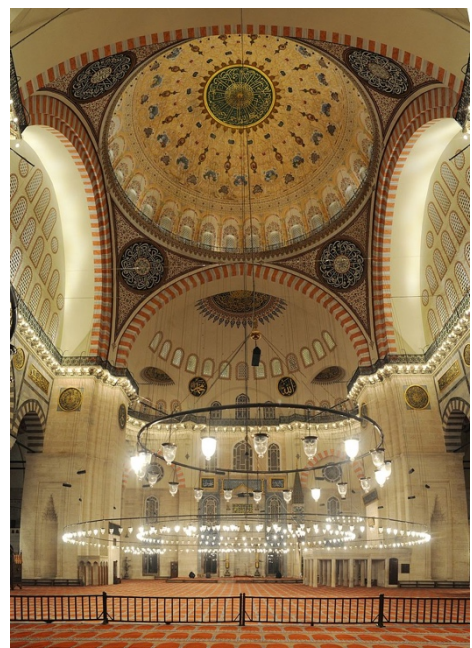
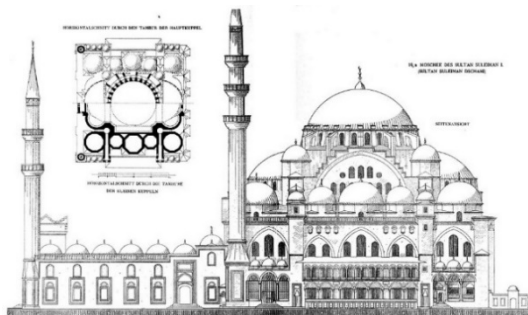




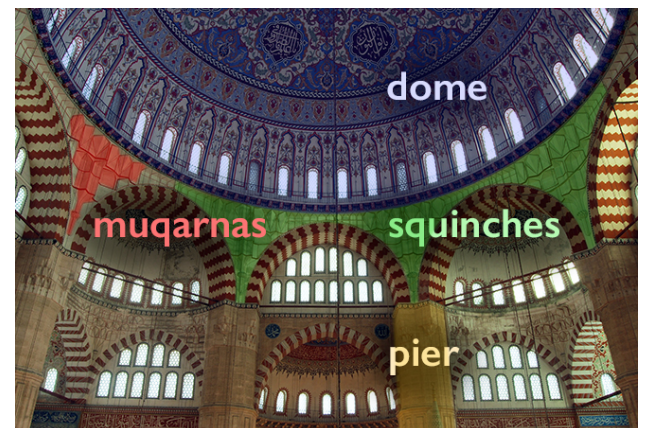
Süleymaniye Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey

- **Architect:** Mimar Sinan (1490-1588)
- **Patron:** Sultan Süleyman I (ruled from 1520-66)
- **Date of construction:** 1548-1559
- **Function:** Mosque - a Muslim place of worship, urban complex, monument to Imperial grandeur
- **Nationality:** Ottoman
- **Location:** Istanbul (previously Constantinople), Turkey
- **Size:** interior 59m square, dome 53m high
- **Materials:** marble, granite and porphyry



1. ART HISTORICAL TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- **Central plan** situated so the whole building is directed towards Mecca
- Square interior
- **Dome** (qubba in Arabic) (53m high, 27.5m diameter): represents the vault of heaven, carried on piers and buttresses
- Dome flanked by two **semi-domes** with buttresses in the walls, half inside the building and half outside
- Grand fenestrated **tympanum arches** dominate the façades divided into three sections by buttresses
- **Pendentives**: supports which lift the dome above the piers on the interior
- Huge **courtyard** on west side with peristyle arcade
- Columns have **lozenge and muqarnas capitals**
- Four **minarets** (towers – for the muezzin who calls the faithful to prayer, and as a visual symbol) – shows it has been endowed by a Sultan (otherwise would have only one or two). The north-south axis is accentuated by varying size of each matching pair
- Ten galleries (**serifes**) shows that Süleyman was the 10th Ottoman sultan
- The interior is legible from the exterior, with unbounded space and multiple layers of 249 windows
- **Mihrab**: a niche in the wall which symbolises the place where the prophet Muhammad stood when he addressed the faithful in the mosque at Medina
- **Minbar**: pulpit or elevated platform from which the Imam leads the service
- **Muqarnas**: ornamental vaulting like a hood, evoking a gate
- **Qibla**: tri-partite wall in which the mihrab is set, decorated with floral patterns in tiles, and stained glass to symbolise paradise. These include peonies and chrysanthemums from east Asia and tulips from central Asia.
- **Iznik tiles**: richly coloured tiles for architectural decoration were part of the Ottoman ‘dynastic signature’. Similar designs are found on a wide range of objects.
- **Calligraphy** in a unified style focuses on themes of worship and divine forgiveness; Koranic roundels
- Raised on a **podium** the mosque complex is sculpted in three dimensions upon layered terraces and seems to grow organically from a hill dominating the cityscape, with its lateral facades given unusual dominance.

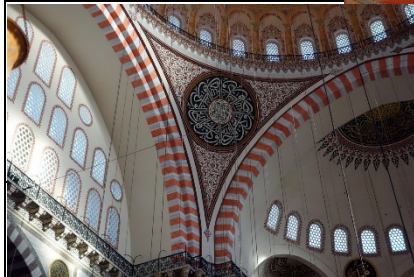
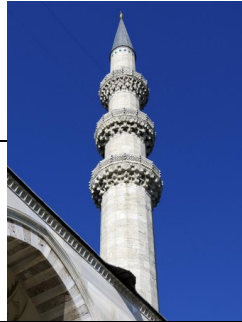


Süleymaniye has a bold layout, the centrally located, centrally planned mosque being surrounded by a large outer courtyard with walls pierced by iron-grilled windows. The peripheral buildings are separated by peripheral walkways and located to the N.E., N.W. and S.W. within a strong rectilinear scheme with only the Hadith college diagonally placed. The square prayer hall is roofed by a central dome, flanked by two semi-domes along the qibla axis. Five small domes of alternating sizes are positioned above the side galleries. The large central dome rests on four gigantic central piers placed in a square. The triple pointed arches separating the central square from the side galleries are carried on two red granite columns giving an elongated volumetric appearance to the building. The rectangular courtyard to the N.W. has a central marble fountain and three-storey gatehouse – an unprecedented feature. Four

minarets (Süleyman was the fourth sultan), a shorter pair with two galleries at the north side, and taller minarets with triple galleries to the south, contribute to the pyramidal composition of the mosque.

We can look at the **Süleymaniye Mosque** as an example of **classical Ottoman** architecture. It is a classical style in the sense that it is based on proportion (modular units of domed squares multiplied by simple units) and symmetry, with design and colour and decoration as subsidiary. It is also representative of this period of Ottoman architecture when the empire spread across many cultures.

Give the architectural term for each of these images from the **Süleymaniye Mosque**:



Give a brief definition of the Ottomans:

And read this:

<http://www.discoverislamicart.org/gai/ISL/page.php?theme=10>

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2. CULTURAL, SOCIAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL FACTORS

Who was Süleyman?

Süleyman was the tenth and longest reigning Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Under his rule, the Empire numbered some 15-25 million people.

Under his rule (1520-1566), the Ottoman Empire enjoyed great success in financial, military and cultural terms. He personally led attacks on Belgrade and Rhodes and conquered much of Hungary, signing a peace treaty with the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V of Spain and Ferdinand 1 of Austria in 1547 (an achievement celebrated by the construction of this mosque). He expanded the empire created by his predecessor Selim which included much of the Middle East and large areas of North Africa as far west as Algeria, with campaigns against the Safavid Persia. The Ottoman Turks had captured Constantinople in 1453, by this point, the Empire extends from Budapest to Baghdad, including Mecca and North Africa.

The Ottoman fleet also dominated the seas from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. If you are studying **Othello** in English Literature, you will be aware of the Venetian Duke sending Othello to Cyprus to fight the Ottoman fleet (called Turkish in modern editions).

Known to his people as Suleyman the Lawgiver, he instituted major legislative changes relating to society, education, taxation and criminal law. He harmonized the relationship between the two forms of Ottoman law: sultanic (Kanun) and religious (Sharia). Every sultan, when young, learned a craft and Süleyman was a goldsmith. He also became a great patron of culture, overseeing the "Golden" age of the Ottoman Empire in its artistic, literary and architectural development. Süleyman is also famous for his writings as a poet (in both Turkish and Persian). This is his most famous verse:

The people think of wealth and power as the greatest fate,
But in this world a spell of health is the best state.
What men call sovereignty is a worldly strife and constant war;
Worship of God is the highest throne, the happiest of all estates.

Education was another important area for the Sultan. Schools attached to mosques and funded by religious foundations provided a largely free education to Muslim boys in advance of the Christian countries of the time. In his capital, Süleyman increased the number of *mektebs* (primary schools), teaching boys to read and write as well as the principles of Islam. Young men wishing further education could proceed to a *medrese* (college), where studies included grammar, metaphysics,



Official signature of Sultan Süleyman



philosophy, astronomy and astrology. Higher *medreses* provided education of university status, whose graduates became *imams* (teachers). Educational centres were one of many buildings surrounding the courtyards of mosques, others included libraries, baths, soup kitchens, residences and hospitals for the benefit of the public. The Süleymaniye Mosque was the most famous urban complex in the Ottoman world with five madrasas dedicated to theological studies “compared to the five pillars of Islam” (Mehmet Aşık), and the library remains a centre for Islamic learning today. The dome and four minarets, four piers, and four granite columns, have been interpreted as representing the Prophet, and the four Sunni caliphs.

Süleyman also became renowned for sponsoring a series of monumental architectural developments within his empire. The Sultan sought to turn Constantinople into the centre of Islamic civilization by a series of projects, including bridges, mosques, palaces and various charitable and social establishments. He was responsible for over three hundred monuments throughout the empire, including this masterpiece, Süleyman also restored the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Jerusalem city walls (which are the current walls of the Old City of Jerusalem), renovated the Kaaba in Mecca, and constructed a complex in Damascus.

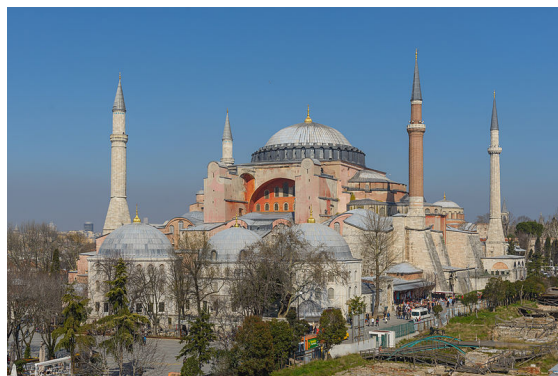
The Süleymaniye Mosque was built 36 years into his reign as his legacy and crowning achievement surpassing all other mosques in beauty and size. The layout proclaimed “the perfect concordance of state and religion in the person of the sultan” (Necipoğlu) and the Arabic foundation inscription (thuluth) carved on three marble panels above the north portal expounds “his claim to the universal sultanate and caliphate by both secular and divine right.” (Necipoğlu)

Who was Mimar Sinan (c.1490-1588)?

Mimar (Turkish for architect) Sinan came from central Anatolia, and was a carpenter. Aged 22 he was recruited into the Janissaries and his military career led him from Baghdad to Damascus, Persia and Egypt seeing large centrally domed mosques. As an engineer and architect he built over 360 structures and became chief royal architect from 1539-88. His work helped to establish the Sultan’s authority and status, and created the iconic skyline of Istanbul.

Understanding Ottoman appropriation of **Byzantine** architecture:

The Roman Emperor Constantine legalised Christianity in 313 CE and in 330 moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium which he renamed Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) towards the east of the Empire. Constantine’s mother Helena was a Christian, and he converted on his deathbed. Christianity flourished and gradually supplanted the Greco-Roman gods that had once defined Roman religion and culture. This religious shift dramatically affected the art created across the empire. Imperial power and resources went into building Christian churches during this period.



The famed **Hagia Sophia** or Church of the Holy Wisdom 532-7 CE (right) was built under Emperor Justinian who saw himself as a counterpart to the Biblical King Solomon. On seeing the completed church he is reputed to have said: “Solomon, I have outdone you”. Sinan worked on the repair of Hagia Sophia early in his career and states in his autobiography that he was trying to outdo the size of its dome. This would have appealed to Süleyman’s sense of rivalry with previous rulers and imperial urban monuments, as Süleyman means Solomon. Imperial Constantinople was the second Rome; when Ottoman Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror and his forces took the city in 1453 the first thing he did was convert Hagia Sophia into the first imperial mosque. By 1550 Sinan’s mosque borrows from both traditions, east and west, Muslim and Christian.

3. DEVELOPMENTS IN MATERIALS, PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES of the Süleymaniye Mosque:

Traditional building materials and techniques were used to create the dome and associated arcuated structures, supported by buttresses and load-bearing walls in ashlar (masonry faced with local limestone -küfeki). It is estimated that 3,500 skilled workers were employed daily with many unskilled too to create the 18 buildings of the complex. White marble paving, and revetment with red voussoirs over the large arches. The mihrab and minber are white marble. Some of the red granite columns are spolia, and materials were recycled from the Roman Hippodrome. Roundels for calligraphy from the Qur'an (Islamic sacred text believed to be the word of God dictated to Mohammed by the archangel Gabriel and written down in Arabic) are porphyry; and decoration includes ceramic tiles from Iznik, carved ebony with inlaid ivory and mother of pearl, bronze and gilding of many elements. Structure is more important than decoration.

4. WAYS IT HAS BEEN USED AND INTERPRETED BY PAST AND PRESENT SOCIETIES

Functions of the Süleymaniye Mosque and architectural complex:

The mosque is a place of prayer, the imperial mosque is a place for the sultan to appear on special occasions. But the complex includes:

- Mausoleums with the tombs of Sultan Süleyman and his family are just outside the mosque's walled garden.
- 3 sided courtyard with central fountain for drinking not ablutions, 4th side with open view over city and Golden Horn
- Primary school and 5 seminary/madrasa buildings on two long sides and the hadith college at an unusual diagonal
- Social service buildings – a hospice, guest house, soup kitchen, and hospital on the third side with bevelled back corners adapted to the pre-existing streets
- Baths and shops nearby show the close relationship of commerce, religion and education.

"The most celebrated architect of the pre-modern Islamic lands is bolstered by his affinity between his centrally planned domed mosques and Italian Renaissance churches: an affinity based in the shared Roman-Byzantine heritage of the eastern Mediterranean basin." (Gülru Necipoğlu)

Sometimes called the 'Turkish Michelangelo' or the 'grand master of the Turkish Renaissance' (Franz Babinger).

Wider reading/watching:

- From Smarthistory on the **Süleymaniye Mosque**:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q48ddBmCjQA>
- If you do not know much about the beginnings of **Islam**, please read this:
<https://smarthistory.org/introduction-to-islam/> And this is an excellent introduction to **mosque architecture**:
<https://smarthistory.org/introduction-to-mosque-architecture/>
- From the Metropolitan Museum of Art:
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/suly/hd_suly.htm
- Gülru Necipoğlu The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire 2005 Reaktion Books
- Murat Gül & Trevor Howells Istanbul Architecture 2013 Watermark Press

Make bullet point lists in answer to the following questions:

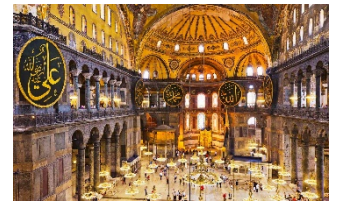
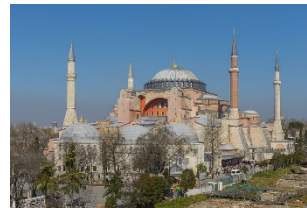
1. What features are Ottoman?

(e.g: Pencil minarets...)

2. Which features show the influence of earlier Islamic structures? And which one in particular?



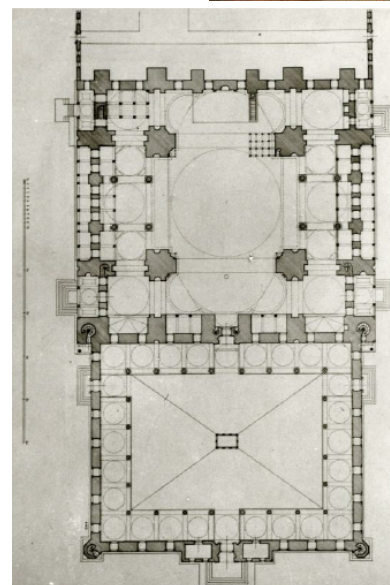
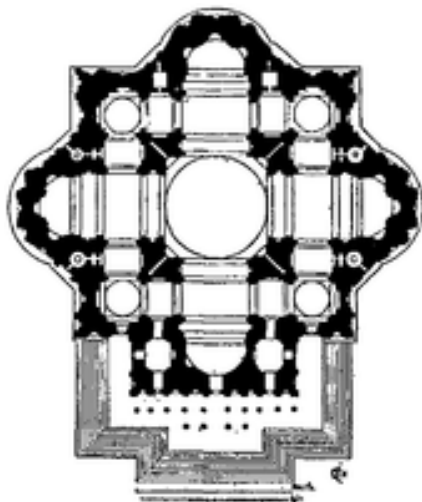
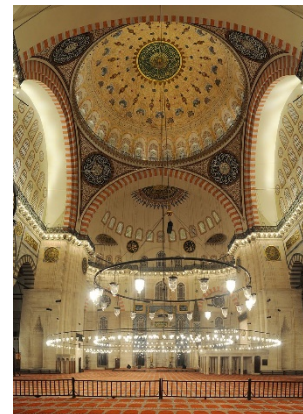
3. Which show the influence of earlier Byzantine architecture? Give an example of a key influential building?



4. What features show its religious identity as a mosque?
5. What links can be seen between 'classical western' architecture of ancient Greece and Rome and Renaissance Italy and the Mosque?
6. The mosque is part of a grand urban design, how did Sinan adapt his designs to the existing geography and plan of the city?

7. The mosque complex was predominantly educational. Imagine yourself as a student and track your day through the complex.

The **Süleymaniye Mosque** is built at the same time as Michelangelo was contributing to the design of **St Peter's Basilica** in Rome. Think about the similarities and differences you see in the images of façade, plans and domes below.



List the similar architectural features and consider the ways in which they have been used and the effect created.

Watch Simon Schama discuss this in the recent series Civilisations:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2rePZHydI8>.. Why do you think this caused a twitter storm?

Many people think that the differences between Islamic and Christian faiths, East and West, makes understanding and mutual respect difficult. Perhaps, this exercise will make you think of Labour MP, Jo Cox's words "we have more in common than that which divides us."



Now practise some exam style questions. (Write 200-300 words in each case)

1. How does this building express the identity of its patron?

2. How does this building demonstrate national identity?

(Make sure you identify the building, location, architect and explain the 'national' identity of the Sultan i.e. Ottoman, in your opening sentence.)