

Sokollu Mehmet Pasha, the son of a Bosnian priest who rose to be perhaps the ablest of all of Süleyman the Magnificent's Grand Viziers. Recruited into the Janissary corps as a youth, Mehmet was educated in the Palace School at Topkapı. His obvious abilities brought him early preferment and he rose rapidly in the Ottoman hierarchy, becoming Grand Vizier in 1565. He continued to hold the post under Süleyman's son and successor, Selim II, and married the Selim's daughter, Princess Esmahan, in whose honour he built this mosque (the mosque is officially named after her but it is more commonly associated with her more famous husband). After Selim's death in 1574, Sokollu Mehmet Pasha continued as Grand Vizier under Murat III until 1579, when he was murdered by a mad soldier in the Divan.

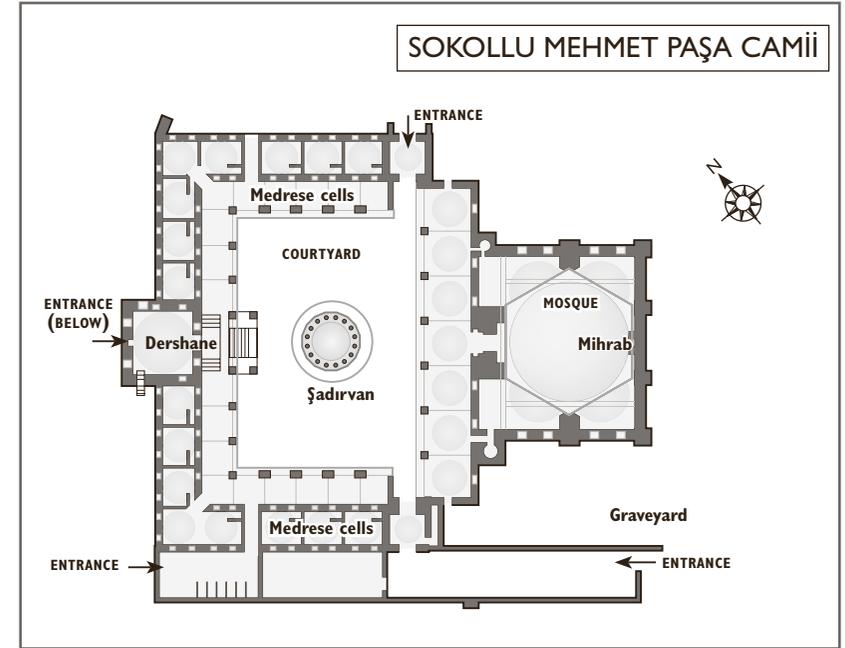
### Exterior of Sokollu Mehmet Paşa Camii

The courtyard of the mosque is extremely pleasing. It served, as did many mosque courtyards, as a medrese, with the scholars living in the little domed cells under the portico (now glassed in). Each cell had a single window, a fireplace, and a recess for storing bedding, books and personal belongings. Instruction was given in the dershane, the large domed room over the staircase in the west wall. The fine şadırvan in the centre of the courtyard is still in use. Above the windows of the mosque porch are some elegant Koranic inscriptions in blue and white faience.

### Interior of Sokollu Mehmet Paşa Camii

The mosque interior is extremely harmonious. In plan the space is a hexagon inscribed in an almost square rectangle, and the whole is covered by a dome, with small semidomes at the four corners. Around three sides runs a low gallery supported on slender marble columns with lozenge capitals. The polychrome of the arches, whose voussoirs are of alternate red and white marble, is characteristic of the period.

Koranic inscription fringed by leaves and flowers. Sixteenth-century calligraphic faience panel from the exterior of Sokollu Mehmet Paşa Camii.



The tile decoration is used sparingly and to good effect. Only certain portions of the walls have been given revetment, most importantly the central section of the east wall. The mihrab is framed with tiles decorated with vine and floral motifs in turquoise on a background of pale green, interspersed with panels of fine calligraphy with white letters on a deep blue field. The mumber hood is clad in similar tiles. Above the mihrab, the framed arch is pierced by elegant stained glass windows, whose bright spectrum of colours complements the cool tones of the faience flowers around and below.

Above the entrance portal is a small surviving specimen of painted decoration. It consists of elaborate arabesque designs in rich and varied colours. Also above the door, surrounded by a design in gold, there is a fragment of black stone from the Ka'aba in Mecca; there are other fragments in the mihrab and mumber.

### Environs of Sokollu Mehmet Paşa Camii

After leaving the mosque courtyard by the gateway under the dershane, turn left and then right at the next corner onto Kadirga Limanı Cd. (map p. 349, D4). This picturesque old street soon leads to a large open square, the heart of area known as **Kadirga Limanı**, 'Galley Harbour'. This was originally a seaport, long since silted up and built over, created by Julian the Apostate in 362. In about 570 Justin II redredged and enlarged it and named it after his wife Sophia. It had to be continually redredged but remained in use until after the Ottoman Conquest. By about 1550, when the French



Detail of the neo-Baroque clock-tower outside Dolmabahçe Palace (1890–95).

### Dolmabahçe Camii

The mosque on the seashore some 300m upstream from the Kabataş ferry port is **Dolmabahçe Camii** (map p. 345, E2). It was built in 1853 for the Valide Sultan Bezmalem, mother of Sultan Abdülmecit; the architect was Nikoğos Balyan, who worked with his father on the new Dolmabahçe Palace, also for Abdülmecit. The wide cartwheel arches of this mosque are very distinctive, divided into great segments like a wedge of lemon. The minarets are very slender, and each is in effect a Corinthian column, fluted up until the acanthus-leaf capital, above which rises a tapering witch's hat roof. The mosque

is preceded not by a classical porticoed avlu but by an eclectic front resembling a villa façade. All these elements are trademarks of Balyan mosque architecture.

The neo-Baroque **clock-tower** to the north of the mosque was erected by Sarkis Balyan in 1890–95 for Abdülmecit II. There are clock faces on all sides with Arabic numbers; these were made by the French horologist Jean-Paul Garnier.

Directly across the avenue from Dolmabahçe Camii there is a **tiny külliye** with a five-windowed sebil. It was built in 1741 by the sipahi Hacı Mehmet Emin Ağa. It is flanked symmetrically by a door on one side and by a çeşme on the other; behind three barred apertures are the tombs of the members of the sipahi's family; his own tomb, unusually, is in the sebil itself.

### DOLMABAĞÇE SARAYI

Map p. 345, F2. Open 9–4; closed Mon and Thur. Bus 28 or 28T from Eminönü to Beşiktaş, or tram T1 to Kabataş, then walk.

Dolmabahçe Sarayı was the principal imperial residence in the late years of the Ottoman Empire, particularly under Abdülmecit I, from whose reign the current building dates. The public entrance is through the gardens to the south. The most impressive aspect of the palace is its white marble seaside façade, 284m long.

#### HISTORY OF DOLMABAĞÇE SARAYI

The site of Dolmabahçe was originally a small harbour on the Bosphorus. On 22nd April 1453, during the Ottoman siege of Constantinople, Mehmet II had 70 ships anchored here in preparation for the strategem that turned the tide of battle in his favour. After sunset he had the ships placed on wheeled platforms and hauled by oxen over the heights of Pera and then down to Kasımpaşa on the Golden Horn, thus bypassing the chain with which the Byzantines closed the mouth of the inner harbour. This gave the Turks control of the Horn and set the stage for their final conquest of Constantinople.

Shortly after the Conquest, Fatih laid out a royal garden on this site, and early in his reign Selim I built a seaside kiosk here. Early in the 17th century, Ahmet I extended the royal gardens by filling in the seashore in front of them, a project that was completed by his son and successor, Osman II; thenceforth this site was known as Dolmabahçe, the 'filled-in garden'. By the beginning of the 19th century there was a large imperial summer residence here, and Mahmut II seems to have preferred it to the old palace of Topkapı.

His son and successor, Abdülmecit I, decided to move out of Topkapı altogether, and in 1844 he commissioned Karabet Balyan and his son Nikoğos to replace the existing structures at Dolmabahçe with a new palace. It was completed in 1855, after which time Dolmabahçe served as the principal imperial residence. The

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