

Chapter 1: Introduction

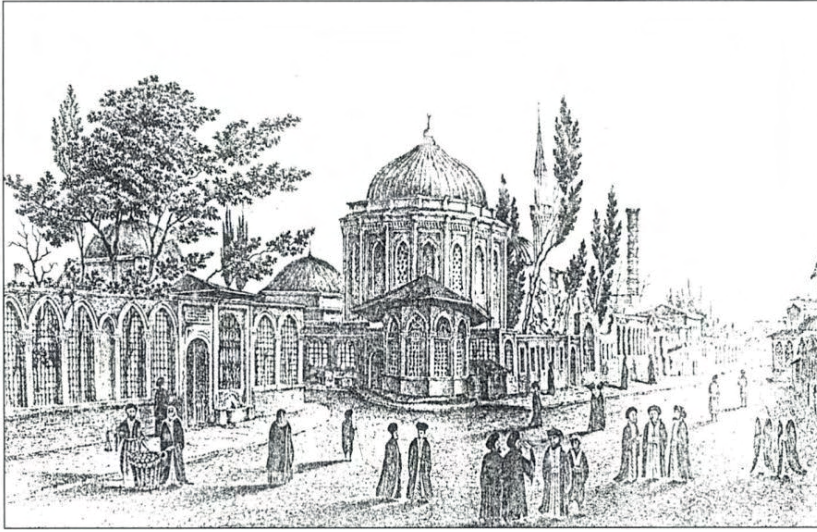


Fig. 1: *The Divanyolu in mid 19th century. From left to right: the Çorlulu Ali cemetery, the Koca Sinan mausoleum, the column of Constantine, the porch of the Köprülülü medrese prayer hall. Lithograph by Hercules Catenacci, Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, Cabinet des Estampes, Vd-7 Fol-T.8.*

The Ottoman Divanyolu (and its extension, the Divan axis) formed the main thoroughfare linking Topkapı Palace at the eastern limit of the peninsula, to the gate of Edirne, principal gate for the continental road into Europe.

It was a concentrate of functional facts and of revealing symbolism.

It was not quite like the ‘main street’ of many other towns, western or eastern, which absorb most, if not all, the highest commercial and monumental expressions of the city. Perhaps, its nearly five-kilometre curving route was too long; perhaps the immense metropolis was too complex to seek expression in a single structure. Many dense and economically vital quarters lay away (but not too far away) from the axis; certainly, only part (but not too small a part) of Istanbul’s Ottoman architectural heritage was situated along the axis.

Since the early Eighties of the 20th century, it seemed to me that the key for the full comprehension of architecture and town-building

in the Ottoman Empire after the 17th century lay in the conflicts and syncretism of cultures, and not in the too simple concepts of Westernisation or Ottomanisation. The uncomfortable clash of architectural concepts and of visions of urban life had been obvious to all, laymen and specialists. But a foggy cultural discussion in which distaste or nostalgia prevailed, understated, or sometimes ideologically overplayed, the historical (and I would add, structural) roots of the clash. I had been thinking of the Kampos suburb in Ottoman Chios (Sakızadası) as a paradigmatic example of synthesis of Western (Genoese) and local ('meta-Byzantine' Greek) models: gradually, after the early Nineties, I discovered that Classical Ottoman themes and complex South-Eastern Anatolian and North-Syrian ways had seeped in. A happily harmonious hybrid model—*felix culpa!*—had come to life (I believe, around the second half of the 18th century). On the other hand, since almost a century and a half, the avenue today named Divanyolu, a short tract between the At Meydan, the column of Constantine (Çemberlitaş) and Beyazıt, has stubbornly kept being neither 'here' (Ottoman) nor 'there' (Western).

In 2000-2001 I was assigned the coordination of a research project on the intercultural characteristics in the historical centres of the Eastern Mediterranean,¹ within which my group in Genoa chose the Divanyolu and the Kampos as case studies.²

Previously I had received an Aga Khan Fund research fellowship at Harvard to work on the Divanyolu. This gave me a unique three-month opportunity to screen all the bibliographical, map and photographic material available on the argument. I was amazed to find out how little had been done or was known under the specific heading 'Divanyolu', and how much, instead, could be gleaned from other sources on the history and architecture of Constantinople-Istanbul for its effect on that axis.

¹ Research project MIUR-COFIN 2001 (Italian Ministry for University and Research with the Universities of Bari, Genova and Palermo) "Analysis and rehabilitation of urban fabric with intercultural characteristics in the historical centres of the Eastern Mediterranean".

² The project "Typology and public space in the Divanyolu (Istanbul) and Kampos (Chios): historical analysis and criteria for protection and urban rehabilitation" has been concluded in December 2003.

I discovered that the Divan thoroughfare was not only an important segment of the Istanbul street system: it could also be a filter for a new and stimulating perspective on the wider issue of the ideological and aesthetic character of Ottoman urban space and architecture, and on its transformation in the 18th and 19th centuries; a peculiar angle from which to view, and give sense to, the immense and bewildering material and information on Ottoman Istanbul which scholarly—or, as for that, also un-scholarly and yet loving!—work has accumulated during the last century, and especially, during the last decades.

The outcome of that discovery was an enthusiastic concentration of the ampler research efforts on the sole Divanyolu. No over-all picture of that important street had been attempted. Of course, today's orderly Divanyolu is but a pale image of the chaotically changing and yet architecturally splendid image of the pre-1865 'road of the Pashas'. West of Beyazıt and Fatih the image has simply been swept away: only a few short fragments in a street or two are there to remind us that the route was like a string of beads strung with timber houses and small palaces, fragile shops, minuscule cemeteries, delightful mosques and modest monuments. Nineteenth century photographers had indulged in picturesque small-scale town life or in the representation of monuments; the street scene at intermediate scale did not interest them. The reconstruction of the over-all architectural aspect of the thoroughfare is hence impossible.

And yet, on the other hand, during the last thirty years much topographic information has been produced and systematised.³

³ I have widely used the following reference works for the chronology and surveys of the Divan Yolu history, monuments and street system: Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Hicri Onüçüncü asırda İstanbul Hayatı*, İstanbul: 1930; Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Hicri Onüçüncü asırda İstanbul Hayatı*, İstanbul: 1932; the invaluable *The Garden of the Mosques: Hafız Hüseyin al-Ayvansarayî's Guide to the Muslim Monuments of Ottoman İstanbul*, ed. Howard Crane, Leiden: Brill Muqarnas Supplements 8 2000; Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of İstanbul: portrait of an Ottoman city in the nineteenth century*, Washington: University of Washington Press 1986 / University of California Press 1993; Dumbarton Oaks Symposium, *Constantinople: The Fabric of the City*, 1998 in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2000), 157-264; *Eminönü camileri*, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet

Müller-Wiener's 1977 seminal work (unfortunately limited to the pre-18th century period)⁴; the surprisingly rich though uneven voices in the eight volumes of the 1993 *Dünden bugüne İstanbul ansiklopedisi*⁵, the two not always perfect compilations of the Müftülüks of Fatih and Eminönü on the mosques of their districts,⁶ and last and above all,

Vakfı Eminönü Şubesi, [1987]; *Fatih camileri ve diğer tarihi eserler*, İstanbul: T.C. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Fatih Müftülüğü 1991; Godfrey Goodwin, *A History of Ottoman Architecture*, London: Thames&Hudson 1971; Cornelius Gurlitt, *Der Baukunst von Konstantinopel*, Berlin: Wasmuth 1912; Halil İnalcık, art. "İstanbul", in *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, new ed., Leiden: Brill 1993, iv 233-59; Doğan Kuban, *İstanbul, an urban history: Byzantium, Constantinopolis, İstanbul*, İstanbul: Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey 1996; Paul Magdalino, *Constantinople Médiévale—Études sur l'évolution des structures urbaines*, Paris: De Boccard 1996; Cyril Mango, *Le développement urbain de Constantinople: 4. - 7. siècles*, Paris, de Boccard, 1985; Robert Mantran, *İstanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle*, Paris: Adr. Maisonneuve 1962; Robert Mayer, *Byzantion—Konstantinopolis—İstanbul*, Wien und Leipzig: Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien Ph.-hist. Klasse, Denkschriften 71 band 3, 1943, 1-129; Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie İstanbuls*, Tübingen: Wasmuth 1977; Mouradja d'Ohsson, *Tableau Général de l'Empire Othoman, divisé en deux parties, dont l'une comprend la Législation Mahométane; l'autre, l'Histoire de l'Empire Othoman*, Paris: Vol II 1790, Vol III 1820; Raymond Janin, "Constantinople byzantine: développement urbain et répertoire topographique", Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1964; Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall, *Constantinopolis und der Bosphoros / Örtlich und geschichtlich beschrieben von Jos. von Hammer; mit 120 griechischen, lateinischen, arabischen, persischen und türkischen Inschriften, dem Plane der Stadt Constantinopel und einer Karte des Bosphoros*. [Pesth: Hartleben's Verlag, 1822] (Reprint: Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1967); Tahsin Öz, *İstanbul Camileri*, Ankara: 1962; Behçet Ünsal, "İstanbul'un İmarı ve Eski Eser kaydı" in *Türk Sanatı Tarihi Araştırma ve İncelemeleri*, İstanbul: 1968.

⁴ Müller-Wiener *Bildlexikon*.

⁵ *Dünden bugüne İstanbul ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı ve Tarih Vakfı 1993-95 (in 8 volumes).

⁶ Eminönü Camileri, Fatih Camileri.

the admirable *Garden of the Mosques*⁷ edited by Howard Crane, whose footnotes and index are even more useful and reliable than Ayvansarayi's text itself. I should add the by now numerous and invaluable historical studies on the single aspects or periods of Istanbul as an urban creation.⁸

One problem is that these secondary sources, no more and no less than precedent texts, and even more than primary sources, are contradictory as to toponyms and dates. The large-scale over-all picture we have tried to describe and analyse is nothing but an over-all picture: the reader should consider the data on the single architectural facts and events we report as reliable (or as unreliable) as the sources they have been derived from.

The chief argument of this book is, however, that overall picture. Not so much the single monuments and short tracts of the axis, as its role in the city's life and architecture, and the way it mirrors Ottoman culture.

Over-all survey, representation and interpretation were the three nodal stages in the process.

The interpretation of the Divan street system, now almost completely lost except for its central stretch, required first of all the systematic comparison of ancient and modern maps, the assembly of the existing few architectural surveys of its architectural monuments, and a reasonably reliable (but far from very precise) reconstruction of its chronology based on secondary sources.

The written historical sources did not have much to say. That is why the research team's inability to read Ottoman Turkish proved to be a lesser handicap than I had thought. Of course, property and judiciary information in the Ottoman court annals available⁹ might have produced some additional detail data, but they involved a period

⁷ Garden of the Mosques.

⁸ See for example: Zeynep Nayır, *Osmanlı Mimarlığında Sultan Ahmet ve Sonrası*, İstanbul: İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi Baskı Atölyesi 1975; Çelik Remaking; various works on particular functional types such as fountains, hammams, schools, libraries which will be quoted in the following chapters.

⁹ *İstanbul vakıfları tabir dafteri: 953 (1546) tarihli*, eds. Ömer Lütfi Barkan, Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, İstanbul: Baha Matbaası 1970.

not vital for our project and would have required a far longer research process than could be faced by our programme.

The common architectural characteristics of the buildings and their accessories—not so much in their autonomous stylistic and typological development, as in their relation to the construction of the street and city image—were far more important, and were examined with a view to reach a synthetic description.

The interpretative synthesis would have been impossible without the work of Emiliano Bugatti and Sabrina D'Agostino who surveyed some tracts of the Divanyolu, and summarised the survey and data files in the appendix chapters and architectural drawings of this volume.

I am much indebted to the helpful and patient personnel of the Harvard library system—of the Houghton and Pusey Map Collections, and of the Fine Arts Library, especially of my good friends Andras Riedlmayer and Jeff Spurr of the Aga Khan Program Documentation Center, who went out of their way to help me in my fastidious search for pertinent photographic material. The facilities of the Widener Library, incredibly rich not only in scholarly works but also in brochures and popular literature on Istanbul, allowed me to do the work of months in days and weeks.

I am also very grateful to Gülru Necipoğlu and Cemal Kafadar at Harvard, and Nur Akın and Günkut Akın in Istanbul for the opportunity they gave me to discuss the issues of this work and directed me to the right sources.

Dr. Aygül Ağır of the Istanbul Technical University, whose work on the epigraphy of some *hazire* corrected some of my initial intuitions, was also of great help in digging out information on maps and other material.

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