

THE BALYANS: OTTOMAN ARCHITECTURE AND BALYAN ARCHIVE

The Balyans is a prominent family of architects who designed and built architectural works for the Ottoman sultans for three generations and achieved a unique interpretation of the Ottoman local architectural language, thereby shaping the architectural taste and preferences of the palace and marking the last century of Istanbul as an imperial capital. The Balyan architectural practice, participated by various family members, especially Krikor (1764-1831), his son Garabed (1800-1866) and grandsons Nigoğos (1826-1858), Sarkis (1831-1899) and Hagop (1838-1875), was formed by the personal histories intertwined with the Ottoman social life as well as the professional knowledge passed down through generations and the expectations of the palace.

The Balyans never wrote down texts revealing their architectural thoughts. In the absence of such texts, which would have helped us in understanding their design philosophy, the Balyan architecture was evaluated only in the light of their constructed buildings for a long time, beginning from journalist and author Viscount Alfred de Caston, who started the Balyan historiography. This book provides a comprehensive review and description of the drawings reflecting the design processes of imperial constructions, most of which belong to the Balyan Family Architecture Archive recently opened to research, and aims to introduce a new approach to the history of the Balyan practice through the unconstructed buildings, as well as the constructed buildings.

Among the achievements of the study are the identifications of architectural documentation in the Balyan Archive, such as the drawings of Beylerbeyi, Çırağan and Fer'iye palaces, the extension project for the Yıldız Palace's Büyük Mâbeyn Kiosk and the decoration project for the Şale Kiosk's Dining Hall, where the Çırağan Palace's doors with mother-of-pearl inlay were reused, the renovation proposal for Bâb-ı Âli, the plan of the Esmâ Sultan Mansion in Kabataş, an important plan for the Ottoman museum history about the repository of old weapon collections at Hagia Irene, projects for industrial facilities such as Dolmabahçe Gasworks and Imperial Fez Factory, and the drawings from the design process of the Aziziye Mosque, a little-known masterpiece of Sarkis and Hagop Balyan, which was the only selâtin mosque ordered to be built with four minarets after centuries.

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