

For other uses, see Selimiye Mosque (disambiguation).

The Selimiye Mosque (Turkish: Selimiye Camii) is an Ottoman imperial mosque, which is located in the city of Edirne (formerly Adrianople), Turkey. The mosque was commissioned by Sultan Selim II, and was built by the imperial architect Mimar Sinan between 1568 and 1575.[2] It was considered by Sinan to be his masterpiece and is one of the highest achievements of Islamic architecture as a whole and Ottoman architecture in particular.[3] It was added as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011.[4]

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Description[edit]

This grand mosque stands at the center of a külliye (a complex of a hospital, school, library and/or baths around a mosque) which comprises a medrese (an Islamic academy teaching both Islamic and scientific lessons), a dar-ül hadis (Al-Hadith school), a timekeeper's room and an arasta (row of shops). In this mosque Sinan employed an octagonal supporting system created through eight pillars incised in a square shell of walls. The four semi-domes at the corners of the square behind the arches that spring from the pillars are intermediary sections between the walls and the huge encompassing dome, which spans 31.25 meters (102.5 feet) in diameter with spherical profile.

While conventional mosques were limited by a segmented interior, Sinan's effort at Edirne was a structure that made it possible to see the mihrab from any location within the mosque. Surrounded by four tall minarets, the Mosque of Selim II has a grand dome atop it. Around the rest of the mosque were many additions: libraries, schools, hospices, baths, soup kitchens for the poor, markets, hospitals, and a cemetery. These annexes were aligned axially and grouped, if possible. In front of the mosque sits a rectangular court with an area equal to that of the mosque. The innovation however, comes not in the size of the building, but from the organization of its interior. The mihrab is pushed back into an apse-like alcove with a space with enough depth to allow for window illumination from three sides. This has the effect of making the tile panels of its lower walls sparkle with natural light. The amalgamation of the main hall forms a fused octagon with the dome-covered square. Formed by eight massive dome supports, the octagon is pierced by four half dome covered corners of the square. The beauty resulting from the conformity of geometric shapes engulfed in each other was the culmination of Sinan's lifelong search for a unified interior space.

At the Bulgarian siege of Edirne in 1913, the dome of the mosque was hit by Bulgarian artillery. Owing to the dome's extremely sturdy construction, the mosque survived the assault with only minor damage. On Mustafa Kemal Pasha's order, it has not been restored

since then, to serve as a warning for future generations.[citation needed] Some damage can be seen on the image of the dome above, at and near the dark red calligraphy to the immediate left of the central blue area.

In 1865 Baha'u'llah,[5] the founder of the Baha'i Faith, arrived with his family to Edirne as a prisoner of the Ottoman empire and resided in a house near Selimiye Mosque,[6] which he visited often until 1868. It was at Selimiye mosque[7] where he was supposed to have had an open debate with Mírzá Yahyá Núrí (also known by the title of Şubḥ-i-Azal), an important event in the split of the Bábi Faith, which ultimately resulted in the formation of the Baha'i Faith guided by Baha'u'llah and the Azali Bábi Faith guided by Mírzá Yahyá.[8]

The Nizamiye Mosque in South Africa is modeled on the Selimiye Mosque.[9] Despite being 80% of the size of the Selimiye, the Nizamiye Mosque is the largest in the Southern hemisphere.[10]

Architecture[edit]

Exterior[edit]

Selimiye Mosque was built at the peak of Ottoman military and cultural power. As the empire started to grow, the emperor sought to centralize Edirne. Sinan was asked to help to construct the Selimiye Mosque, making the mosque distinctive and serving the purpose of centralizing the city.[11]

One of Sinan's primary objectives in building the Selimiye was to make it appear as a single unit when viewed from the inside or outside, rather than as the collection of separate masses created by the cascade of smaller domes and half-domes used in most Ottoman mosques. Hence, he decided to largely cut out the usual profusion of supporting domes in favor of one gigantic single-shell dome, an ambitious endeavor considering that smaller domes and half-domes work to bear the load of larger central domes. Another of Sinan's primary objectives was to surpass the size of the Hagia Sophia's central dome, and indeed upon completion he wrote triumphantly that "In this mosque...I [have] erected a dome six cubits higher and four cubits wider than the dome of Hagia Sophia." [12]

In order to accentuate and draw attention to the centralized structure of the mosque, the traditional placement of different-sized minarets was abandoned from the design. Instead, four identical minarets were planted at each corner of the marble forecourt to frame the central dome. The four vertically-fluted, symmetrical minarets amplify the upward thrust, shooting towards the sky like rockets from each corner of the mosque, in the words of Ottoman scholar Gulru Necipoglu. With the great dome rising subtly from the center, it had harmoniously interplayed with the half domes, weight towers, and buttresses crowded around it. It was believed that the circular architecture was to affirm the oneness in humanity and called out the simple ideology of circle of life. The visible and invisible symmetries that were called out from the exterior and interior of the mosque was to evoke God's perfection through the plain and powerful structure of the dome and the bare stone. Interior[edit]

The interior of the mosque received great recognitions from its clean, spare lines in the structure itself. With the monumental exteriors proclaiming the wealth and power of the Ottoman Empire, the plain symmetrical interiors reminded the sultans should always provide a humble and faithful heart in order to connect and communicate with God. To

enter, it was to forget the power, determination, wealth and technical mastery of the Ottoman Empire. Lights were seeped through multitude of tiny windows, and the interchanging of the weak light and dark was interpreted as the insignificance of humanity. The Selimiye Mosque did not only amaze the public with the extravagant symmetrical exterior, it had also astonished the people with the plain symmetrical interior for it had summarized all Ottoman architectural thinking in one simple pure form.

The mosque was depicted on the reverse of the Turkish 10,000 lira banknotes of 1982-1995.[13] The mosque, together with its külliye, was included on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2011.

[Gallery](#)^[edit]

[See also](#)^[edit]

[List of Friday mosques designed by Mimar Sinan](#)

2a. Peter Francopan, The Silk Roads, page 232... (1564 - 1574) Selimiye mosque was built