

# Changing cultural references: Architecture of Damascus in the Ottoman period (1516-1918)

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Four hundred years of Ottoman government and culture (1516-1918) left a distinctive imprint on the urban centres of Bilād al-Shām,<sup>1</sup> as well as in some rural areas like the Lebanese Mountains. Walking through the markets (*sūq*) or the residential quarters of cities like Aleppo, Damascus, Sidon, Tripoli or Jerusalem, we see to a very large extent the remains from the Ottoman period. Other dynasties and periods, for Syria especially, Hellenistic, Roman and Umayyad town planning (661-750) and the many constructions and urban interventions first of all during the Ayyubid (1176-1260) and Mamluk (1260-1516) era, had a strong impact on the shaping of cities. But with a very few exceptions, nearly all houses and commercial buildings were constructed during the Ottoman period. Many urban centres were significantly modified by the construction of important public buildings during the first one hundred years of incorporation into the empire and took on a different pattern over the following centuries, especially in the 18<sup>th</sup>, late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

This article tries to identify the main architectural and urban characteristics of the different phases of Ottoman rule and to understand the architecture and cultural production of an Arab society in the Bilād al-Shām within the framework of local traditions and adoption of foreign models. Applying the question of multiculturalism to civil urban architecture in the main cities of Ottoman Bilād al-Shām, the concepts of race and religion are of minor importance. The markets, houses (*bayt*), bathhouses (*ḥammām*), schools (*madrasa*), and caravanserais (*khān*) of Muslims, Christians, Jews, Kurds, Arabs, and Turks, etc., do not differ from each other or only minimally.<sup>2</sup> Houses of all sects and ethnic groups visited during our surveys in different cities of the region are—despite some symbols of religious identity (like crosses or paintings of Christian or Muslim motifs or Hebrew inscriptions)—identical in décor and layout but differ in size, layout, deco-

<sup>1</sup> Today Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel. After the Ottoman conquest in 1516, Bilād al-Shām was subdivided in 1529 into the three provinces (*iyāla/ iyalāt* or *paşalık*) Aleppo (*Halab*), Damascus (*al-Shām*) and Tripoli (*Tarāblus*) to which Sidon (*Ṣaydā*) was added as a fourth *paşalık* in 1660. This article is based on a research project on Ottoman architecture in Damascus, Sidon, Tripoli and Mont Liban, located in the German Institute of Archaeology in Damascus and the Orient Institute in Beirut (see: [www.oidmg.org/weber/index.htm](http://www.oidmg.org/weber/index.htm)). I would like to thank Hans Theunissen for his critical reading.

<sup>2</sup> Except 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Jerusalem and to a certain extent Beirut.

ration and material by vectors like the regional setting, the social class of the owner and the period of construction. Although David could identify a different living pattern of a European consular and merchant family in Aleppo, the French or local consul in Sidon and Tripoli both lived in very Ottoman style houses.<sup>3</sup> For many parts of Bilād al-Shām the question of defining multicultural urban patterns on ethnic or religious lines remains secondary, and it makes much more sense to distinguish different sources of inspiration for urban society in terms of time and social class, as we will see. Thus the definition of multiculturalism in this article will not be based on the existence of the many different ethnic or religious groups that formed a very complex society throughout the Ottoman period. Multiculturalism in architecture will be discussed here in the light of cultural trends that building masters, craftsmen and clients referred to. One point of analysis would be the social class of the building owner, but the architectural remains from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries belong nearly completely to the upper strata of the city. However from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, many houses survive that allow us a view into domestic architecture in a demographically more representative manner. Hence, I will focus here on different cultural references, craftsmen and owners, who took their models and patterns of adoption from the Ottoman centuries. The geographical framework of this discussion will be the city of Damascus.

As its historical framework changed, quite different ideas concerning the style of construction and decoration, and of urban organisation and patronage, were applied in the course of the four Ottoman centuries. The *sūqs*, houses, *ḥammāms*, *madrasas*, *khāns*, administrative buildings and mosques of Damascus are appropriate examples through which we can examine the characteristics of urban institutions at that time. From the 16<sup>th</sup> until the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the urban skyline became marked by wide-spanned domes and variations on the typical Ottoman "pencil-shaped minarets". Later it was largely modernized by reformed urban institutions at the *fin de siècle*. Judging from the architectural remains, three different stages can be roughly identified:

<sup>3</sup> For Aleppo: Jean-Claude David, "Le consulat de France à Alep sous Louis XIV. Témoins architecturaux, descriptions par les consuls et les voyageurs." *Res Orientales*, VIII (1996), 13-24.; for Sidon: Stefan Weber, "An Egyptian *qā'a* in 16<sup>th</sup> ct. Damascus. Representative Halls in Late Mamluk and Early Ottoman Residential Architecture in Syria and Lebanon." In: *From Handaxe to Khan, Essays Presented to Peder Mortensen on the Occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, eds. Kjeld von Folsach, Henrik Thrane, Ingolf Thuesen, Aarhus (2004) 273 ff. The French consul in Sidon lived in a house with a reception hall (*qā'a*), built by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ma'nī in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and described by the French traveller D'Arvieux, who lived in Sidon between 1658 and 1665. The cross-like plan of the *qā'a*, marked by a dome in its centre and four raised living units (here: *iwān*) in the arms, is a typical form of upper class Ottoman reception halls (just the furniture was different). Like the *qā'a* of the French consul in Sidon, the reception room of the Kastaflis family, who served as consuls for different nations, was of the same layout and probably erected by a local dignitary around 1600.

1. The 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries: The Creation of Ottoman City Centres
2. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century: The Age of the *A'yān*
3. The 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries: The modernization of Urban Institutions

One can distinguish certain architectural trends in the different periods of Ottoman rule, but also the ways of resistance, integration, imitation, adoption, inspiration and creation of new cultural patterns are quite diverse from case to case. Thus not only cultural references to which craftsmen and patrons referred, will be discussed here, but various patterns of cultural adoption will also be of interest. The first century of Ottoman rule serves as a folio to elucidate these processes in the moment of contact among different architectural cultures.

### 1. *The 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries:* *The Creation of Ottoman City Centres*

Immediately after the Ottoman conquest in 1516, the Ottoman State—or, rather, the elite ruling in its name—left its mark by engaging in extensive building activities.<sup>4</sup> During the first century after the conquest, new “Ottoman” centres grew in

<sup>4</sup> For the city's architectural development in the time see: Antoine Abdel Nour, *Introduction à l'Histoire Urbaine de la Syrie Ottomane (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Beirut : Librairie orientale 1982; Doris Behrens-Abouseif: *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule: Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo, (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century)*, Leiden: Brill 1994; André Raymond, “The Ottoman Conquest and the Development of the Great Arab Towns”, *IJTS*, 1, (1979/80), 84-101 and André Raymond, *Grandes Villes Arabes à l'Époque Ottomane*, Paris: Sindbad 1985. For Damascus see: Jean -Paul Pascual, *Damas à la Fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle d'après Trois Actes de Waqf Ottomans*, Damas: Institut Français d'Études Arabes de Damas 1983; Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, “In the Image of Rûm: Ottoman Architectural Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Aleppo and Damascus”, *Muqarnas* 16 (1999), 70-96; Michael Meinecke, “Die osmanische Architektur des 16. Jahrhunderts in Damaskus”, in: *Fifth International Congress of Turkish Art, Budapest 1975*, ed. Geza Fehér, Budapest: Akad. Kiadó 1978, 575-595; Stefan Weber, “The Creation of Ottoman Damascus. Architecture and Urban Development of Damascus in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries”, *ARAM* 9 & 10 (1997-1998), 431-470. Recently an extensive documentation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Marianne Boqvist, *Architecture et Développement Urbain à Damas de la Conquête Ottomane (922h/1516-17) à la Fondation du Waqf de Murad Pacha (1017h/1607-08)*, PhD thesis, Paris 2005. Dorothee Sack gives an overview of the city's development in Ottoman times in: *Damaskus, Entwicklung und Strukturen einer orientalisches-islamischen Stadt*, Mainz: von Zabern 1989, 31 ff. Compare for Aleppo: Jean-Claude David, “Domaines et limites de l'architecture d'empire dans une capitale provinciale.” *REMMM* 62 (1991), 169-194; Jean-Claude David, “Le Patrimoine, Architecture et Espaces, Pratiques et Comportements. Les souks et les khans d'Alep.” *REMMM* 73-74 (1994) 189-205; Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, *Aleppo, Historische und geographische Beiträge zur baulichen Gestaltung, zur sozialen Organisation und zur wirtschaftlichen Dynamik einer vorderasiatischen Fernhandelsmetropole*, Wiesbaden: Reichert 1984; André Raymond, *La Ville Arabe, Alep, à l'Époque Ottomane (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Damas: Institut Français d'Études Arabes de Damas 1998; and recently: Heghnar Z. Watenpaugh, *The Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Leiden: Brill 2004. For Jerusalem see Sylvia Auld and Robert Hillenbrand, *Ottoman Jerusalem, the Living City: 1517-1917*, London: Altajir World of Islam Trust 2000. For Sidon see: Stefan Weber, “An Āghā, a

the cities of Sidon (at Sāḥat Bāb al-Sarāyā), Damascus (along Darwishīyya-street) and Aleppo (west and northwest of the citadel), or even in smaller towns, around the *sāḥa* of Dayr al-Qamar.<sup>5</sup> A number of mosques of Ottoman governors, schools, *sūqs*, *ḥammāms*, and *sarays* sprang up at very distinctive public spots.

In Damascus this development occurred in the western extramural part of the town, along Darwishīyya Street. In this important public space—the main arterial road from the North to the South through which once a year the important pilgrim (*ḥajj*) caravan passed—an Ottoman presence was immediately evident as the visitor entered the city (fig. 1). A second aspect of these “First Ottoman Cities” consisted of a new mercantile centre—especially in Aleppo on the southern side of the main axis between Antakiya Gate and the citadel, in Damascus *intra muros* next to the Umayyad Mosque, and in Sidon in the northern part of the city close to the harbour. The process of integration into the Ottoman Empire stimulated economic development, which became visible in the changing urban texture of the cities. Sidon as a harbour city for southern Bilād al-Shām and Tripoli for the northern regions, Aleppo as an international trade centre and Damascus with its special role for the *ḥajj*-caravan all witnessed an enormous boom. Thus Damascus and other cities in the Syrian lands became, especially in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, (land)marked by Ottoman foundations, experienced by local societies by their names of Ottoman dignitaries and the integration of new elements of layout and decoration. This Ottomanization of the main commercial and public centres was most probably the result of a deliberate process promoted by the city authorities.<sup>6</sup>

### Continuity

When patterns of Ottoman imperial architecture arrived in the Arab regions during the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they met a very strong and elaborated architectural tradition made famous by the many beautiful buildings dating back to

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House and the City: The Debbané Museum Project and the Ottoman City of Saida, first report.” *Beiruter Blätter* 10-11 (2002-03) 132-140; Stefan Weber and Ralph Bodenstein, “A House and the City, The Debbané Palace and the Ottoman City of Saida.” *Archaeology & History in the Lebanon* 20 (2004) 66-74.

<sup>5</sup> The situation in Tripoli is more complex, with the re-development of the old harbour al-Minā, the remaking of the citadel, mosques throughout the city and important commercial buildings in the northern half of Tripoli – but without a clear Ottoman public centre. The square near the old Saray (Sāḥat al-Sarāyā) in the West of the city never had this function.

<sup>6</sup> For the phenomenon of an Ottoman skyline of the harbour towns of Crete see: Irene A. Bierman, “The Ottomanization of Crete”, in: *The Ottoman City and its Parts, Urban Structure and Social Order*, eds. Irene Bierman, Rifa’at Abou-el-Haj, Donald Preziosi, New York: A.D. Caratzas 1991, 53-75. For Ottoman Syria see: Kafescioğlu, *In the Image of Rūm*, 79 ff.; Weber, “Creation of Ottoman Damascus”, 439 ff.



Ayyubid and Mamluk times. Concepts of residential architecture as well as traditional construction, decoration techniques and motifs remained very strong throughout the four Ottoman centuries.<sup>7</sup> Often specific elements (techniques and patterns) of the Ottoman layout of buildings, decoration and urban planning were brought to the centres of the provinces and then evolved during the next decades autonomously without much "updating" from the centre of the empire. Local societies adopted certain models and combined or developed them into new models and types that were very Ottoman in understanding but originated in the local architectural context and only existed within these local environments. In the first four decades of Ottoman rule in Damascus the architecture of the city followed the still pre-established models that had developed mainly during the Ayyubid (1176-1260) and Mamluk (1260-1516) periods.

A good example is the mosque and *takiyya* of Sultan Selim I (1512-20), erected next to the grave of the famous Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī. On the same day that the Sultan commissioned this building, the supreme judge of the province (*qāḍī al-quḍā*) Walī al-Dīn ibn al-Farfūr and the chief architect Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn al-'Aṭṭār went to the site.<sup>8</sup> Both men were reconfirmed in the offices that they had held under Mamluk rule, and their designs for the mosque of Ibn 'Arabī corresponded to Mamluk models, as an heir of late Mamluk hypostyle mosque plans like those of al-Ṣībā'iya / al-Kharrāṭīn (915/1509) or Mu'allāq (915/1509). This is also true for many later edifices commissioned by the governors on Darwishīyya Street, such as the mausoleum and mosque of Luṭfi Pasha (940/1533-34), the mausoleum of Aḥmad Pasha (942/1535-36) and the mosque of 'Isā Pasha (~950/1543), all commissioned by Ottoman governors. Constructed using local techniques, these buildings continued to feature Damascene architectural patterns of the Mamluk period.<sup>9</sup> Ottoman concepts of architecture were still little known

<sup>7</sup> Especially residential architecture developed in the framework of local tradition of layout and construction until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Influences from Istanbul are visible just in some elements of layout (*qā'a*) and interior decoration (tiles, motifs in local techniques of colour paste, and especially painted wood panelling). Compare: Weber, "An Egyptian *qā'a*"; Stefan Weber and Peder Mortensen, "A Period of Transition: Bayt al-'Aqqad between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> Century." In: *Bayt al-'Aqqad: The History and Restoration of a House in Old Damascus*, ed. Peder Mortensen, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press 2005, 227-278.

<sup>8</sup> See: Meinecke, "Die osmanische Architektur", 577 und 582. The story of the beginning of the mosque is nicely reported by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭulūn in his works: *Muḥābāt al-Khullān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān, Tārīkh Miṣr wa-l-Shām*, 2. vols., ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, al-Qāhira: al-Dār al-Maṣriyya li-l-Ta'lif wa-l-Tarjama 1964, 68 f. idem, *al-Qalā'id al-jawhariyya fī Tārīkh al-Sālihiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duḥmān, 2 vols., Dimashq: Maṭbū'āt Majma' al-Lughā al-'Arabiyya bi-Dimashq 1949, 1956, 144 ff.; idem, *Flām al-warā biman walā Nā'iban min al-Atrāk bi-Dimashq al-Shām al-Kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duḥmān, Dimashq: Dār al-Fikr 1984, 239 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Information and literature on the buildings is already published elsewhere and will not be repeated here. See: Pascual, *XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, tab.1; Meinecke, "Die osmanische Architektur", and Weber, "Creation of Ottoman Damascus". Many buildings of this period are docu-

in Damascus, and no workshop from the centre of the empire had yet been established in the city. Nevertheless, Ottoman architectural concepts did arrive in the first decades of Ottoman rule, although not via the governors, nor the foundations of the sultan or craftsmen from the imperial centre. It is interesting to note that the first Ottoman architectural concepts were in fact introduced by local dignitaries. Two individuals are of special interest here: the scholar Muḥammad ibn Khalil al-Ṣumādī (d. 948/1541-42) and the aforementioned supreme judge Walī al-Dīn ibn al-Farfūr (895/1490 – 937/1530).<sup>10</sup>

*Individual adoption of a different architectural culture:  
the Zāwiyya al-Ṣumādiyya and the Sūq al-Qāḍī Ibn al-Farfūr*

The *zāwiyya* of al-Ṣumādī, erected in 934/1527, makes use for the first time in Damascus of a central dome covering the square room of a prayer-hall in a mosque (fig. 2, 3). This follows the Ottoman concept of a central domed chamber. Most probably the patron of the building, Muḥammad al-Ṣumādī, instructed local craftsmen to build a central dome. He had been in Istanbul for an audience with Sultan Selim I, who made him a fief, and it seems that he was deeply impressed with the Ottoman use of space in mosques, or perhaps he simply wanted to have a building similar to those of the new rulers.

However, al-Ṣumādī's craftsmen turned to a construction method they knew. Since the construction technique of an Ottoman central dome with its low pendentives was not used in Damascus at that time, the inner space of the mosque appears to be a huge Mamluk mausoleum (*turba*). A square chamber topped by a dome was a very common layout for Ayyubid and Mamluk funeral buildings but had until then never been applied to mosque architecture. Ten

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mented with illustrations in: Stefan Weber, *Zeugnisse kulturellen Wandels; Stadt, Architektur und Gesellschaft des spätoomanischen Damaskus im Umbruch (1808-1918)*. Berlin: 2006 (<http://www2.let.uu.nl/Solis/anpt/ejos/EJOS-IX.0.htm>), 463 ff., here among others 464 f., 509 f., 651, 658 f., 664, 665.

<sup>10</sup> See for Muḥammad al-Ṣumādī, who had great influence in Damascus: Muhammad A. Bakhit, *The Ottoman Province of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century*, Beirut: Librairie du Liban 1982, 183 f.; Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ghazzī, *Lutf al-Samar wa-Qatf al-Thamar. Min Tarājim A'yān al-Ṭabaqa al-Ālā min al-Qarn al-Hādī 'Asbr*, 2 vols., Dimashq: Maṭbū'at Wazārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī 1981, vol. I, 130, fn. 5; vol. II, 600, fn. 2; Ibn Jum'a, "al-Bāshawāt wa l-Qudāt fi Dimashq", in: *Wulāt Dimashq fi l-'Abd al-'Uthmānī*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, Dimashq 1949, 39, fn. 1; 'Abd al-Qādir al-Nu'aymī, *al-Dāris fi Tārīkh al-Madāris*, edited by I. Shams al-Dīn, 2 vols., Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Alamiyya 1990, vol. II, 171; Muḥammad As'ad Ṭalas, Appendix in Y. Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, *Thimār al-Maqāsid fi Dhikr al-Masājid*, edited by M. A. Ṭalas, Bayrūt: Maktabat Lubnān 1975, No. 181; No. 190. Ibn al-Farfūr was several times *qāḍī* of the town: from 924/1518 until 926/1520, 927/1520 and from 930/1524 until 936/1530. See for Ibn al-Farfūr: Ibn Jum'a, *al-Bāshawāt wa l-Qudāt*, 1 ff.; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭulūn, *Qudāt Dimashq, al-Ṭaghbr al-Bassām fi Dhikr man wulliya Qadā' al-Shām*, edited by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, Dimashq: Maṭbū'at al-Majma' al-'Ilmi al-'Arabī bi-Dimashq 1956, 182 ff., 309 f., 312 ff.

years after the Ottoman conquest we find in the Zāwiyya al-Ṣumādiyya a typical Ottoman feature of architecture—the central dome for a larger mosque—following the local construction tradition and commissioned by a Damascene notable. Thus, the *zāwiyya* of al-Ṣumādī provides a pattern that differs from local architectural traditions being continued by other building owners of his time.

Domed prayer halls, one of the characteristic elements of Ottoman architecture, later became widespread in Syria during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Commercial buildings were covered by domes too. A domed market hall or *bedesten* (bazaar-like “shopping malls” for valuable textiles) was introduced to Damascus by Murād Pasha around 1017/1608-09, and in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, even *khāns* were for the first time covered by domes. Again a Damascene predated this development. The contemporary historian Ibn Ṭūlūn reports on Ibn al-Farfūr:

“In the year 32 [932/1525-26] he started to build a *sūq* close to the Bāb Jayrūn in Damascus. Instead of a wooden gabled roof he constructed domes that were made of bricks. [...] There was no building before [constructed] like this among the *sūqs* of Damascus.”<sup>11</sup>

This *sūq*, known today as Sūq al-Qāḍī, of which only some shops at the western end of Qaymariyya Street survive, was not often copied and domes on market streets remained extremely rare. Later *sūqs* were also normally covered by wooden gabled roofs. However, the story of Ibn al-Farfūr is very significant because he changed his *madhhab* from “Mamluk” *shāfiʿī* to “Ottoman” *ḥanafī* in order to remain *qāḍī* of the city, thus taking a deliberate step to adjust to Ottoman rule. In 937/1530 he also ordered the construction of a typical Ottoman top on the “Mamluk shaped” minaret of Sultan Selim’s Mosque of Ibn ‘Arabī. All this seems to have happened with a specific goal in mind, since Walī al-Dīn ibn al-Farfūr, as well as Muḥammad ibn Khalīl al-Ṣumādī, benefited under the new rulers. Most probably they wanted to demonstrate their affiliation to them by introducing Ottoman elements of architecture to Damascus. This individual adoption of imperial patterns is an active orientation to a new cultural framework, translating these patterns into the local context by the local available means and knowledge. However, to my knowledge, these two references to another culture of building remained an exception for nearly another three decades.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq*, 312. For the development of the Ottoman *sūq* see: Stefan Weber, “The Transformation of an Arab-Ottoman Institution: The Sūq (Bazaar) of Damascus from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, in: *7 Centuries of Ottoman Architecture. “A Supra-National Heritage”*, eds. Nur Akin, Afife Batur, S. Batur, Istanbul: Yem 2000, 246 ff.; and Weber, *Zeugnisse kulturellen Wandels*, 194 ff.

*The introduction of a different architectural culture:  
the takiyya of Sultan Süleyman*

A more deliberate state policy of reinforcing Ottoman rule in the provinces is seen in Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent's (1520-1566) huge construction program on the pilgrim road to Mecca. This included the restoration of the city walls, the infrastructure and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem<sup>12</sup> and the construction of the well-known *takiyya al-Sulaymāniyya* (962/1554 until 967/1560, fig. 4) in Damascus, designed by plans of the famous court architect Sinan (~1490-1588). This building had a special role in the process of introducing Ottoman architectural designs and techniques. The *takiyya* of Süleyman the Magnificent is the "most Ottoman building" in Damascus, despite the integration of local decorative elements, and it had an enormous impact on the architecture of its time—by the importance of the building proper and the training of local craftsmen working on site with a foreign workshop. The architectural features of this building and its purely Ottoman design elements—just to name a few: the buttressed central dome of its mosque, its pencil shaped minarets, Ottoman like pointed arches, faience tiles—were emulated in several buildings and inspired the local builders to incorporate new principles and forms, and new approaches to urban setting, layout and decoration. The decoration and arrangement of buildings evolved, based on the local Mamluk tradition, into local interpretations of Ottoman architecture. The development is complex, but—to simplify—it appears that many of the decoration and construction techniques remained local (except for example the reintroduction of tiles), while in public buildings (mosques, schools, *khāns*, *sūqs*) Ottoman concepts of space were applied and new types of architecture were introduced (*külliye*, *imaret*, *bedesten*, etc.).<sup>13</sup> For architectural decoration, Mamluk motifs remained predominant but developed, by integrating the Ottoman floral motifs (flower bowls, tulips etc.), during the 17<sup>th</sup> century into a style unique to Damascus. Yet, in the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century it is far from being a homogeneous local style. These interpretations bore elements of the "İstanbūlī" "imperial" architecture and especially made mosque buildings

<sup>12</sup> Michael Meinecke, "Die Erneuerung von al-Quds/ Jerusalem durch den Osmanensultan Sulaimān Qānūnī", *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Palestine*, III (1988), 257-281.

<sup>13</sup> However, the *külliye* itself, with a mosque, school, kitchen (*imaret*) and other buildings arranged to an architectural unit like that of the *Takiyya al-Sulaymāniyya*, remained unique. Other clusters of buildings of a same *waqf* and/or building owner, for example the *Sināniyya* (see below) with its *sūq*, *ḥammām*, school (*maktab*) and fountain, do follow the previous pattern of an unordered arranged setting (see the mosque, *ḥammām*, and fountain of Tawrizī, 826/1423, 832/1428-29 and 845/1441-42). In Damascus the term *takiyya* (Turkish *tekke*) is used for important imperial foundations that provided food, which might be the reason why the two terms, *imaret/ takiyya*, were often used synonymously. See for this problematic: Astrid Meier, "For the Sake of God Alone? Food Distribution Policies, *Takiyyas* and *İmarets* in Early Ottoman Damascus", in: *İmarets in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Nina Ergin, Christoph K. Neumann, and Amy Singer, Istanbul forthcoming.



obviously Ottoman and at the same time distinctive, differing from those of Istanbul and other cities of the empire.

Two examples may help to elucidate this argument. The mosques al-Sināniyya (994/1586 to 999/1591, fig. 5, 7) and al-Siyāghūshiyya (1005/1596-97, fig. 6, 8) were both commissioned by important statesmen and feature prominently Ottoman elements. As Meinecke has shown, the prayer hall of Sināniyya Mosque (like that of the Darwīshiyya Mosque, 979/1571 to 982/1574-75) recalls the layout of the imperial mosque of Mihrimah in Istanbul (probably between 1565-70), which was also used as a model for the mosque of the Sokollu Mehmet Pasha Complex in Lüleburgaz (977/1569-70).<sup>14</sup> It seems that around 1570 this plan was a very attractive model for provincial mosques and this layout of Imperial architecture remained admired in Damascus. However, the Siyāghūshiyya Mosque recalls no direct archetype like the Sināniyya. Nevertheless it has among other features, a domed chamber as prayer hall with a high marble podium (*dhikr*), a domed vestibule, an Ottoman shaped minaret, and tiles and arches in the style of the Ottomans. While it is a distinctive Ottoman mosque, it is far from being a direct copy; rather, it is a complete local interpretation of imperial architecture. This mosque does not imitate imperial architecture, but is an adoption that integrates single elements, being inspired by the different concepts and combining them with local patterns.

The combinations of local elements—like most prominently, but not exclusively, the *ablaq* striping of the façade—and features from Ottoman architecture are too many to mention here. But they give evidence that the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a period that was highly creative, without formulating a set sample of patterns to be applied. The two briefly introduced local Ottoman mosques in our study look quite different from one another, and none of the 13 mosques or mosque-like buildings of that period resembles the other. On location, masters builders and craftsmen experimented each time anew. This is best demonstrated by the tiled minaret of the Sināniyya-Mosque. It remained unique. It fits the picture that Ḥasan Pasha Shūrbaza (d. 1027/1618), commissioned by the grand vizir Siyāghūsh Pasha to build a mosque for him, was responsible for many other buildings in the city as well, of which none resembled the architectural features of the mosque.<sup>15</sup>

Only the combination of elements deriving from different cultural settings cannot be called a proper local style. However the encounter of these architec-

<sup>14</sup> Compare: Godfrey Goodwin, *A History of Ottoman Architecture*, Oxford: Thames & Hudson 1971, 297 and Meinecke, "Die osmanische Architektur", 584 f.

<sup>15</sup> Further buildings of Ḥasan Pasha were a *khān* in Sūq al-Jaqmaq (Khān al-Zayt?), the *sūq* of grand vizir Murād Pasha, the Khān and Sūq al-Dhirā' (the above mentioned *bedesten* and Khān al-Murādiyya), and Hammām al-Buzūriyya. See: Muḥammad Amīn al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al-Athār fī A'yān al-Qarn al-Hādī 'Ashar*, 4 Vols. Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir 1970, II 25 ff., IV 356 f. Compare as well: Pascual, *Damas à la fin*, 105 ff.

tural cultures created a stimulating atmosphere which resulted later, in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, in an interesting architectural style of its own. Having been enriched in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Ottoman patterns, this "search for a style" started to evolve from the 1550s/60s.

*The melting into an idiosyncratic ex novo:  
the commercial buildings of Shamsī Aḥmad Pasha*

Many of those experiments remained unique, some of them laying the ground for more sustainable idiosyncratic patterns, best to be demonstrated in commercial buildings. In Damascus not only mosques, mausoleums, baths, and *bedesten* were domed, but also many *khāns*. These commercial buildings epitomise the development of characteristic Ottoman Damascene forms. The oldest dated *khān* surviving in its original appearance in Damascus, the Khān al-Jūkhiyya (963/1555-56), marks the beginning of the specifically Damascene development of domed *khāns* (fig. 9, 10). The courtyard of this *khān* was not—like normally throughout the Middle East—open, but was covered with two large domes. The *khān* was erected as a donation of the Ottoman governor Shamsī Aḥmad Pasha, while just a workshop was in town to build the *takiyya* of Sultan Süleyman and to rebuild the *takiyya* (not mosque) of Sultan Selim with two large domes very similar to the Khān al-Jūkhiyya. It is most likely that this workshop or Damascene craftsmen trained by them were employed by Shamsī Aḥmad Pasha to build his *khān*.<sup>16</sup> Another commercial building of the same patron proves that this was not a linear or exclusive development from the above-discussed Sūq al-Qāḍī Ibn al-Farfūr to the Khān al-Jūkhiyya, but that domes for commercial buildings became one acceptable and applicable model among others from which craftsmen and client could choose to match their means, technical capabilities, functional needs and taste. Next to his own *takiyya*, of which the gate is still visible in Sūq al-Ḥamidiyya, Shamsī Aḥmad Pasha commissioned the Sūq al-Arwām, built between 962/1554 and 963/1556 (fig. 11, 12, 13). Today this partially destroyed *sūq* with its two small integrated mosques differs from the normal pattern of a *sūq* in its second storey and can be closed like a *bedesten* on its two entrances. As a hybrid between *sūq* and *bedesten*, it was covered by cross vaults—a constructional need for this rare two storey building type and to my knowledge a unique case in Damascus. *Sūqs* were normally covered by wooden gabled roofs (replaced in the last decades of Ottoman rule by metal barrel vaulted or gabled roofs) or by the very rare domed market-street, like the Sūq al-Qāḍī. Next to the adoption of foreign patterns to be integrated in the local framework of architectural knowledge, Ottoman design models, like the domes,

<sup>16</sup> An observation first made by Marianne Boqvist, see Boqvist, *Architecture et Développement*, 199.

enriched and inspired Damascene craftsmen and patrons. The new models were accepted and integrated in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They became—as demonstrated with sacral architecture above—not a fully formulated new style but elements in a broader catalogue of applicable ways to construct.

However, the Khān al-Jūkhiyya is a bit more than that and was among those different patterns that devolved one that survived. Governors and notables from Damascus gave their commercial centre an Ottoman appearance with domed *khāns*, which were a unique phenomenon throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. The linkage of *khān* and dome became a model developed on the spot *ex novo* in the very moment when probably masters builders, craftsmen and patron connected different traditions to find a solution that derived from both architectural cultures, but did not belong to either of them. It was not the adoption or inspiration of an element, being incorporated once and then forming one of many combinational patterns. The Khān al-Jūkhiyya was the creation of a new model that stood out at the time by virtue of its dome arrangement and that was applied as such during the next centuries. Several other *khāns*—of those that have survived to our days and that were built in the first two hundred years after the Ottoman conquest—are domed, such as the Khān al-Murādiyya (1017/1608-09, completely changed after a fire in 1911), the Qaysāriyyat al-Haramayn (Khān Shaykh Qaṭanā, 1017/1608-09) and the undated *khāns* al-Ṣadrānī and al-Tutun (most probably middle and late 16<sup>th</sup> ct.), al-Ṣnawbar / al-Fawqānī and al-Safarjalānī (probably early and late 17<sup>th</sup> ct.). Only in Damascus does one find *khāns* covered by one, two, three, and later during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, four or even nine domes. It could be argued that the above-mentioned domed *sūq* and a *khān* commissioned by Ibn al-Farfūr might have been the starting point of the emergence of domed commercial buildings in Damascus.<sup>17</sup> Whichever building was the first domed *khān*,—it was the very beginning of something new, created by the contact of different cultures.

<sup>17</sup> The Khān al-ʿAmūd, which contains structures from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was built according to al-ʿUlābī by Ibn al-Farfūr as well. A court record from the 19<sup>th</sup> century supports this assumption. The *khān* was in 1239/1824 still a *waqf* of the Farfūr family (of al-Shihābī Aḥmad al-Farfūr). However, the inner of the two courtyards of the *khān* is covered by four domes that date to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and thus probably belong to the reconstruction of the *khān* by Ismāʿīl Pasha al-ʿAzīm (d. 1144/1731). Maybe the building of Ibn Farfūr was already domed and thereby represents the beginning of this development. The historians of that period do not specifically mention this building, and based on the above mentioned observation on the structure of the domes of Khān al-Jūkhiyya, I would argue that this commercial building of Shamsī Aḥmad Pasha was most probably the first domed *khān*. See for the Khān al-ʿAmūd: Weber, *Zeugnisse kulturellen Wandels*, 556 f. and for the mentioned sources: Markaz al-Wathāʾiq al-Tārikhiyya (al-Mahākīm al-Sharʿiyya) *sijill* 301/*wathāʾiq* 1483 (1239/1824); Akram al-ʿUlābī, *Khiṭaṭ Dimashq, Dirāsa Tārikhiyya Shāmila*, Dimashq: Dār al-Ṭibāʿ 1989, 485.

## 2. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century: The Age of the *A'yān*

The 18<sup>th</sup> century is often called the age of the *a'yān* (notables). Even if local notables have always been active in urban life, both before and after the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this label is not mistaken. Examining the architectural remains we find evidence for large-scale building activities by local families in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This period, for which the term "18<sup>th</sup> century" is used as short-hand, is to be understood as the period between 1695 and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The year 1695 has symbolic value, being the year when the lifelong right of tax-farming (*muqāṭa'ā*) was legalized in the empire. From this date on, an extraordinary number of buildings were constructed, indicating the economic strength and independence of local notables in cities and in the countryside. For it was most often local families, such as governors, *āghās* or *muqāṭa'īs*, whether in Ottoman service or not, who built the greater part of the public buildings of that period. This changed after the first hundred years of Ottoman rule, when high officials came to the Arab provinces, set up large foundations, erected public buildings, and then left again. Many of the important families of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Çapanoğulları and the Karasmanoğulları in Anatolia, the Shihabis (Shihābī family) in Lebanon, the 'Aẓms ('Aẓm family) in Syria, and the Çıldıroğulları between Tiflis and Doğubeyazıt, were very powerful local families inside the Ottoman system. They would normally be officially appointed and dismissed. But families had become powerful not only on the level of governors. Many, like 'Alī Āghā al-Ḥammūd and his family in Sidon, had procured the lifelong right of tax-farming and were therefore managing the taxation of huge amounts of land or goods at customs offices, a role they could easily exploit to the full. In this way, enormous wealth came to be concentrated in the hands of local families. They left an extremely rich and previously quite unknown architectural heritage. Local or "localized" families, especially in Sidon, Aleppo and Damascus, commissioned huge clusters of combined real estate, like houses, *khāns*, *sūqs*, *madrasas* and *ḥammāms* to form important and multifunctional urban units.

### *The climax of local patronship: the 'Aẓm buildings*

The example of the 'Aẓm family in Damascus is especially revealing. Between 1724 and 1808, members of this family served nine times as *wālī* (governor) of Damascus. Although for this survey of Ottoman Damascus no special research on the 'Aẓm family has been done, I came across some 30 buildings commissioned by this family, and many more would be discovered should research be focused on the building activities of this family (fig. 14).<sup>18</sup> Most of the buildings

<sup>18</sup> See for the 'Aẓm-Family: Karl Barbir, *Ottoman Rule in Damascus 1708-1758*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980; Abdel-Karim Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus 1723-1783*,



were erected in the *sūqs* of Damascus, where members of the different branches of the 'Azm family not only earned a lot of money, but invested it in buying very big plots of land and erecting next to *madrasas* and their residences many economically attractive buildings, like *khāns*, *sūqs* and *ḥammāms*. Some clusters were established as *waqf* by a single donor and arranged as interconnected urban units. Muḥammad Pasha al-'Azm (d. 1783), for example, donated in 1195/1780-81 houses, a *ḥammām* and a *sūq* at the southern moat of the citadel. Ismā'il Pasha al-'Azm (d. 1723-24), who was a very active patron, had among other houses a *ḥammām* and a *khān* built on the eastern end of the core district of the bazaar. 'Abdallāh (d. 1808-09), As'ad Pasha (d. 1757), Sulaymān Pasha and again Ismā'il Pasha donated numerous important buildings in the middle of the bazaar district in the region of the Sūq al-Buzūriyya and Sūq al-Khayyātīn.

This pattern of real estate clusters established by rich bourgeois families of the 18<sup>th</sup> century can be observed in many different cities. However, it is not a new pattern, and we know from other centuries that families were active in forming the city's structure through their *waqfs*. But judging from the remaining structures, we find—on comparing to the centuries before and after—many commercial, educational and residential buildings of high quality erected by these families. For instance, one family, the Ḥammūds, constructed the most outstanding remaining architectural cluster of different buildings in Sidon. Thanks to the inscriptions on the buildings, it was possible to find elements of what once must have been the core of the Ḥamūd real estates. Next to several *ḥammāms*, and a *madrasa*, the most outstanding structures from the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Sidon are the two houses of the family and a *khān*.<sup>19</sup> Thus it becomes clear that local families gave the most important impetus for the urban development in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

During this period of huge building activity by local families, the style of decoration and the layout of buildings also developed within a local framework. After the imperial influence during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, architecture in the Bilād al-Shām developed quite independently. From time to time new elements were incorporated, but in general the style of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is an evolution of the elements that were given in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The best exam-

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Beirut: Khayats 1966; Shimon Shamir, "As'ad Pasha al-'Azm and Ottoman Rule in Damascus (1743 – 1758)." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXVI (1963) 1-28; Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics, Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Stuttgart: Steiner 1985, 29 ff. There is no publication on the architecture of Damascus or the Bilād al-Shām in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. So far, see for the *waqf* of one governor: Brigit Marino, "Les Investissements de Sulaymān Pacha al-'Azm à Damas." *Annales Islamologiques* 34 (2000) 209-226.

<sup>19</sup> These buildings are the Bayt Debbané (1134/1721-22), Bayt Ḥammūd, known today as Madrasat al-'Ā'isha (1143/1730-31), and the Khān al-Qishla (1134/1721-22). Bayt Debbané is to be converted into a museum on houses and urban life in Ottoman Saida by the Debbané Foundation in cooperation with the Orient Institute Beirut (see: [www.museumsaida.org](http://www.museumsaida.org)). See for the buildings: Weber, "An Āghā"; and Weber/ Bodenstein, "A House and the City".

ples are the domed *khāns* that emerged in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which together with the *khāns* of the ʿAẓms achieve their most splendid form. Even if the most famous of the buildings, the Khān Asʿad Pasha al-ʿAẓm (1166/1751 to 1167/1753, fig. 15, 16) features for the first time stone carvings in the manner of the Ottoman baroque, which had just become popular in the capital, the proper layout of the building is the climax of the local genesis of domed *khāns*. A similar layout with nine domes is documented with the Galata Bedesten of Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror (1444, 1451-1481, fig. 17, 18), but it would be far-fetched to search for a link between both. The Bedesten is three centuries older and never since inspired craftsmen in the capital. Most probably the Khān Asʿad Pasha al-ʿAẓm is a genuine piece of local architecture and the climax of a development that started during the contact of different traditions two centuries ago.

*Patterns of a self-referring system: the colour paste decorations*

This independent development based on the Ottoman impact on local architecture in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is also apparent in the form and techniques of decoration. First of all, this concerns the colour paste technique, where coloured pastes were filled in prepared carved stones (fig. 19, 20). This technique, developed in Damascus and Cairo in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, evolved during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century into a decoration practice more or less unique to Damascus.<sup>20</sup> During this period the colour paste technique integrated Ottoman floral motifs like tulip and carnation, and built up a canon of motifs that did not undergo any profound change between 1600 and 1770. The designs evolved slightly during that period of time, but the shape of single elements—like the tulip or the carnation—remained nearly the same when the technique arrived in Damascus in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; therefore this type of decoration was quite different from what was en vogue in Istanbul during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In general, the local style of Damascus, consisting of elements from the architecture of the city before the Ottomans on the one hand, and from the single but strong impact of Ottoman architecture during the 16<sup>th</sup> century on the other hand, developed quite independently into a local “bourgeois” style, applied to the houses of wealthy owners and public buildings. This local Ottoman “bourgeois style” was very homogeneous throughout the city and highly standardized during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For this period, no direct European influences in Damascus can be traced and only very limited ones from Istanbul during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Only painted wooden interiors or ceilings (*ʿajamī*) feature motifs—like depictions of fruit bowls—known from interior decoration and fountains of late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup>

<sup>20</sup> To my knowledge, first applied on the coloured emblem of the Turba al-Rashidiyya (768/1366-67). It came to be part of decoration panels in the 1370s and started to replace the labour-intensive mosaics in portals, for example at the Zāwiyya al-Yūnisiyya (784/1382-83) and the Turba al-Taynabiyya (797/1394-95).

century Istanbul. Furthermore, the "Ottoman" style of Damascus also became influential in the cities close to Damascus. Between 1600 and 1820, one can see on individual buildings in Ḥasbayyā, Hama, Dayr al-Qamar, Sidon or Bayt al-Dīn colour paste decorations that were made by Damascene workshops.

Interior decorations of the palaces of the Shihābīs in Ḥasbayyā from 1009/1600-01 or of Yūsuf al-Shihābī in Dayr al-Qamar from 1180/1766-67 show Damascene craftsmanship just like Bayt al-Ḥammūd (Debbanē) from 1134/1721-22 and other buildings in 18<sup>th</sup> century Sidon. The patterns that one can find in Sidon or Dayr al-Qamar were, in part, exact copies or at least paralleled those frequently used in Damascus (fig. 20). On earlier buildings in Sidon or Dayr al-Qamar, neither this style nor these techniques were applied. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries craftsmen and master builders referred to Istanbul and developed parallel to Damascus new forms of a local Ottoman architecture, without any references to Damascus. This orientation and thus cultural point of reference shifted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Upper class families in southern Syria and Lebanon were orientated to the regional centre of Damascus and not so much to the imperial capital Istanbul during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is in sharp contrast to the developments in the 16<sup>th</sup> and, as we will see, the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus it is remarkable that tendencies of the age of the *a'yān*, when single Syrian families were in charge of running political and economic affairs are paralleled by architectural trends. As the main characteristic of architectural development we no longer see the merger of different cultural traditions and the orientation to another practice of building, but rather an inclination toward a self-referring, regional framework.

### 3. *The 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries:* *The Modernization of Urban Institutions*

With the return of Ottoman central power, following the efforts of Maḥmūd II (1808-1839) and the ministers and grand viziers of the *tanẓīmāt* period (1839-1876), the urban texture of the cities in Bilād al-Shām changed quite rapidly over the last five decades of Ottoman rule.<sup>21</sup> The urban transformation concerned nearly all sectors of architecture like public spaces, commercial districts and residential architecture. In the course of modernising state policy, the administration aimed to centralise and reform its institutions, especially in the domains of the army, police, justice, health, education and municipal management. In this process, new office buildings, schools, barracks, hospitals, etc. were erected in larger cities throughout the Empire. Many other projects can be traced back to local initiative or Syrians being part of the newly introduced administrative councils.

<sup>21</sup> For the history and architecture of late Ottoman cities: Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp and Stefan Weber, *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Beirut: Orient-Institut 2002. All relevant literature there.

The municipal institutions introduced into the region after the provincial reforms in 1864 played an important role in the process of modernising urban landscapes in the Ottoman Empire. On the basis of a new corpus of engineering and building codes, the new municipality—a council of elected city residents—had control over many private construction activities and launched an extensive program of public buildings, including infrastructure modernization (often by European contractors) and developments in the commercial, health and education sectors. Not everything that was planned was realised. However, at the turn of the century, public places like parks, coffee-houses and theatres were located by private and municipal initiative at new public centres. These centres were founded outside the old cities, for example in Damascus (Marja Square), Aleppo (Bāb al-Faraj), Beirut (Burj Square) and Tripoli (Tell Square). Numerous buildings of the Ottoman reform administration (like municipality buildings, high courts, sarays, etc.) were built along with hotels and modern transport facilities (tramway and railways). This occurred to the same extent in some cities—not all—and can be observed, for example, in Damascus much better than in Aleppo.

*Adopting and accommodating the new to one's own experience:  
the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya*

The new time was not chosen by the Damascenes but introduced by the state reforms and by the European dominated global economy that swashed new thoughts, techniques and goods to the Syrian coast from the 1830s onwards. Thus, the points of reference for developments in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries became Istanbul and Europe, whereby Istanbul itself had in the process of reform adopted European models according to its own needs and framework. It was mostly these receptions that came to the provinces, and European ideas and techniques reached Damascus in general via the capital (different from cities like Beirut and Izmir, where, next to the imperial centre, European influence was tangible in a much more direct way). Being active in these institutions and trained by the new education system, many Damascenes became themselves agents of reform. Moreover, new means of transportation and communication—especially illustrated newspapers—distributed new ideas in the city and led to a change in larger parts of Damascene society, best visible in the new system of clothing that prevailed in the streets at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, many aspects of urban and architectural culture first changed by an introduction by the state, and more and more thereafter by the adoption by local society of forms predominant in the capital and Europe. It is interesting that this acculturation with its orientation to new points of cultural references (quite different from the above discussed 18<sup>th</sup> century) did not lead to a pure copying of new forms but rather to accommodating and transforming these elements in order to match the local experience and needs.



The Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya, the core of the modernised bazaar of Damascus, is an interesting example of this adjustment to the local framework. Many of the Ottoman *sūqs* were remodelled in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as seen in Beirut (Sūq al-Ṭawīl), Damascus (sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya, Midḥat Pasha) and Tripoli (Sūq al-Bazarkān).<sup>22</sup> New or modernized wide market streets were built or enlarged through the commercial heart of those cities. Many aspects of the traditional *sūqs* changed. The intensification and further integration into a world economy not only brought new goods and merchants into the city, but changed attitudes towards selling and buying as well. Hotels, on the one hand, and shopping malls, on the other, took over the functions of the traditional *khāns*. In Damascus, these new shopping malls were built in a *khān*-like architecture (but without the traditional functions of storage and overnight stays) or as free-standing buildings in a Europeanized architecture. The bazaar streets themselves were enlarged and often remodelled as arcades.<sup>23</sup>

The Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya, which was built in two steps (1<sup>st</sup> phase: between 1301/1883-84 and 1304/1886; 2<sup>nd</sup> phase between 1894 and 1312-13/1895-96, fig. 21) by the municipality of Damascus, clearly illustrates this development. Its layout with the metal barrel vaults (replacing the wooden ones in 1911) and the new designs of façades using the newest building materials like steel beams was inspired by European arcades that had also been built in Istanbul. However, it was not called *arcade al-Ḥamīdiyya*, and visitors, at that time or today, perceive it as one among the other *sūqs* of the city. The Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya is a very impressive adaptation of a traditional institution to modern demands, and, being more than 400 m long, the most outstanding example of the very many modernized *sūqs* from the late Ottoman Empire. The modernization of urban space happened next to the integration of new patterns (like the municipality, hotels, tram and railway, etc.) to a large extent as well inside the framework of long-established areas of the built environment—like the traditional building type of the *sūq* here. Next to the process of adaptation, the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya also stands for the cultural change of a provincial capital during the four centuries of Ottoman rule. The pictures of the Sūq al-Arwām (fig. 12, 13) and Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya (fig. 21), both Ottoman constructions—one erected in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by a governor, and the other more than 300 years later by the elected municipal council—clearly show the shift of patronship, urban planning and concepts of design.

<sup>22</sup> Most probably due to the solid stone structures, this process of rebuilding the *sūqs* was not so prevalent in Aleppo or Sidon.

<sup>23</sup> For further information on the *sūqs* in Damascus in Ottoman times and their changes see: Weber, "The Transformation" and Stefan Weber, "The Reshaping of Damascus, Architecture and Identity in an Arab-Ottoman City." In: *From the Syrian Land to the States of Syria and Lebanon*, eds. Thomas Philipp and Christoph Schumann, Beirut: Orient-Institut 2004; Weber, *Zeugnisse kulturellen Wandels*, 203 ff.

*Modernizing Private Space: The Central Hall House*

To illustrate patterns of influence and the many changes in function and layout of buildings, techniques and forms of construction and decoration, one last example of architecture will be briefly discussed here. The modernization of urban space and architecture, as well as of social organization, penetrated the private sphere too. The Arab courtyard house (fig. 22, 23, no.2) underwent profound changes in its layout, decoration and general appearance to a degree not witnessed in the centuries before. Nearly all decoration techniques that we know from Mamluk Damascus and the first centuries of Ottoman rule, like colour paste and wood-lacquer work (*'ajamī*), were replaced by the imported techniques of the Ottoman baroque style (as a reinterpretation of European forms in the capital): wall paintings, and wood and marble carving. Furthermore, the functions and organization of rooms in Damascene private houses changed to a large extent with the totally new imported feature of a central hall arrangement (next to modifications in the layout of rooms in the still common traditional courtyard houses).

The version that became important for Damascus and other regions of the empire is marked by a central room in the house that gives access to the other rooms (fig. 23, no.1). As such, it has functions very similar to the courtyard of the classical Arab house. The central hall (in Damascus called *sofa*) gives the city a new kind of residential space, which was often found in free-standing houses of two or three floors with a clear structured façade, but without a courtyard. This type—often upper-class house—with a central hall had been well-known in Istanbul and the larger Anatolian cities since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For ease of terminology, I call this type of house *konak*.<sup>24</sup> The Turkish name *konak* refers to upper-class houses and important administrative buildings of this type. It was this way of laying out a building that became prominent from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

The first examples of this house type were introduced by high-ranking Ottoman officials or members of the local elite. Examples of a central hall can be found in Damascus from the 1840s (maybe even earlier) in prestigious buildings, for instance, like the *saray* and the military hospital (both destroyed). The Damascene National Archives contains an imperial order (*fermān*) describing how the

<sup>24</sup> For a definition of the term “*konak* -style”, see Stefan Weber: “Der Marğa-Platz in Damascus – Die Entstehung eines modernen Stadtzentrums unter den Osmanen als Ausdruck strukturellen Wandels (1808-1918).” *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 10 (1998), 291-344, Taf. 77-88, here 317 f. To distinguish the new house—which, like the original model in Istanbul and Anatolia, often had a central hall—from the Arab courtyard house, I use the word *konak* for houses in Damascus with the new layout (central hall, free standing, tiled roofs, and structured street facades with large windows). See as well: Weber, *Zeugnisse kulturellen Wandels*, 355 ff.

entrance hall of the military hospital was to be built.<sup>25</sup> The architectural description clearly specifies a central hall, which is also visible on historical photographs from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It was this design that became the pattern on which rooms were to be built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As an architectural feature, the *konak* had a "revolutionary" impact on the layout of buildings. In the 1860s this *konak*-type spread all over the empire and became the most common design for houses of the lower, middle and upper classes and for administrative buildings and schools, etc. In Damascus—like in other cities of the empire—most of the buildings of the new administration were centred around a middle hall (fig. 23, no. 5). The origin of influence was the capital of the empire. The imperial centre was standardizing architecture in all provinces through the new building codes and the body of municipal engineers. But even if the architectural models in the empire became far more standardized than they had ever been before, every region developed its own models in response to the impetus from the centre. David (Aleppo) and Davie (Beirut) show how the central hall merged with the existing local vernacular architecture to form the typical "Aleppine" or "Beiruti" house that has specific characteristics not common in other cities of the empire.<sup>26</sup> In Damascus the *konak* and the *dār* or *bayt* (Arabic terms for house) fused into a new form of house: the Arab courtyard house was now combined with a "*konak*" as a front house with an elaborated street façade. In the old town of Damascus, many houses that were remodelled in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries show this pattern (fig. 23, no. 3). Interestingly this was not only seen in adaptations of old houses; entirely new houses built outside the old city were also designed as courtyard houses with a "*konak*" (fig. 23, no. 4). The two types became one, thus forming a new type of house widely adopted at the turn of the century. Similar to the central dome arrangement introduced centuries before,

<sup>25</sup> See the Syrian National Archive: al-Awāmir al-Sultāniyya, *siḡill* 3/*watbiqa* 119, 122, 123 (1259/1843).

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Claude David: "L'Habitat Permanent des Grands Commerçants dans les Khans d'Alep: Processus de Formation Locale et Adaptation d'un Modèle Extérieur." In: *Les Villes dans l'Empire Ottoman: Activités et Société*, ed. Daniel Panzac, Aix-en-Provence: IREMAM-CNRS 1994, 85-124. May Davie and Lévon Nordiguian, "L'Habitat Urbain de Bayrūt al-Qadimat au 19<sup>e</sup> Siècle." *Berytus* 35 (1987) 165-197. Unfortunately both articles do not integrate the local development into the Ottoman framework and underestimate the interregional commonalities. For a more comparative approach: Anne Mollenhauer, "The Central Hall House, Regional Commonalities and Local Specificities: A Comparison between Beirut and al-Salt." In: *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, eds. Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp and Stefan Weber, Beirut: Orient-Institut 2002, 275-296; Anne Mollenhauer, *Städtische Mittelhallenhäuser in Bilad al-Sham im 19. Jahrhundert – lokale und überregionale Einflüsse auf eine Bauform*, unpublished PhD thesis Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main: 2005; Michael F. Davie ed., *La Maison Beyrouthine aux Trois Arcs, une Architecture Bourgeoise du Levant*, Beirut: Académie Libanaise des Beaux-arts and Tours: Centre de Recherches et d'Études sur l'Urbanisation du Monde Arabe 2003.

the courtyard houses with a "*konak*" as a front house evolved into a new archetype when different architectural cultures, which became very successful in the local context, came into contact.

### Conclusion

It is interesting to observe how patterns of modern architecture developed in Damascus. This is not only a question of style and form, but also involves a flow of ideas in the context of reciprocal cultural progress. Certainly pathways of architectural influence are as manifold, reflecting the complex patterns of human action. This becomes even more relevant in the time when transportation and communication were facilitated by steamboats, railways, newspapers and telegraphy. From the developments generated by very different people during the four centuries of Ottoman rule in Bilād al-Shām, one can tease out some of the key characteristics of urban organization and architecture, and identify the main elements of persistence and change. What emerged here in the case of Damascus is typical of the general situation in most of the urban centres in the Bilād al-Shām and, to a large extent, also in other parts of the Ottoman Empire.

The characteristics of urban development and architecture in Damascus between 1516 and 1918 can be summarized as follows: In the first few decades after the Ottoman conquest, local architectural traditions continued to thrive, and Ottoman architectural models were not emulated for a while, not even in the foundations of successive governors and of Sultan Selīm himself. On the other hand, carefully planned building activities started by the Sultan in 924/1518 and the first foundations of the governors in the western *extra muros* do show an urbanistic approach that is followed up in the next decades. Ottoman architectural concepts were first brought to the city by local dignitaries, most probably to show their affiliation with the new rulers. From the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the impact of imperial architecture on the city was very strong and must be understood in the context of the extensive "imperial" building program of Sultan Süleyman (the Magnificent) in the Arab provinces. This led to a highly experimental period, fusing together local traditions and Ottoman elements in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, laying the ground for development of a distinctive Damascene-Ottoman style. This local Ottoman style became formalised during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the manner of decorating a building was soon copied in other cities, like Sidon and Dayr al-Qamar, where local builders turned for guidance to the centre of the region and not to the centre of the empire. With an upsurge in building activity by local families, big structures—mainly in the *sūq* of Damascus *intra muros*—were built in a local formalised style developed in Ottoman times and typical of Damascus, with its elements of local (Mamluk) architecture enriched by Ottoman ones.



The tendency towards uniformity of architectural patterns throughout the empire, such as one can observe later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was still not visible at that time. The level of Ottomanisation of urban structures and urban society—that had started back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century—took place on a totally different scale after the *tanẓīmāt*. Now the state reasserted its influence through an extensive building program that remodelled many parts of the city on the basis of patterns developed in Istanbul and applied locally by new bodies of urban planning and management. Nearly all the decoration techniques and many construction techniques changed as new models and principles of spacial organization were applied during the period of modernization in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. But even though models from Istanbul and Europe had an overwhelming influence on the architecture and urban structures of the city of Damascus, and even though there were building codes and an engineering office to oversee construction and decoration, the architects, craftsmen and property owners developed their own solutions locally, for which the combination of the *konak* and the courtyard house serves as one example.

During the four centuries of Ottoman rule in Bilād al-Shām, we were able to observe several shifts in the cultural framework to which master builders, craftsmen and their clients turned. As the points of references were different, quite different ways of who was referring how to another architectural tradition did (or didn't) appear. The variety of patterns included the continuation of known ways of construction and decoration, the import of new elements by non-Damascenes (mainly from the Ottoman administration), and the incorporation of single elements after techniques or forms became locally available, while other actors turned actively to new cultural horizons in the search for forms matching their own experience. The new models were very seldom exactly copied, but most of the time, during a process of adoption, changed and combined with locally available forms to match existing needs, taste and means. Often new forms evolved *ex novo*, by not only combining, but converting creatively several elements from different contexts into something hitherto unknown. The architectural heritage of Damascus, and thus of many other cities in the region, preserved this built environment deriving from multiple cultures.



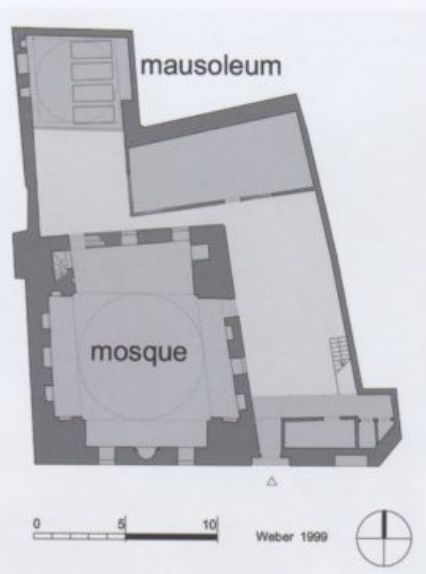


Fig. 2: Zāwiyya al-Ṣumādiyya (934/1527), ground plan (Weber)

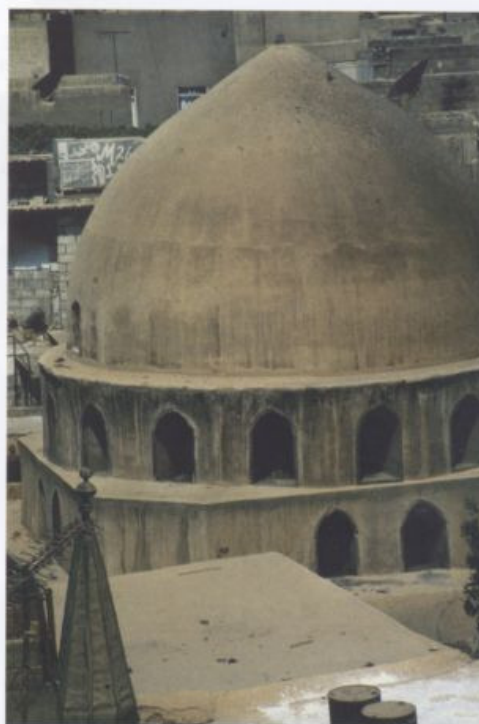


Fig. 3: Zāwiyya al-Ṣumādiyya (934/1527), dome (Weber)



Fig. 4: al-Takiyya al-Sulaymāniyya (right) and the so called al-Madrasa al-Salimiyya (974/1566-67, left above) and training institute for teachers (Dār al-Mu'allimin 1328/1910-11, left down) ca. 1930 (IFPO)



Fig. 5: Mosque al-Sināniyya (994/1586 to 999/1591), western street façade (Weber)

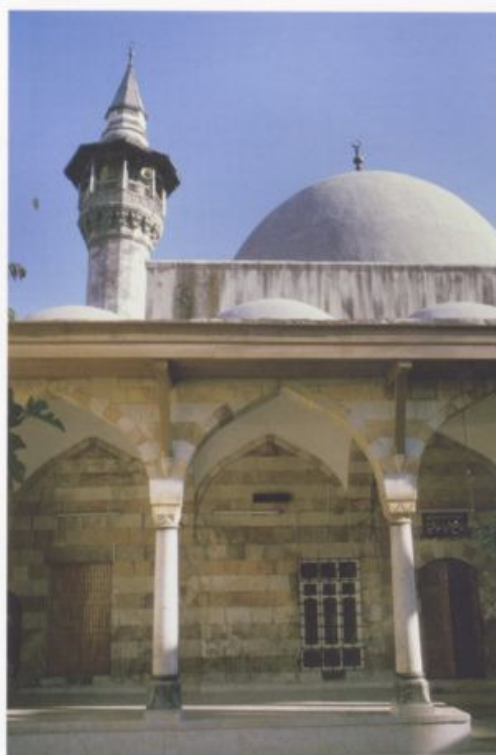


Fig. 6: Mosque al-Siyāghūshiyya (1005/1596-97), courtyard façade (Weber)



Fig. 7: Mosque al-Sināniyya (994/1586 to 999/1591), plan (after Wulzinger / Watzinger)



Fig. 8: Mosque al-Siyāghūshiyya (1005/1596-97), plan (Weber)



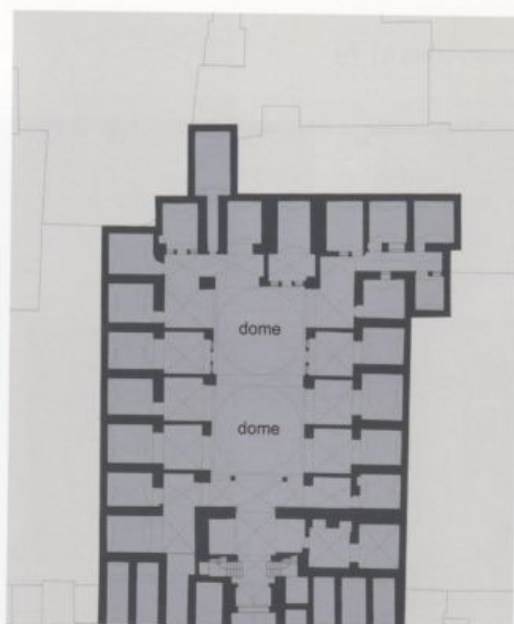


Fig. 9: Khān al-Jūkhiyya (963/1555-56), plan (Weber)



Fig. 10: Khān al-Jūkhiyya (963/1555-56), courtyard (Weber)

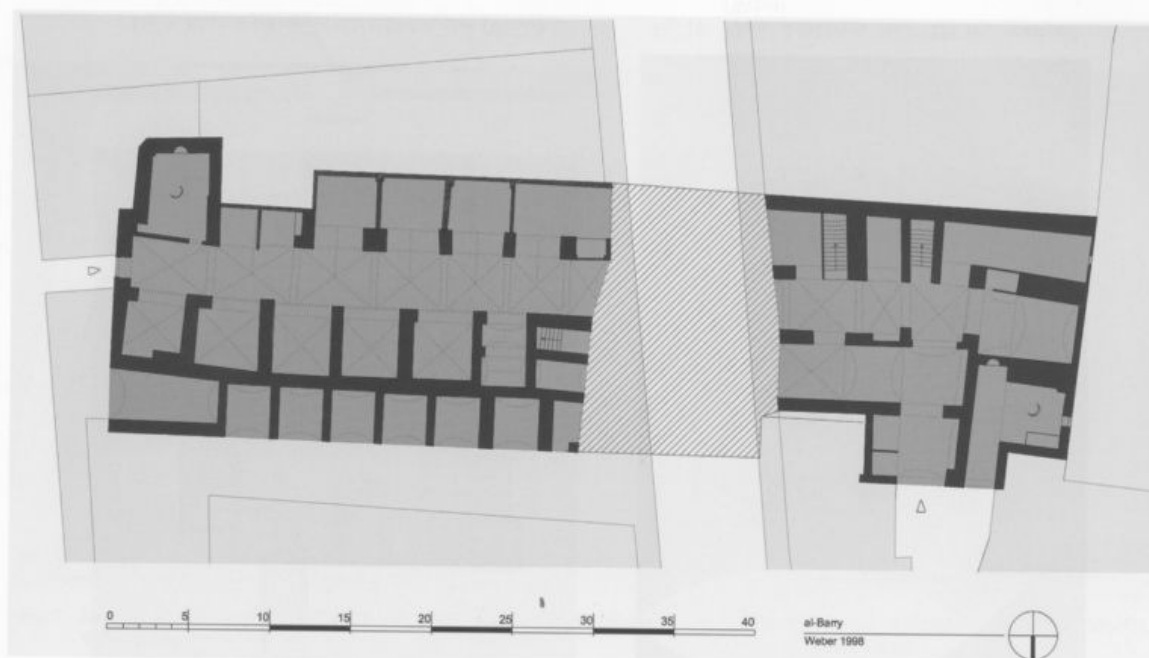


Fig. 11: Süq al-Arwām (963/1556), plan (Weber)

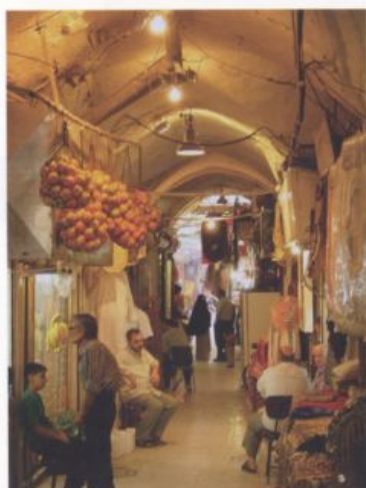


Fig. 12: Süq al-Arwām (963/1556), inside (Weber)



Fig. 13: Süq al-Arwām (963/1556), modern cut through the building (Weber)

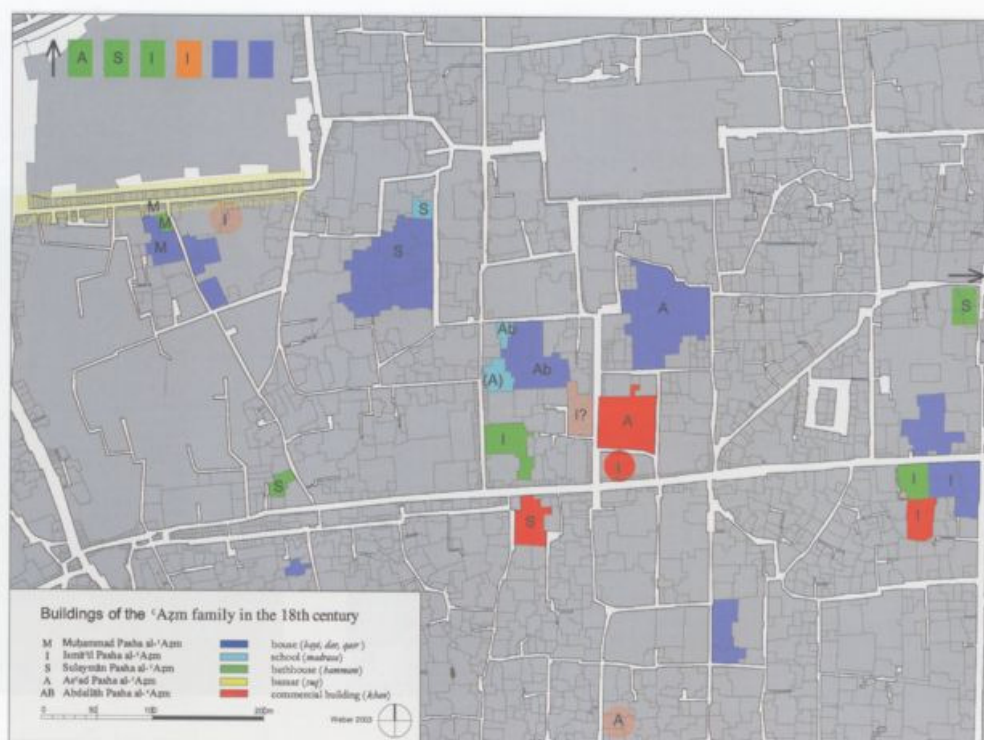


Fig. 14: Buildings of the 'Azm family in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Weber)

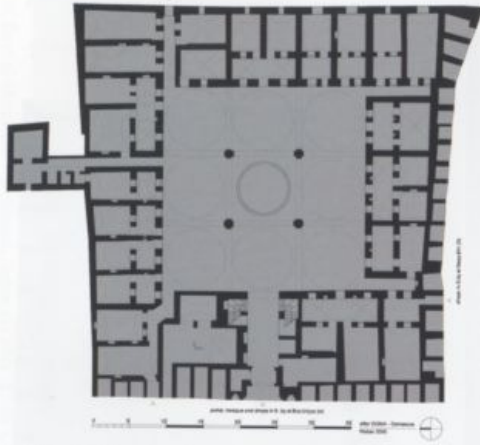


Fig. 15: Khān As'ad Pasha al-'Aẓm (1167/1753), plan (after DGAMS)



Fig. 16: Khān As'ad Pasha al-'Aẓm (1167/1753), hall (Weber)

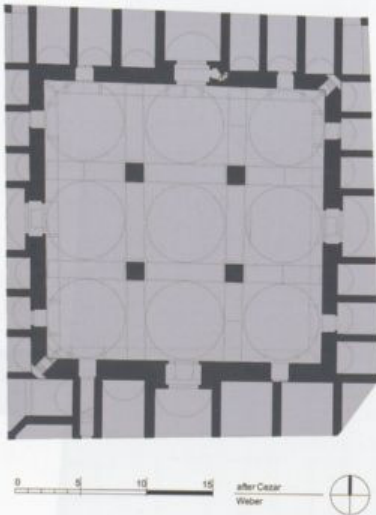


Fig. 17: Galata Bedesten, Istanbul, plan (after Cezar)

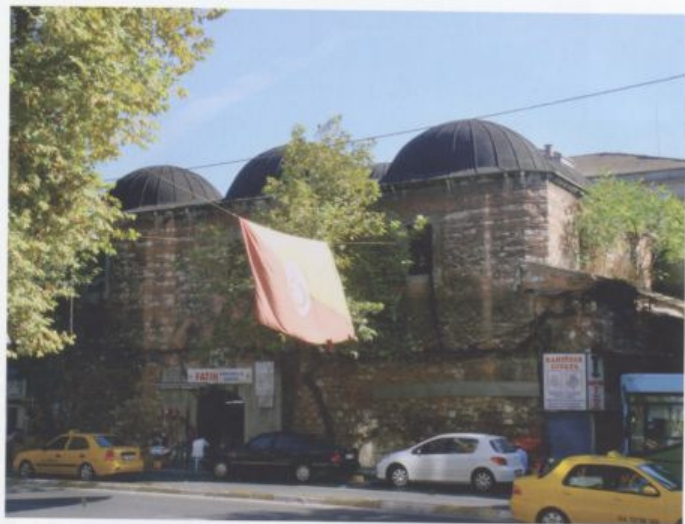


Fig. 18: Galata Bedesten, Istanbul, street façade (Weber)





Fig. 19: Bayt al-ʿAqqād (1167/1754), *qāʿa* (Weber)



Fig. 20: Bayt al-Hammūd / Debbané, Sidon (1134/1721-22 ), *qāʿa* (Weber)





Fig. 21: Sûq al-Ĥamidiyya (1883-1894), eastern part (Weber)

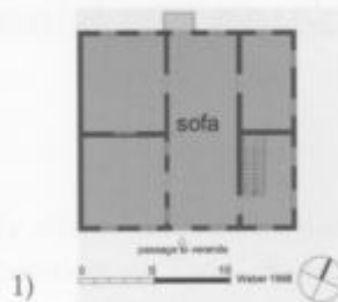


Fig. 22: Bayt Niyādū, courtyard (TU Dresden)

1) Bayt al-Dālāni

~1880, cadastral-no: XXIV/4-819, first floor.

*Konak* – central hall building on two floors without courtyard.

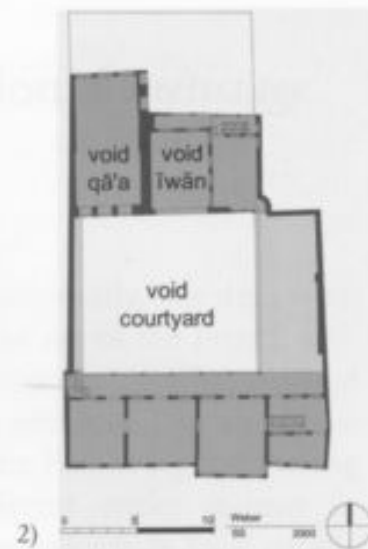


1)

2) Bayt 'Ajami-Shattā

18th century, modernized in 1878, cadastral-no: X/2-494, first floor.

Traditional courtyard house on two floors with *iwān*.

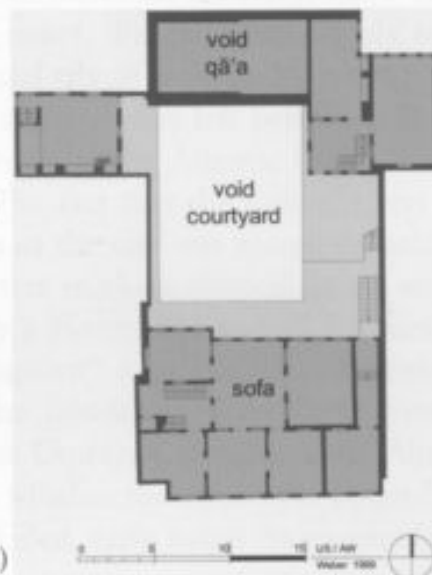


2)

3) Bayt Zanāniri

Rebuilt in 1871, cadastral-no: X/2-506, first floor.

Traditional courtyard house on two floors with *iwān* and a *konak* like front-house with *sofa*. (*iwān* only in the ground floor.)

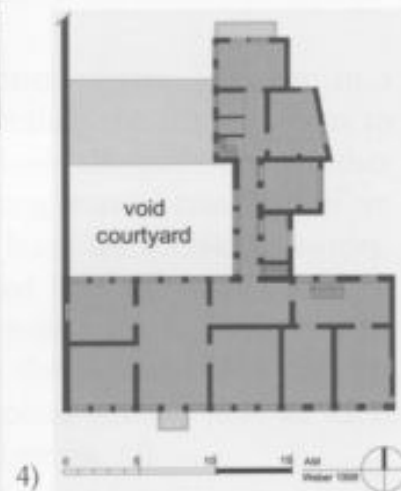


3)

4) Bayt Bizm

Built around 1900, cadastral-no: II-229, first floor.

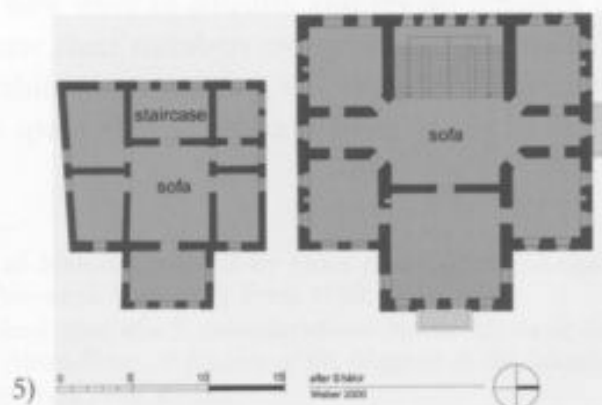
Courtyard house on three floors with *iwān* and *konak* like front-house with *sofa* and *franka*. (*iwān* only in the ground floor.)



4)

5) Municipality (right) – medical centre (left)

Built between 1310/1892-93 and 1311/1893-94, first floor of the medical centre in 1918, cadastral-no: VIII/3-1030, first floor. Administration buildings from the municipality in manner of a *konak* with a central hall (*sofa*).



5)

Fig. 23: Examples central hall buildings in Damascus (Weber)