical world. Early Islam itself used the theme on some of its coins.[48]

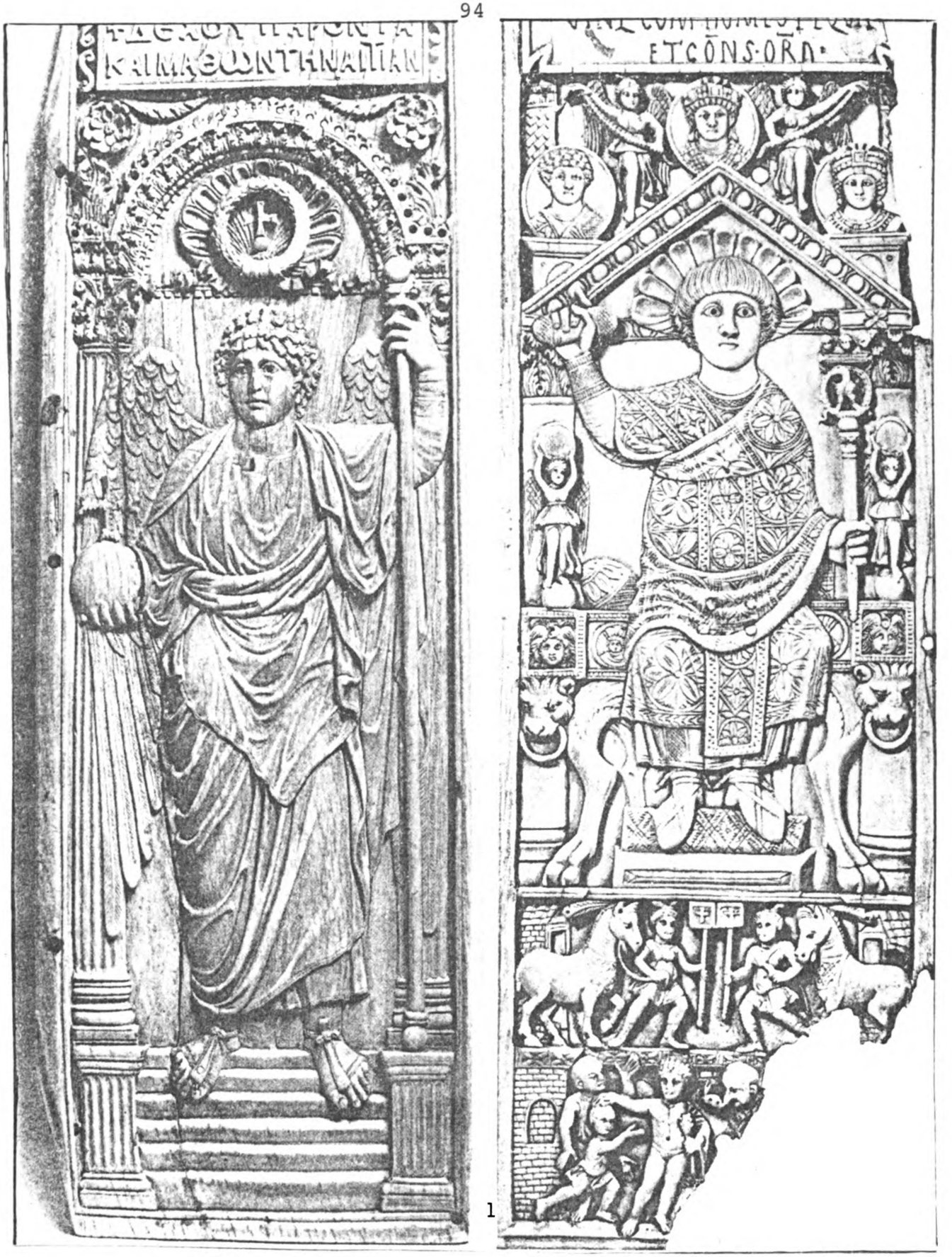
While this statement may be quite true, the connection of Süleymaniye's mihrab and the honorific niche of the kind used in Roman palaces, which I have mentioned earlier, is more complex (Plates 19 & 20). Commonly accepted among Byzantine scholars is the fact that this Imperial imagery is often inherently religious or else transferred to religious symbolism, and that in the apses--"an honorific niche" of the Byzantine churches, Mary is often portrayed with Christ on her lap (Plate 21) and given the epithet of the Throne of Wisdom--the passive element who received the Word incarnate in Christ. The throne-honorific niche symbol can be applied also to the Koranic Throne idea.[49] Mystics such as Abu Yazid Tayfur Al-Bistami called Bayazid Bistami (c. 261/875) had written:

> I thought that I had arrived at the very Throne of God and I said to it: 'O Throne, they tell us that God rests upon thee.' 'O Bayazid,' replied the Throne, 'we are told here that he dwells in the humble heart.'[50]

Most interestingly for the present discussion, a link between Byzantine Christianity and Islam would seem suggested in Süleymaniye. Evliya Celebi records that in Süleymaniye the inscription "over the semi-dome of the mihrab . . .

Left: St. Michael. Leaf of an ivory diptych. Constantinople, 519-27.

Right: Leaf of the Consular diptych of Flavius Anastasius. Constantinople, 517.



1

Plate 20

Missorium of Theodosius

Plate 21

Madonna Enthroned mosaic,
Apse Hagia Sophia

(reads) 'Whenever Zakariyya went into the Chamber (mihrab) to her.'"[51] This refers to the third Surah of the Koran, verse thirty-two, which tells of the immaculate conception of Mary and following this the conception and birth of Jesus. It is an inscription which only appears in sixteenth century Ottoman mosques. F. Schuon points out, in discussing similarities in religions, that:

> In a certain respect the Virgin and the Prophet 'incarnate' the passive or 'feminime' aspect--or pole--of universal Existence . . . On the other hand, there is also an important connection between the invocation of the Divine Name and the birth of Christ: in the first case the Word issues from the mouth of man; in the second case it issues from the Virgin. This comparison brings to light the symbolical analogy between speech and childbirth. It results from this analogy that the mouth of one who invokes God is identical with the Virgin (Virgo genetrix) 'virginity' is therefore an indispensable attribute of the mouth of the spiritual man.[52]

Here the Virgin is paralleled by Mohammed who is also a virgin in that he was illiterate, pure of human knowledge and passive in that he "receives" the word of God. At the same time he is the lamp through which the light of God shines just as on a lower scale each human being is a lamp to transmit the Word. Mohammed acts in the passive role, which is the Virgin's in Eastern Christianity, as well as in the role of Christ's humanity. This appears to be an instance where an architectural motif embodies a particular and specific Islamic meaning, i.e., the honorific niche or recepticle of the Word as received by

the prophet; at the same time this motif continues to operate in a similar and related way for the Christians with whom it originated, i.e., as the honorific niche for the Word incarnate in Christ through the Virgin.[53] The connection seems particularly significant as one more aspect of the "Byzantine mirage in the Arab mirror" in Süleymaniye.

The mihrab also functions symbolically as a door or portal. This idea seems plausible when one remembers the identical designs of the gate, portal and mihrab. On this subject, Al Ghazali (d. 1111) writes, "that the heart has two gates, one opening outwards, which is that of the senses, and one opening inwards towards the divine world, which is the heart and which is the gate whereby the heart receives inspiration and revelation."[54] Here, as well as in the dome's calligraphy, is the suggestion of the sky door through which the believer reaches the Throne. To be taken into account here is Mahmud 'Ali-Ghul's statement that etymologically midhgan was almost identical to mihrab, which can mean masjid (teaching place), musala, or even "burial place in the shape of a portico, place for prayers and services for the dead."[55] In an excellent article by Geza Fehervari, the point is made that mihrab designs often appear on tombstones and were perhaps transmitted to them by means of flat mihrabs.[56] In the Persian marble tombstone of Mahmud

dated 753/1352 in the Metropolitan Museum (Plate 22), Surah three again appears around the arch as well as Surah 112:

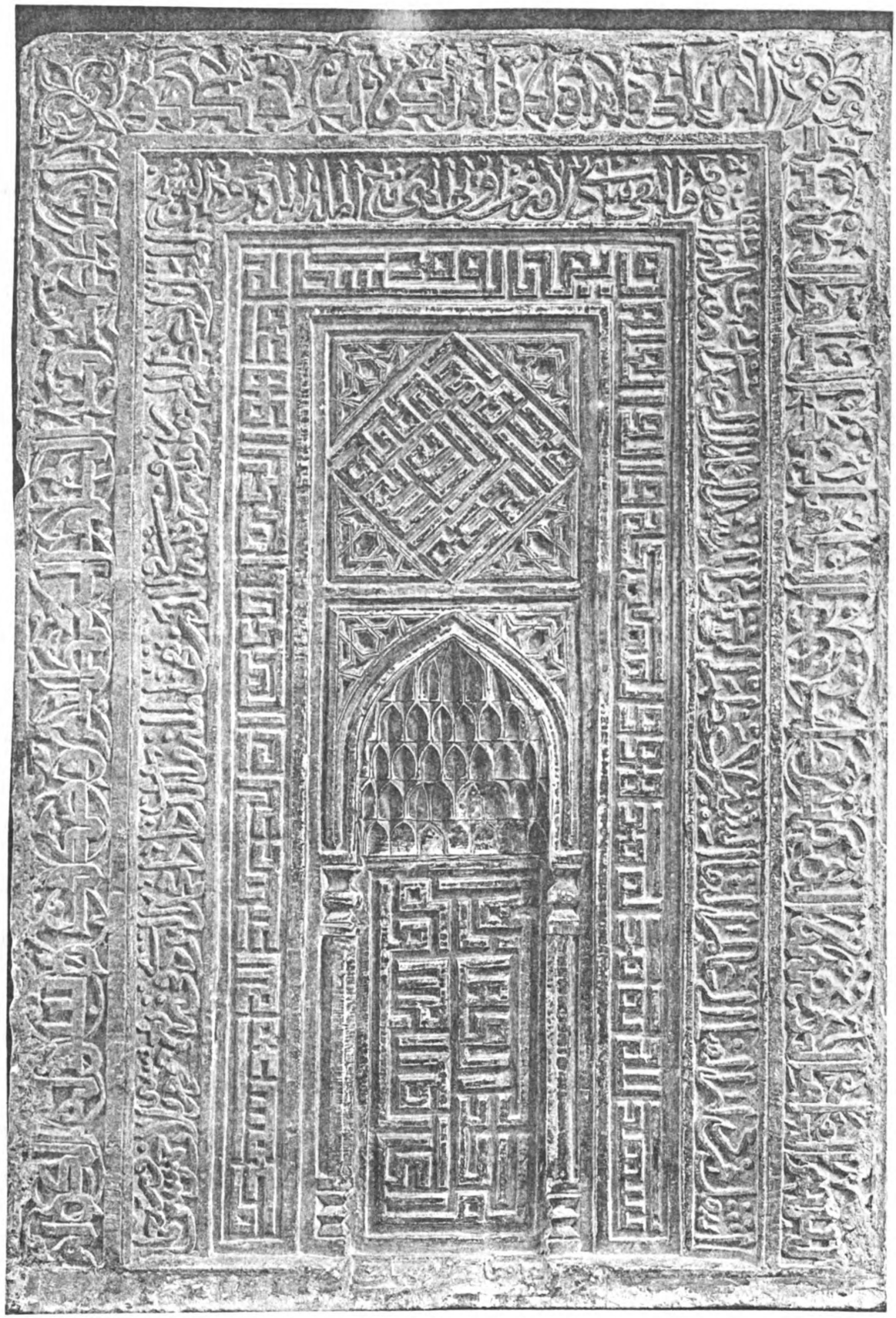
> In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate
> Say: 'He is God, One
> God the Everlasting Refuge
> Who has not begotten and has not been begotten
> and equal to him is not anyone.[57]

Here then it seems even clearer that the idea of the revelation of the Word through Mohammed and his Way is suggested, again with the overtones of a Byzantine Christian tradition signified by the presence of Surah three. But it could also be suggested that both function as doorways. It is through physical death that good Muslims go to one of their heavens; it is by the death of things worldly and turning to things spiritual, i.e., in the direction of the mihrab and God that a Muslim passes to the greater reality and knows God.[58]

Finally, in speaking of the decoration of the mihrab, one element remains unexplained; the shell design. While there are early Christian, Byzantine and Judaic forerunners all deriving ultimately from classical antiquity, the exact meaning of the shell is unclear. One suggestion is that the shell shape is connected with the birth of the Goddess Venus, and symbolizes birth or regeneration. How this motif was later adopted iconographically is an interesting question which remains unanswered.

Plate 22

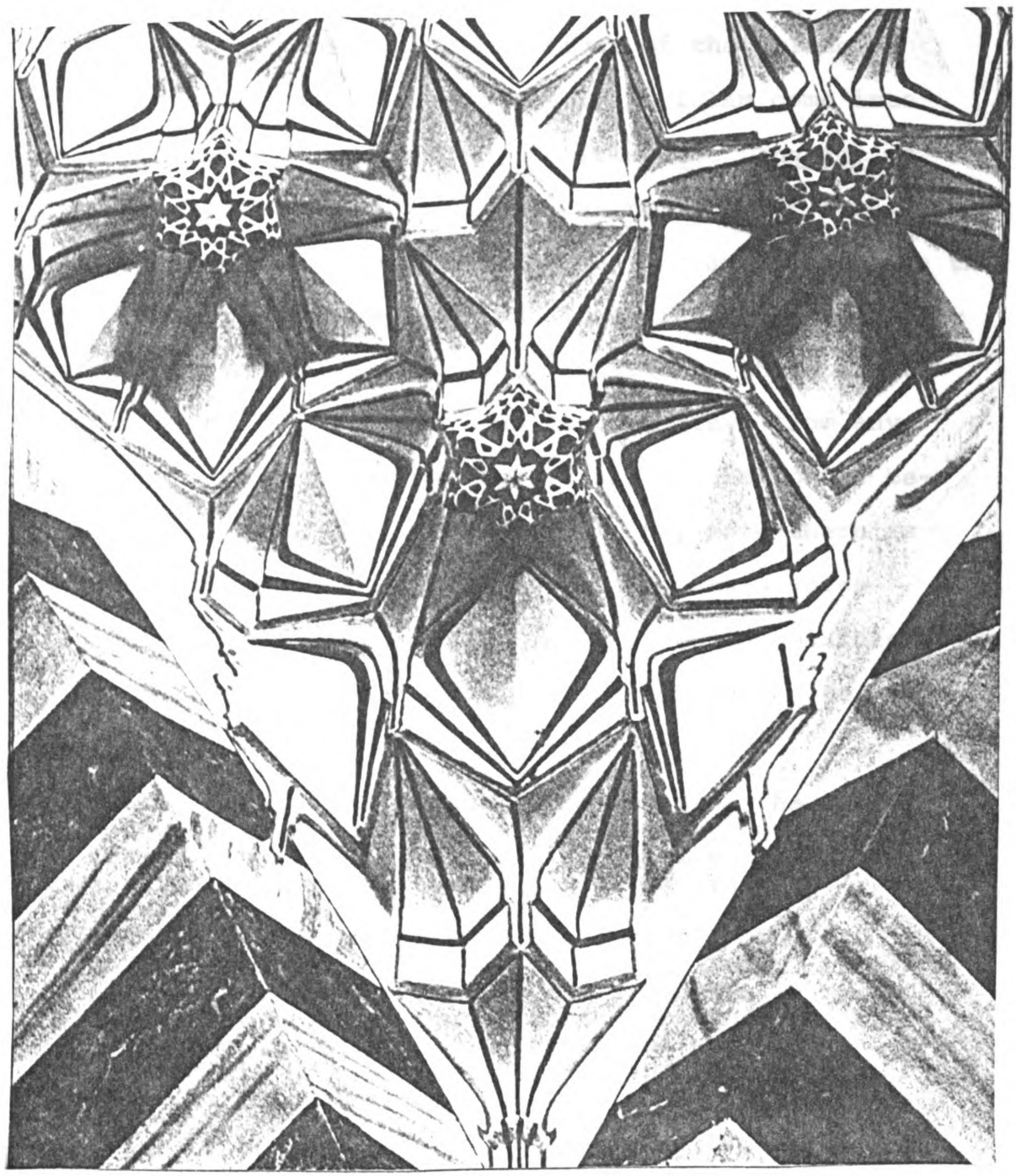
Persian tombstone c. 753/1352



The mosque furniture and decoration in Süleymaniye follow a Muslim tradition. One of the most interesting elements of the decoration is the stalactites (Plate 23) on which a deeper study might yield very interesting results. This motif has many forerunners in early Ottoman and Seljuk mosques, particularly those of Bursa. They appear at many points in Süleymaniye in the area of transition on pendentives between square and dome, and some scholars have felt that they mask this transition. They are outlined by black lines. Scholars, Vögt-Göknil among them, regard these lines as a later restoration.[59] These stalactites do not seem to serve as a mask to hide transitions but instead they act more positively. The Middle East was quite capable of making the dome to square transition smoothly. If they had not yet known how to make a smooth transition, they could have found out easily enough from the countless Byzantine churches in Istanbul. Thus, Vögt-Göknil's more positive theory, that the stalactites aid the crystalline and static feeling of the building, rendering the feeling of a frozen moment outside of time, seems closer to an explanation. In Süleymaniye, it is interesting to note their triangular shape echoing the threes of the windows. Their composite form is built by the addition of lines into a crystalline shape.[60]

Plate 23

Detail of stalactites from Süleymaniye



The stalactites are a man-made geometric system. Here the close historical connections of the sciences of astronomy, theology, and geometry in Islam come into play. In an interesting study entitled The Language of Pattern, Albarn et al. point out, as many others have, the Islamic interest in number symbolism.[61] They illustrate the generation of star patterns, and investigate the relationships of these patterns to "their polygons, three sided to nine sided."[62] A continuous line is drawn from any point on the polygon which touches all of the points before returning to the original one. They note there is a "pattern of movement by the developing stars which interrelates unlike polygons."[63] It is quite possible to see for oneself that these, as they further note, are present in the stalactites of Süleymaniye:

> We see . . . a stalactite formation from the Mosque of Suleyman I, Istanbul, showing how from a simple hexagonal grid successive projection of elements have given a complex three-dimensional structure which acts as a zone of transition between the earthly cube and the heavenly sphere of the dome. This symbolic representation did not originate in Islam: it was developed from Eastern and Western sources, including Byzantine and Hindu, and in this is representative of the synthetic character of Islamic culture.[64]

Thus, in this function of symbolic transition, there is again a confluence of sources and models within Süleymaniye. Again, the confluence takes a form here which provides imagery to fit the Islamic purposes. Albarn et al. write that:

> The characteristics of nature Ibn Sina described as the hot and moist and the cold and dry. He constructed a model of concentric spherical development away from the amalgam (the source, the whole, the center), and noted the gradual lessening of the hot and moist (as the movement became less) and the increasing of the cold and dry. He saw natural forms echoing this model. The essence, thinly disposed in stones and crystals (being cold and dry and therefore substantially inanimate) developed intensity towards the organic (which is hot and moist, and therefore animate, i.e. generating life) the nearer to the original source it becomes. The Earth he saw as having fallen through successive levels, away from the source and having cooled down in the process, until the mineral solids coalesced at the lower level.
>
> Unfortunately when we read astrological symbols or see early diagrams of the humours we may fail to reach the underlying deduction, which at that time could only be expressed in such terms. When Ibn Sina uses the circle or square it is a key to his vision of the cosmos: the Circle expresses a continuum of movement and is therefore the most perfect of forms; the square is rigid, earthbound and therefore cold, but could nevertheless return through the layers of development back to the circle via the pentagon and expanding polygons . . .[65]

This information would seem then to return to the original point of similarity of these stalactites to crystalline forms. Now the idea must expand to an added sense of depth and the realization that the triangles formed by these line extensions are the transitory shapes between a square and a circle. As a final point in support of the idea, the mathematician H. S. M. Coxeter has remarked that the Moors had "already made use of all 17 crystallographic groups of symmetrical structures subsequently established by E. S. Fedorov in 1891."[66]

In short, these seem to be significant and meaningful patterns which would be worthy of further study and suggest that the meaning of the stalactites at Süleymaniye is symbolically a transition between earthly and heavenly thoughts and, conversely, they are indicative of the transmission of heavenly truths to earth.

But perhaps the most important of all the decoration of the mosque is the calligraphy. Ettinghausen has gone so far as to say that: "Writing was the vehicle of the Koran, the basis of the whole religion and civilization."[67] While the exact translation of several of the inscriptions has already been mentioned, the other aspects of the calligraphy should also be kept in mind.

Sir Thomas Arnold refers his readers to the fourteenth century writer Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Amuli whose two-volume work on modern Islamic sciences (literary, legal, mystic and conversational) and ancient sciences (philosophy, mathematics and physics) contains this section on calligraphy:

> The art of writing is an honourable one and a soul-nourishing accomplishment; as a manual attainment it is always elegant . . . it is respected in every land; . . . being always held to be of a high rank and dignity . . . The Prophet (peace be upon him!) said: 'Beauty of handwriting is incumbent upon you, for it is one of the keys of man's daily bread.' A wise man has said: 'Writing is a spiritual geometry, wrought by a material instrument.' And another has said: 'Writing is the offspring of thought, the lamp of remembrance, the tongue of him that

> is far off, and the life of him whose age has been blotted out.'[68]

The characteristics of "spiritual geometry," the "lamp of remembrance" and "the offspring of thought" are important to the motifs and meanings suggested in this mosque. As Goodwin notes in the pendentives of Süleymaniye, the texts seem "transformed into flowers with sixteen petals and the letters spring and cavort with great vitality." In the dome they "radiate like rays from a sun disc transformed into Arabesques."[69] Here the number of petals could interestingly be reduced by cabalistic reduction, as detailed by Albarn et al.,[70] from sixteen to seven, which is the center of the Vedic square, a multiplication square that acts as a cosmogram. It had been integrated into Muslim thought from North India c. 770 A.D. It is also the number of the heavens and spheres in Muslim thought and of the number of the "mother" verses of the Koran (Refer to Footnote 20 in this chapter). The flower pattern is echoed in the flowers of the tiles which surround the mihrab area.

Turning to the tiles, it is quite clear that they were influenced by Persian art and in many cases made by Persian hands. The wholesale resettlement of the people from Tabriz in the time of Selim I has been mentioned earlier; kilns in Iznik provided the tiles for Süleymaniye,[71] the first mosque in which Sinan used tiles to a great degree

(he would later turn Rustem Pasha Camii into a veritable tile museum). Süleymaniye tiles are confined, however, to the mihrab area, they act as an aid to meditation.

The subject matter of the tiles is presented in an open--not closed--pattern (Plate 7) with a curious asymmetry. Massignon has noted that this pattern encourages one to move beyond the Pythagorean-Greek view of completeness in the contemplation of beauty to a sense of incompleteness or multiplicity of the present leading to a completeness of the whole, of Allah the eternal. It is tempting to read in the flowers the symbolism not only of a Paradise garden always associated with mosques and found on prayer rugs,[72] but also as the symbol of the souls of men[73]--a symbolism already recorded as used by Cappodician monks whose churches in Byzantine times seem to have been architecturally closely connected with Constantinople.[74] It is known that by the seventeenth century, when Sufism was driven underground in Persia, sunbirds and other symbols were reduced to flowers on the carpets.[75] To my knowledge there is no proof to link these associations to Islamic thought at this time or to the precise symbolism current at that time. The likelihood nevertheless of such a connection seems strong.

The arabesque patterns of these flowers suggest yet again the multiplicity of that which is below, and as Adalan and Bakthiar see them, the rhythm "manifest

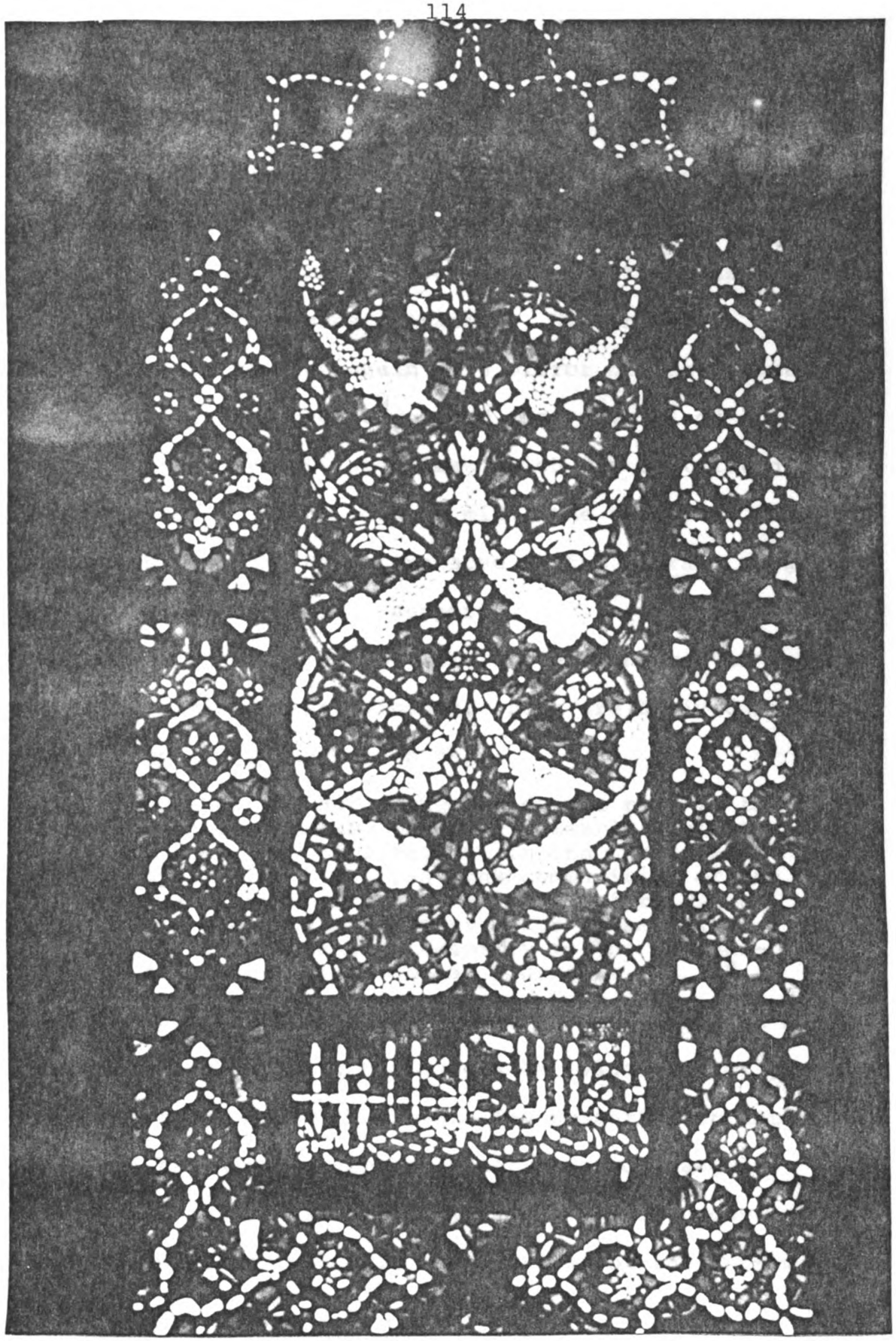
time--time in the sense that the motifs are given in temporal succession as waves, or as a combination of flux and cycle."[76]

The stained glass by Sarhoş Ibrahim, appears, like the tiles, only in the mihrab area. Goodwin cites, and also questions, a legend that the two rose windows came from Baghdad. The windows today (Plate 24) follow the original pattern although the plaster ribs have decayed and have been replaced. They are sheltered by bull's eye lights set in lead on the exterior.[77] Precise reasons for this lighting are not clear. Whether the placement of this glass was influenced in any way by the Turks turning to western art of stained glass--as they certainly did at times--and thus to Gothic is unproven. It seems doubtful that there was direct influence from Gothic rose windows, for not only is the plaster setting technique different, but the Gothic windows appear on the facades of the churches rather than over the "apse" as at Süleymaniye.

The stained glass serves functionally to emphasize the mihrab area in an emotionally appealing way. The softened and colored light alleviates some of the severity of the stark white Proconnesian marble of the mimber and mihrab. Also, it seems to add another aspect to the already complex light iconography by carrying a paradisiacal suggestion when considered in conjunction with the

Plate 24

Detail of stained glass from Süleymaniye



tiles and one may surmise, prayer rugs which were probably originally planned for the floor. The Arabesque floral designs certainly seem to suggest a multiplicity of time, here penetrated by the light of the Word of God as it emanates from the highest Paradise. Historically, the glass could serve once again as a mirror of the Byzantine tradition. It has been suggested that several of Justinian's churches had stained glass which was restricted to the apse area. With this in mind, the theory of the relationship of the Byzantine apse to the mihrab, suggested earlier, finds additional support.

Two other quite specific suggestions can be made for these stained glass windows. Both are derived from Joseph Campbell's suggestion that:

> The roots of the Sufi movement do not rest in the Koran, where Mohammed comes out clearly against the monastic way of life, but in the Christian Monophysite and Nestorian monk communities of the desert and, beyond those, their Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain models farther east. For Islam, like Judaism, is oriented principally to the furtherance of a sanctified secular consensus . . .[79]

The first possibility is that these windows could be connected in some way with the angels of Islam who act as intecessors for man with Allah. The Byzantine Christian tradition had adopted similar teachings about angels. These teachings appear in the works of Pseudo Dionysius the Aeropagite (ca. 500 A.D.) who writes of the angels:

> The Celestial Intelligences are constituted in three triads, forming nine orders, whose names represent the Divine Attributes which they manifest to all below them.
>
> They have also an inner relation with every human soul, for through their ministrations the aspiring soul becomes liberated from material bondage, receives a knowledge of its own purpose and is enabled to live its true life and ultimately to attain to the full its Divine Likeness.
>
> The first triad, the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones, are nearest to the Godhead, 'ever dwelling in the vestibule of Divinity' . . .
>
> The Thrones, 'Divine Seats,' make manifest the purifying power of Providence which wholly penetrates the consciousness. Through them the soul is uplifted to the Divine and becomes established in the constancy of divine service.[80]

Dionysius goes on to speak of the angels and says of them that it is by means of their powers that the Word of God "shows . . . forth to us in the measure of the mystical receptivity of each one who is inspired by the divine Illumination."[81] He further notes their modes of depiction:

> The Scriptures also depict them as a cloud, showing by this that these holy Intelligences are filled in a supermundane manner with the hidden Light, receiving the first revelation without undue glorying, and transmitting it with abundant brightness to the lower Orders as a secondary, proportionate illumination; and further, that they possess generating, life giving, increasing and perfecting powers by reason of their intelligible out-pourings, as of showers quickening the receptive womb of earth by fertilizing rains for life-giving travail.
>
> The Scriptures also liken the Celestial Beings to brass and electron an alloy of silver and gold, and many coloured jewels. . . . Again of the many coloured varieties of stones, the white represents that which is luminous, and the red corresponds to fire, yellow to gold, and green to youth and vigour. Thus

> corresponding to each figure you will find a mystical interpretation which relates these symbolical images to the things above.[82]

Dionysius then cites their symbolic connections with wheels:

> We must now consider the representations of the Celestial Beings in connection with rivers and wheels and chariots. . . .
>
> The chariots symbolize the conjoined fellowship of those of the same (angelic) order; the winged wheels, ever moving onward, never turning back or going aside, denote the power of their progressive energy on a straight and direct path in which all their intellectual revolutions are supermundanely guided upon that straight and unswerving course.
>
> The figure of the spiritual wheels can also have another mystical meaning . . . Gel is the name given to them which in the Hebrew tongue means revolutions and revelations . . .[83]

These meanings seem to appear again in Islam where the angels are also important as intercessors. Lane quite specifically notes that at certain parts in his prayers, a believer, looking over his right shoulder says, "Peace be on you and the mercy of God" and then repeats this over his left shoulder. These are his salutations to his guardian angels who are said to watch over each believer and note his actions.[84] These angels are closer to God than man, containing more light and acting as intercessors for man. Therefore a parallel to the symbolic Christian connection of angels within wheels of light and the Muslim angels and light seems possible. This is reinforced when one considers the placement of the mosque windows by the mihrab, the wheel-like shape of

the two rose windows, and the presence of the calligraphy--the revelation of the Word of God--which exists within the pattern and through which the light passes to the worshipper.

More interesting, however, is the possibility of a connection between the entire area--mihrab, tiles and windows--and the Byzantine symbolism of Mary as the Throne of Wisdom, the holder of the Word Incarnate. This area could well serve as a reflection of the Byzantine symbolism of the Enthroned Madonna in apse mosaics.

As has been stated, it seems probable that the mihrab area reflects the passive element, i.e., Mohammed as the vessel which transmits the Word of God. It is of interest to note Campbell's comment that the Islamic world revered Fatima, Mohammed's daughter and that, in certain areas:

> . . . her veneration goes to such lengths that she is even termed the 'Mother of her Father,' 'Source of the Sun,' and given a masculine name, Fatir, signifying 'Creator,' the numerical value of the letters of which--290--is the same as that of Maryam, Mary, the mother of Jesus. For as daughter, wife, and mother, she personifies the center of the genealogical mystery; and at least one Shi'a poet has compared her to the Burning Bush of Moses; to the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, where the Prophet is supposed to have experienced his Heavenly Journey; and to the Night of Power, when the Angel of Destiny, Gabriel, descending to earth, brought forgiveness to mankind.[85]

He further notes that in at least one Shi'ite Persian text, the Omm-al-Kitab, there is the following narration:

> When God concluded with men a covenant at the time of his creation of the material world, they prayed him to show them Paradise. He showed them, thereupon, a being ornamented with a million varicolored shimmering lights, who sat upon a throne, head crowned, rings in the ears, and a drawn sword at the girdle. The radiating rays illuminated the whole garden; and when the men then asked who this was, they were told it was the form of Fatima as she appears in Paradise: the crown was Mohammed; the earrings, Hasan and Husain; the sword was Ali; and her throne, the Seat of Dominion, was the resting place of God, the Most High.[86]

The presence of some Shi'ite thought in the Bektasi orders has already been noted by Hamilton Gibb. If this particular idea of Fatima could be connected with Ottoman Muslim thought at the time of Süleymaniye--built for the son of Selim who had brought to Istanbul the relics of the Prophet--it would be a good explanation for not only the "Enthroned Madonna" elements within the prayer niche and the paradisiacal elements of the tiles but especially for the presence of the stained glass in this "throne area" where the "varicolored shimmering lights" of the "being enthroned" literally "illumined the whole garden"--the garden of Paradise, "the throne," the resting place of "God the Most High." The Fatima-Mary image would function as a unifying symbol, drawing together several strands of thought consistent with Muslim iconography and with historically understood symbols.

Lastly, the exact role of the prayer rugs is unclear. Süleymaniye has only red carpeting today, and

precise information about the sixteenth century is lacking. Assuming prayer rugs were present (Goodwin states they are in the adjoining museum), their role in this cosmic imagery is not clear. Some probably bore zodiacal signs, as do later rugs, but it is unclear as to whether the signs symbolize the earth in its position on the floor, or as Lehmann suggests with floor mosaics, they mirror the heavenly symbolism above--a concept in keeping with the light on all levels discussed earlier and the Islamic vision of the world of "reality" acting as a mirror for the greater reality of Allah. Again, some contain a mihrab, with a lamp woven in the place where one's head touches during the prostration. This would seem to mirror the Gate of the Word, the Sun Gate, the Way to Paradise directly open to each man through the Word of the prophet and Islam (whose meaning is literally submission). The symbolic possibilities are intriguing but unsolved. Originally, Goodwin notes, rush tiles simply covered the red, herringbone pattern tiled floor of Sinan.[87]

FOOTNOTES

[1]Since it seems important to this discussion but perhaps too long to include in this thesis, I refer the reader to a description of a Muslim's ablutions and the prayer service to be found in Lane, op. cit.

[2]H. A. R. Gibb, Mohammedanism, New York, 1962, p. 37.

[3]Massignon, op. cit., p. 50.

[4]K. Burrill, "From Gazi State to Republic: A Changing Scene for Turkish Artists and Men of Letters," Studies in Art and Literature of the Near East in Honor of Richard Ettinghausen, ed. P. Chelkowski, N.Y., 1974, p. 263: "In spite of the official establishment of Sunni orthodoxy as the state religion, the inclination of a large proportion of Turks has been toward the less austere, and to them more satisfying beliefs and ritual of the mystic orders (some of which had very strong Shiite influences). At the same time within Turkish orthodoxy itself there has been considerable compromise in order to hold the allegiance of the greatest possible number of Muslims. Throughout the course of Ottoman history there has existed this religious dichotomy--official and popular Islam--reflections of which are very pronounced in art and literature."

[5]H. A. R. Gibb, op. cit., pp. 159-160.

[6]A. S. Tritton, Islam, London, 1966, pp. 106-107.

[7]N. Ardalan and L. Bakhtiar, The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture, Chicago, 1973, p. 5.

[8]H. A. R. Gibb, op. cit., p. 144.

[9]T. J. de Boer, The History of the Philosophy of Islam, London, 1903, pp. 58-59.

[10]O. A. K. Coomaraswamy, Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art, N.Y., 1956, p. 32.

[11]S. H. Nasr, Sufi Essays, Albany, 1972, pp. 31, 43.

[12]Massignon, op. cit., p. 49.

[13]Ibid., p. 149. On the arabesque he also says that "L'arabesque est une espece de negation indefinie des formes goemetrique fermée, pour nous empêcher de contempler, comme le faisait le geometre grec, la beauté du cercle en lui-même, la beauté du polygone en lui-même."

[14]S. H. Nasr, Science and Civilization in Islam, Cambridge, Mass., pp. 90-91. "After the Mongol invasion, however, the Sufi centers became in an ever more outward manner, institutions of learning. (Here) in addition to the esoteric sciences and gnosis, the branches of the arts and sciences . . . now found refuge."

[15]M. G. S. Hodgson, "Islam and Image," History of Religions, vol. 3, no. 1-2, p. 222. "But it is the most intimate realm of religion which is the life of symbolism at its fullest, just as symbolism is generally felt to be the most adequate outer expression of relation." Here he further notes the extreme richness of symbolism in Sufi literature.

[16]Adralan and Bakhtiar, op. cit., p. 9.

[17]T. Burckhardt, Sacred Art in East and West: Its Principles and Methods, London, 1967, p. 112. Ardalan and Bakhtiar also would add to this with an extensive discussion of the mandala or cosmogram form as derived from this pattern. They see it as the "reflection of the cosmos and the cosmic processes within all things, the mandala works through numbers and geometry . . . so man begins his intellectual search by relating to space. This relationship must of necessity be structured so that the intellect may function and not dissipate," op. cit., p. 31. Wolska, op. cit., pp. 114, 134-135 refers to the number four which "designe les quatre extremités du monde," which is mentioned in the Bible. She also refers to the Holy of Holies in a Jewish Temple "celle qui est à l'interieur des quatre colonnes, était interdite au prêtres, tel le ciel reserve à Dieu," Philo-Judeas, Philo, vol. I, London, 1939, p. xvii, insists on the significance of particular numbers, four being among them as a sort of inheritance of the Pythagoreans. It is noted, "He owes something to Aristotle, notably the four fold nature of causation . . ." He goes farther and says "coming now to the fourth day, Philo brings out the significance of

the number four, and points to the boons conferred on body and mind by Light, which has given rise to philosophy by drawing man's vision upward to the heavenly bodies. He sees the purposes of these in their giving light foreshadowing coming events, marking the seasons, and measuring time." Ibid., p. 3. Finally, John P. Brown, The Darvishes or Oriental Spiritualism, London, 1968, p. 47 states that the four "great elements are fire, air, earth and water . . . which are supposed to compose the body and constitute the inner faculty of comprehension." This seems equally plausible as a second level of meaning in the piers, for the Sufi saw God both without the person and within the center of the person. The piers operate as a part "model" of heaven beyond and the microcosm within carrying also the hope of understanding or revelation. As has been noted, Brown further states (p. 186) "The hall of a convent of lakia of the Bektashi Order is always a square." It will be remembered that this is the order to which Sinan belonged.

[18]S. R. Nasr, Sufi Essays, op. cit., p. 31.

[19]M. Smith, Readings from the Mystics of Islam, London, 1950, pp. 91-93. J. P. Brown, op. cit., p. 177 adds that the Shaikh instructs the Bektasi: ". . . there are 40 maqams, or seats, 360 degrees, 28 manzils (places of rest), 12 spheres [my underlining], 24 hours, 4 fasls, or chapters, 7 climes, 4 qurars, 13,000 worlds, 7 subul-i-masawi or ayats (verses called the Mother of the Koran), 7 letters, 7 fatihas, (first chapters or openings) of the Quran; all of these are called hal (dispositions) and not qal (sayings). There is but one light . . ." Interestingly, if the two half domes are counted here as one whole dome the total number of domes is twelve. Later, the temporal time, or 24-hour motif is reinforced by the presence of a clock tolling a mortal hour in each mosque. Both would seem to underline the idea of temporal multiplicity which resolves itself in the Unity of Allah. Finally, Ibn Sina's doctrine reads: "It is for the heavenly spheres, which possess no translational motion, to specify the high and low directions in an absolute sense. The center of the sphere of the cosmos is the downward direction, and its circumference the upward. Moreover, the heavens possess an east-west direction corresponding to the places of the rising and setting of the stars, and an up-and-down direction corresponding to the place of the noon day sun and the horizon of the earth, a forward and backward direction corresponding to the direction of the motion of the heavens and its opposite . . ." S. H. Nasr, Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines. Cambridge, Mass, 1964.

[20]Koran 24:35. The relationship of this as it forms a circle with a hole seems to relate strongly to such oriental forms as the Chinese jade Pis which also comes to carry connotations of heaven and to the Middle Eastern Sun Gate.

[21]Grabar, The Formation of Islamic Art, op. cit., p. 115 ff.

[22]M. Smith, op. cit., p. 89. Here Farid Al-Din Attar (c. 626/1229) writes: "The heart is the dwelling place of that which is the Essence of the universe, within the heart and soul is the very Essence of God. Like the saints, make a journey into yourself; . . . be unveiled within and behold the Essence. . . . By union, I have merged in the Unity, I am become altogether apart from all else. I am Thou and Thou art I . . ."

[23]Ibid., p. 46.

[24]Lane, op. cit., p. 71.

[25]Grabar, op. cit., pp. 115 ff.

[26]M. L. Teuber, "Sources of Ambiguity in the Prints of Maurits C. Escher," Scientific American, (July, 1974), vol. 231, no. 1, p. 102.

[27]M. Smith, op. cit., p. 53, verse 55.

[28]Koran, 1:153.

[29]Koran, 5.

[30]This concept may be an eastern one predating the Romans. Most directly Pope notes in Persia the gate is the entrance to the right and wrong ways, A. Pope, Persian Architecture: The Triumph of Form and Color, N.Y., 1965, p. 13. In Gilgamesh: A Verse Narrative, trans. Herbert Mason, N.Y., 1970, p. 34:

When Enkidu touched the gate his hand felt numb,
he enters
. . . . . .
They stood in awe at the foot/of the green mountain. Pleasure/Seemed to grow from fear of Gilgamesh./As when one comes upon a path in woods/Unvisited by men, one is drawn near/The lost and undiscovered in himself;/He was revitalized by danger./ They knew it was the path Humbaba made./ Some called the forest "hell," and others "Paradise."

This connection seems even closer to the gate concept in relation to the cosmic house. The Koran 22:25 reads: ". . . and proclaim among men the Pilgrimage,/and they shall come unto thee on foot . . ." Koran 3:90, "It is the duty of all men towards God to come to the House a pilgrim . . ."

[31]Cammann, op. cit.

[32]Ibid., p. 183.

[33]Ibid., p. 188.

[34]Ibid., p. 209.

[35]There seems to be a strongly connected tradition here also between royal and sacred imagery. Grabar, op. cit., p. 169, gives a description based on al-Khatib's History of Baghdad of the arrival of the Byzantine ambassadors at the Abbasid capital in A.D. 917. The writer tells the "number of carpets and mats of the kinds made at Jahram and Darabgird and at Ad-Dawrak was twenty-two thousand pieces; these were laid in the corridors and courts, being spread under the feet of the nobles, and the Greek Envoys walked over such carpets all the way from the limit of the new Official Gate, right to the presence of the Caliph . . ." The exact iconographical link remains unclear but seems worth deeper scrutiny since those seeking audience of the All High, Allah, in a mosque also walk on the rugs in the same way. The Sun Door idea is also recognized in connection with Asiatic art in A. Pope, "An early Ming Porcelain in Muslim Style," Aus Der Welt Der Islamischen Kunst, Berlin, 1959, pp. 356-375.

[36]Stratton, op. cit., mentions Sinan commissioned Ushak rugs which are similar in pattern to this group. He does not however give a source for this information. Goodwin, op. cit., p. 235, mentions the "old rugs" but gives no further information.

[37]B. Goldman. The Sacred Portal: A Primary Symbol in Ancient Judaic Art, Detroit, 1966, p. 133.

[38]Ibid., p. 140.

[39]The physical gate known as the Sublime Porte was the entry to the foreign Ministry Offices: it was through this that foreign ambassadors must pass to present their papers and it was by this name that the empire was

known. Topkapi Saray is literally Cannon Gate Palace and is still the palace's name, and within the palace it was through the Gate of Felicity that the sultan passed to his private quarters. The Porte du Cheikh-al-Islam was the Department of Religious Law, and so on ad infinitum. For documentation see R. Attabinen, Les caracteristiques de l'architecture Turque, Paris, 1938, pp. 74-75. I am also aware of E. B. Smith's writing on the subject which stresses the symbolic importance of the gate to the Romans. In this case, however, I feel a more direct link can be proven with the above.

[40]Grabar, op. cit., pp. 120-121.

[41]Burckhardt, op. cit., p. 119, footnote 20.

[42]Ibid., p. 117.

[43]S. D. Goitein, Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages, N.Y., 1972.

[44]B. Goldman, op. cit., p. 133.

[45]Goodenough, op. cit., p. 277.

[46]Koran 3:5, "He sent down upon thee the Book/ wherein are verses clear that are the Essence of the Book . . ."

[47]M. Smith, op. cit., p. 61. A paraphrase from Al-Ghazali, one of the most famous of all Muslim writers who wrote many treatises on Sufism.

[48]Grabar, op. cit., pp. 122-123.

[49]M. Smith, op. cit., p. 27. Koran 32:5, "God is He that created the heavens and the earth,/and what between them is, in six days/then seated Himself upon the Throne." Koran 40:15, "Exalter of the ranks is He, Possessor of the Throne." Koran 56:90, "Then if he be of those brought nigh the Throne,/there shall be repose and ease . . ."

[50]Fehervari, "Tombstone or Mihrab? A Speculation," Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum, R. Ettinghausen, ed., N.Y., 1972, p. 249. The etymology of mihrab is given by Rhodokanakis as a part of a palace, a "throne recess." In addition, Evliya, op. cit., p. 76 notes the "spirally twisted columns" to the right and left of the mihrab. These are paralleled in Old Saint Peters and could carry the insinuation of Solomon's Throne.

[51]The writer is also much in debt to Professor Priscilla Soucek of the University of Michigan who notes that this inscription occurs only in Istanbul mosques of the sixteenth century. She continues that the Arabic may be rendered as either "mihrab" or "room."

[52]F. Schuon, The Transcendent Unity of Religions. Trans. P. Townsend, N.Y., 1953, pp. 140, 188. A further relationship is made with this and the "beneficent and merciful aspect of Prakriti, namely Lakshmi (the Kwan Yin of Far Eastern tradition) . . ."

[53]The connection appears stronger when one reconsiders the Surah of Light which says "his light is as a niche wherein there is a lamp" (note the stylized lamp-like projection in Süleymaniye's niche) and Christ's "I am the light of the world." Light in both tends to take the image of transmitting light or revelation. A further tie could be suggested in Judaism. Goodenough, op. cit., p. 28 writes: "The Patriarchs advanced to the spiritual stage where they assumed the garment of light, and became the 'saviors' of Judaism, the figures through whom the divine light of the Logos revealed itself, made itself available to men. I came to see that for Philo no one Patriarch was transcendently important: Philo expressed himself in superlative terms about each." (He refers to this as "His study of 'incarnate laws.'")

[54]Ardalan and Bakhtiar, op. cit., p. 136.

[55]Fehervari, op. cit., p. 249.

[56]Ibid. Lethaby, op. cit., p. 113 says of old Chinese and Japanese Sun Gates: "They are the means of communication between living and dead, and symbolically, the portal by which the dead acquired a re-birth in a new form of existence."

[57]Fehervari, op. cit., Hannah McAlister's analysis of this stone indicates it is in the Mongol style from Iran and compares it with the portal of Masjid-i Jami of Veramin. The similarity in style to Süleymaniye's mihrab should be noted.

[58]I am indebted to Professor Molly Smith for pointing out a possible parallel in the Byzantine canon tables which she feels act as a "gateway" to the revelations found in the gospels.

[59]Vögt-Göknil, op. cit., p. 19.

[60]Paul Weiss, "One Plus One Does Not Equal Two," The Neurosciences: a Study Program Planned and Edited by Gradner C. Quarton, et al., n.d., writes in this study which links self replicating geometries to a would be cybernetic philosophy of life: ". . . whenever one is faced with static geometric regularities of patterns, he ought to look beyond them--or, rather, behind them--for the rules in the play of forces that have shaped them. In thus raising the sights from statics to dynamics, static interrelations become dynamic interactions." A sidelight to this problem is also seen in Teuber, op. cit., pp. 90-105. Here is noted, not only Escher's interest in visual perception and alternating figure and ground, but his studies of the tiles of the Alahambra. These ideas are connected to experiments on figure and ground of the Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin, Kurt Koffka's Principles of Gestalt Psychology, 1935, and the later experiments of Molly R. Harrower, a student of Koffka's. It is further noted that "Escher himself recognized the similarities of his regular subdivisions of the plane to principles of crystallography. They had been pointed out to him by his brother, B. G. Escher, Professor of geology of the University of Leyden. By that time, however, the artist had created his own figure ground patterns based on Rubin's visual analyses and the Moorish tiles of the Alhambra."

Escher notes that "the act of tracing a line is a complicated business. On either side of it, simultaneously, a recognizability takes shape. But the human eye and mind cannot be busy with two things at the same moment, and so there must be a quick and continual jumping from one side to the other . . ." Lastly, in Gerald Holton's article "On Trying to Understand Scientific Genius," The Graduate Journal, Austin, Texas, (1973), supplement, pp. 366-367, it is noted that Einstein's "desire to remove an unncessary assymetry was not frivolous or accidental, but deep and important. At stake is nothing less than finding the most economical, simple, formal principles, the barest bones of nature's frame, cleansed of everything that is ad hoc, redundant, unnecessary . . ." I am indebeted to Professor Paul Robert Duggan for calling this information to my attention, and feel that it would be an interesting alley of investigation in connection with the stalactites.

[61]This point could be developed more in view of the Muslim tendency to toy with geometric means of symbolism which is surely a human need recognized by psychologists today. K. Albarn, et al., Language of Pattern, London, 1974, p. 8.

[62]Ibid., p. 58.

[63]Ibid., p. 58.

[64]Ibid., p. 68.

[65]Ibid., p. 78.

[66]Teuber, op. cit., p. 96.

[67]Ettinghausen, op. cit., p. 122.

[68]T. W. Arnold, Painting in Islam: A Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture, N.Y., 1965. (Originally published in 1928), p. 2.

[69]Goodwin, op. cit., p. 235. It is important also to keep in mind Massignon's comment on the use of the arabesque. Also see Ardalan and Bakhtiar, op. cit., p. 43.

[70]Albarn, et al., op. cit., Chapter 1.

[71]Interestingly, Maria G. Lukens, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Guide to the Collections: Islamic Art, N.Y., 1965 writes "Iznik ware produced from about 1550 to 1700 and once erroneously assigned to the island of Rhodes, received its impetus from the restorations to the shrine of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, with the resulting need for large-scale manufacture." These were the years when Sinan was using massive amounts of tiles in his Istanbul mosques as well as in the royal palace and one can justifiably question whether this didn't provide as great an "impetus" for this factory located geographically much closer to Istanbul than Jerusalem.

[72]A. Pope, op. cit., p. 365. He records an inscription on a Persian mosque, "The Mosques are the gardens of Paradise." In addition, one could consider again the previously mentioned quote by Tursun Beg on Fatih's entry into Constantinople.

[73]Callahan, op. cit., p. 49. (Cited from the Hexaemeron of St. Basil of Caesarea.)

[74]Philo, op. cit., I, p. 184. He would disagree. He sees flowers and plants as symbolic of the virtues "planted in the soul."

[75]Camman, op. cit., p. 199, makes it clear that other plant symbolism was certainly present in the Middle East. There is a connection of the bird and vase with resurrected souls and the tree so often used in tiles is more than likely the Muslim tree of life which Lane records as shaken once a year during Ramazan on the Night of Lights. On this tree each man has a leaf, and if his leaf falls, his death is predicted for the coming year. A Gulistan, the Rose Garden, is a famous moralistic writing. G. Lechler, "The Tree of Life in Indo-European and Islamic Cultures," Ars Islamica IV (1968), p. 380 states "In Assyrian and Hittite the tree of life is nothing but a synonym for the year . . . In Babylonia the tree of life was called the tree of Ea, the father of the gods; . . . Those who ate its fruit were supposed to receive eternal life. From his belief is derived the tree of life of the Old Testament, growing in the midst of Paradise. In the religion of Zoroaster the tree of life is called the white haoma (homa), and its fruit is used to nourish the blessed spirits in heaven . . . Very similar to this is the some of the old Indian Veda . . . The Muhammadan tradition leads back to the Jewish; thus it does not support the theory of the priority of the tree of knowledge . . ." In addition, Mohammed's Night Journey to Heaven is sometimes seen as accomplished by means of a tree. See Arnold, op. cit., p. 117.

[76]It seems even more likely if one accepts the clouds to the plate's right as a part of a Chinese influence and further infers a Lotus pattern in certain flowers. Again, a cross and eight-pointed flower were a cuneiform ideogram for ilu which translates "god-sun-year." See Ibid., p. 370. In Gilgamesh, op. cit., p. 84, a plant-flower symbolism appears which could be connected to the flowers rendered in the new and famous Iznik red:

> "There is a plant in the river. Its thorns
> Will prick your hands as a rose thorn pricks
> But it will give you new life . . .
> . . . . . .
> When he saw the plant
> Of rich rose color and ambrosial
> Shimmering in the water like a prism
> Of the sunlight (note well proximity of tiles
> to stained glass) he seized it, and it cut
> Into his palms. He saw his blood flow in the
> water.
> He cut the stones loose from his feet and rose
> Up sharply to the surface and swam to shore.
> He was calling out I have it! I have it!"

The Anthology of Islamic Literature, ed. James Kritzek, N,Y., 1964, pp. 168, 169, 269 records:

1. Omar Khhayam:

"I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

2. Hafiz (c.1390)

"A rose blooms within me, wine is in my hand,
And my beloved embraced.
This day the world's king is my slave.
Bring us no candlelight at dark . . .
. . . . . .
The red rose is open and the nightingale is drunk:
An invitation, Sufiyan, wine-worshippers,
To the pleasures of intoxication . . ."

[77]Goodwin, op. cit., pp. 336-337.

[78]Excavations of St. Vitale at Ravenna indicate stained galss in the apse area as early as the 6th century. Information given to Professor Molly Smith by Professor G. Bovini. See also: Guda d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano, Emilia e Romagna, Milan, 1957, p. 673.

[79]Campbell, The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology, N.Y., 1972, p. 447.

[80]Dionysius the Aeropagite. Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies. Trans. The Editors of the Shrine of Wisdom, Surrey, 1965, pp. 17-18.

[81]Ibid., p. 46.

[82]Ibid., p. 65. The symbolism of Chinese cloud patterns in the tiles would become more precise with this interpretation.

[83]Ibid., p. 67.

[84]Lane, op. cit., p. 80. Hanging lamps of glass were also suspended from wheel like structures throughout

the mosque. The significance of the glass and oil may become clearer in the discussion of the mihrab. As for the wheel itself, a parallel in the cosmic or heavenly symbolism of Gothic rose windows in the west is suggested. H. Dow, "The Rose Window," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 20 (1957), p. 266 and Pl. 14b, discusses a source in the Byzantine Polycandelon for the rose window-wheel imagery. Again, Hagia Sophia is cited: "In view of the wheel's significance, is it not possible that a related meaning could at some point have become attached to the very similar wheel-shaped chandelier? Would not the sun, a ball of light, and traditionally represented as a wheel, naturally spring to mind . . . Christianity, of course, makes abundant use of light-symbols. A number of biblical passages refer symbolically not only to the sun but even to lamps. . . . 'Thy Word, O Lord, is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths'. . ." One of the closed references to the actual use of polycandela, however, occurs in Paul the Silentiary's poem on Santa Sophia, written in 563, where the description of the church is precise . . . "The cosmic significance implied in his light-symbolism seems to correlate with that already mentioned . . ."

[85]Campbell, op. cit., p. 446.

[86]Ibid., p. 445.

[87]Goodwin, op. cit., p. 237.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Süleymaniye is a blending of several traditions which were at hand and sympathetic to the needs of Sinan and his Sultan Süleyman. That these elements do not appear fragmented but act as a whole seems due to their adaptability to the needs and ideas of the time. The imagery was one which the worshippers readily understood and identified with. Süleymaniye stands not only as a tribute to the greatness of Süleyman the Magnificent but as a tribute to Sinan who, by means of his artistic genius unites these traditions to reflect a universal theme that:

> We are no other than a moving row of
> Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
> Round the Sun illumined Lantern held.
> In Midnight by the Master of the Show.[1]

For in the end, Süleymaniye functions as a whole. It transcends the years and specific images in its effect of enormous and timeless emptiness flooded with light. There is a sense of being literally overwhelmed with this light, the Logos and its silence.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, op. cit., Stanza 68.

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