



### Mihrimah Sultan Mosque

Also called the Iskele (Quay) Mosque because of its proximity to Üsküdar's pier, Mihrimah Sultan Mosque is one of Üsküdar's best-known landmarks.

Mihrimah Sultan, the daughter of Hürrem Sultan (Roxelana) and Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, and wife of Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha, commissioned Sinan to build this mosque in her own name. It was built in 1547 as an imperial mosque with two minarets, only because Mihrimah obtained permission from her father.

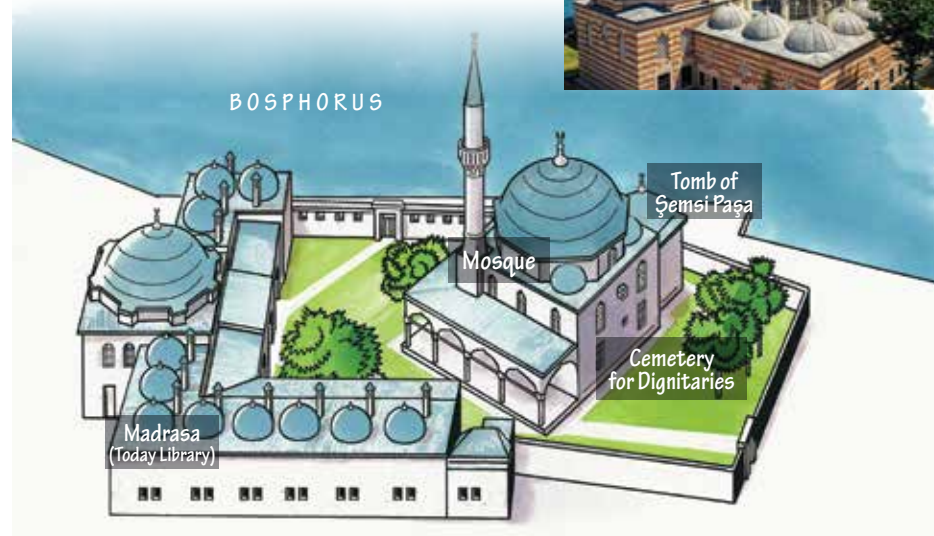
### Şemsi Paşa Mosque

Only a short walk from the docks in the direction of the Maiden's Tower is the Şemsi Pasha Mosque, which is informally known as Kuşkonmaz (the mosque where birds don't land) due to the strong winds at the mosque.

The mosque was built in 1580 by Sinan, when he was already 90 years old. Şemsi Pasha Mosque was designed for the grand vizier Şemsi Ahmet Pasha. In addition to serving as the Grand Vizier, Şemsi Pasha occupied other numerous high-ranking political posts, including governor of Damascus.

It is not its size that makes it interesting, but rather its location and layout. This mosque has a privileged and unique position next to the Bosphorus shore. Sinan always paid special attention to the site and its surroundings, adapting the proposed building accordingly.

The Mosque is a celebrated example of Sinan's skill in organically blending architecture with the natural landscape.



### OTHER MONUMENTS BY SINAN

**Valide Sultan Bath (Mimar Sinan Bazaar)** This is another bath built by Sinan for Nurbanu Sultan, which later served as a market starting in the early 20th century.

**Hacı Ahmed Paşa Tomb** Another monument is a tomb built by Sinan for Hacı Ahmed Pasha, who was the chief courtier for Selim II and Murad III.

# SİNAN in ÜSKÜDAR

## The Most Celebrated Ottoman Architect

**Sinan's importance and influence are often compared with his contemporary Michelangelo; his hundreds of works and architectural skills make him one of the most prolific architects of all time.**

In his early twenties, Sinan began his lifelong service to the Ottoman Sultans during the reigns of four sultans, particularly Süleyman I. Some of Sinan's prominent monuments are located in Üsküdar, two of which were built for female patrons; Sultan Süleyman's daughter Mihrimah Sultan and Selim II's wife Valide Nurbanu Sultan.

Through these monuments it is possible to trace Sinan's architectural evolution as well. Sinan completed Mihrimah Sultan Mosque in 1547, this was only 8 years after he became the chief architect. Şemsi Pasha Mosque was built in 1580 when he was about 90 years old. He also built Atik Valide Mosque in 1583, and it became his last major work.



Atik Valide Mosque





**Sinan's Life (c.1491-1588)**

He was born in the village of Ağırnas near Kayseri probably to a Christian family. Around the age of twenty, he was drafted into the Janissary corps, which required his conversion to Islam. Following years of rigorous education, Sinan became a military engineer in the Ottoman army, eventually serving as chief of the artillery for Sultan Süleyman's campaigns. When he was 48, he was appointed Chief of the Imperial Architects, a post he held for half a century during the reign of three different sultans: Süleyman I (28 years), Selim II (8 years) and Murad III (14 years).

**Sinan's Architecture**

Sinan was not just an architect, but also an equally accomplished engineer, urban planner, and administrator. The total number

of his works was around 375 consisting of mosques, madrasas, tombs, public kitchens, hospitals, aqueducts, palaces, storehouses, hamams, and bridges.

He drew on a wide range of influences on the region, from Byzantine domed-churches and Seljuk architecture to the various monuments he saw during his extensive travels. He was constantly driven by the desire to learn more, establish links with the past, and develop reliable principles of architecture throughout his life.

As an architect who built so extensively, Sinan never repeated himself, which was a remarkable achievement. A major aspect of his talent was the ability to transform any possible architectural problems into aesthetic accomplishments.



Sinan's signature and seal

Detail showing Sinan at the funeral of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, miniature painting by Nakkaş Osman.

**Mihrimah Sultan Mosque**

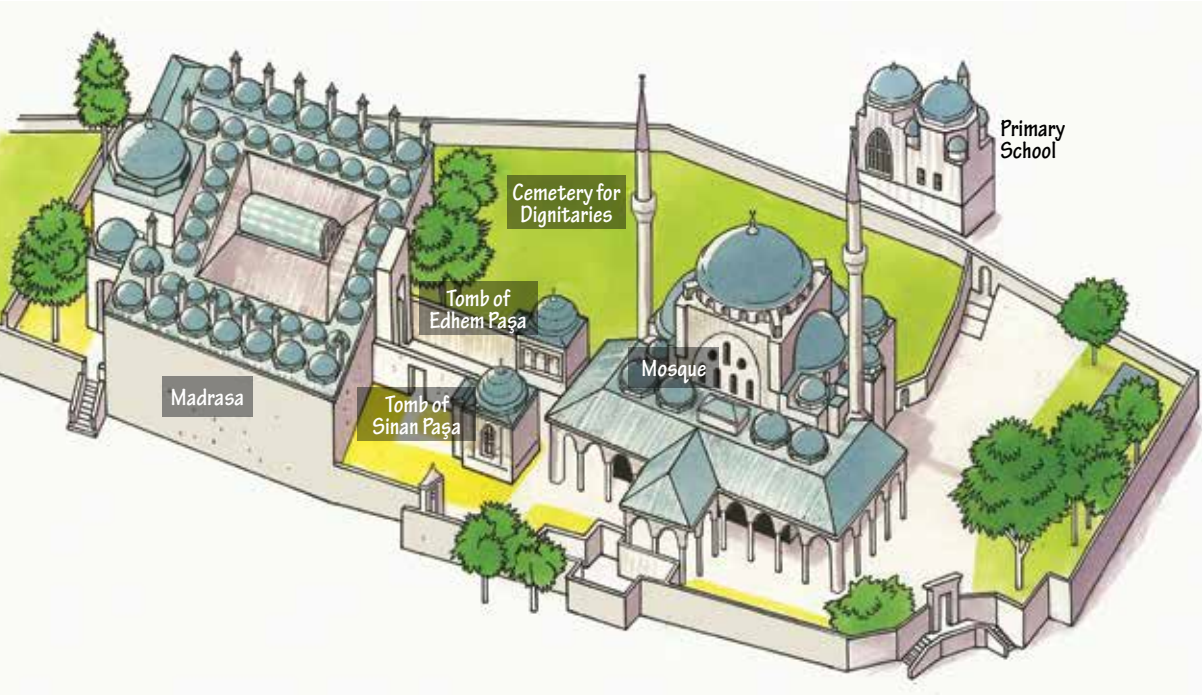
Mihrimah Sultan Mosque is a massive structure on a raised platform consisting of a spacious, high-vaulted basement, slender minarets, a single-dome resting on clover-shaped piers connected to each other with pointed arches, three semi-domes flanking the central dome on three sides, and a wide double portico.

The location of the mosque was once on the shore of the Bosphorus. It is also on the side of a hill, which required Sinan to adjust the



architecture of the building to the topography. The limited space is probably the reason for the use of only three half domes instead of four as well as the lack of a classical style colonnaded rectangular courtyard.

It was originally a larger complex; the remaining buildings in the complex are the mosque itself and a madrasa (school of theology), a primary school, a fountain, tombs and a hamam (later used as a market).



**Atik Valide Mosque**

Atik Valide is another Ottoman mosque complex sponsored by a powerful woman, Nurbanu Valide Sultan, wife of Selim II and mother of Murad III, which Sinan completed in 1583, just before Nurbanu's death. Selim was the son and successor of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent.

Even after Selim began to take other concubines, Nurbanu continued to be a favorite for her beauty and intelligence, and acted as an important advisor to her husband.

The complex consists of a mosque at the center, a madrasa, primary school, dervish lodge, school for Qur'an recitation, imaret (soup kitchen), hospital, and hamam.

The buildings of the complex are spread out and lined up on a large rugged stretch of land,



through which the streets had to pass. The mosque was expanded with two domes on both sides probably by Sinan's assistant Davut Aga. A pavilion with an independent entrance was added during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II in 1834.

This complex can be deemed as a farewell from the great architect Sinan. In his last masterpiece, Sinan displayed his extraordinary talent and provided a lesson in the architecture of the 16th century.

İznik tiles decorate the walls on both sides of the prayer niche. Sinan designed a bright and well-lit mosque for Nurbanu Sultan by using many windows and white marble that reflect the meaning of Nurbanu's name "light".



Funerary Procession of Nurbânü Sultan on the way out of the Palace, Miniature painting by Lokmân b. Hüseyin, Şehinşâhnâme.

