

The Madrasas of the Ottoman Empire

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THE MADRASAS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Introduction

Pre-Ottoman *Madrasas*

The structure of the *madrasa* system when examined from the perspective of the history of its founding rests on a legal foundation defined, interpreted and preserved by experts in the field of Islamic jurisprudence (*fikih*). In terms of the organization of the *madrasas*, priority was given in the educational curriculum to *fikih* and all fields auxiliary to it. In contrast, fields based on the rational (natural) sciences (*aklî ilimler*) were not included in the curriculum.¹

The primary objective for founding *madrasas* was to offer instruction in the "science of jurisprudence (*fikih*)." In the eleventh century the Nizâmiye *madrasas* were founded solely for the purpose of training jurists in *fikih* (known as *fakîh*). Among these *madrasas* there were those, which had, separate *madrasas* and teachers for each of the four Sunni schools of law (*mezheb*), there were also *madrasas* where several schools of law or, on occasion even all four schools, were taught. In the first Nizâmiye *madrasas*, classes were offered in *fikih* and Arabic language subjects such as morphology (*sarf*) and syntax (*nahiv*), but there is no information in particular about whether instruction was given in the rational sciences (*ulum-i akliye*). Later, in the thirteenth century, in Egypt and Damascus, in addition to the *fikih madrasas*, separate *madrasas* such as the *Medâris al-hadis*, *Medâris al-tafsir* and *Medâris al-nahiv* for the study of the Hadith (prophetic traditions), commentary on the Qur'an and syntax respectively were established.

The *madrasa* system and organizations such as those of the social service and religiously oriented institutions in the Islamic world such as mosques, hospitals, soup kitchens, caravanserais, commercial houses and baths were established as pious foundations (*vakıfs*). As these institutions all had a religious aspect to them, their *vakıfs* had to be in conformance with Islamic law (*ser'î serîf*).

Though not much information is available about the nature of the education offered in the Anatolian Seljuk *madrasas* or about the lessons given and their subject matter, it is quite clear that *fikih*, religious studies and complementary lessons in literary studies were offered. From the charters, which are available for these *madrasas*, we learn that classes were given throughout the week with the exception of Tuesdays and Fridays and that the full course of education was limited to a period of five years. *Madrasa* students known as *fakîh* were at first referred to as beginners (*mübtedî*), then later as intermediate (*mutavassıt*) and in the end, when they were in a position to write their own opinions based on inference, were referred to as advanced (*müstedîl*). The rich, extensive accumulation of knowledge and education inherited from the Seljuk's in Anatolia provided the necessary foundation for Ottoman advances in this area.²

In the charter of the Altun-Aba *Madrasa* in Konya (prior to 1196-1197), one of the *madrasas* established in Anatolia during the Seljuk period, reference is made to one teacher and one assistant (*muîd*) as well as to

¹ For a comprehensive and detailed discussion of this subject see G. Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges, Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh, 1981).

² For pre-Ottoman *madrasas* in Anatolia see A. Qur'an, *Anadolu Medreseleri-I* (Ankara, 1969); M. Sözen, *Anadolu Medreseleri, Selçuklu ve Beylikler Devri*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1970-1972), 2: 19, 83.

thirty-eight students.³ In the charter of the *madrasa*-established in Amasya in the year 1209-10 by Mübariz al-din Halifet Gazi, reference is made to one teacher, two assistants and twelve students. The teacher was to have taught Hanefi *fikih* for a salary of 1200 fine silver *dirhems* per year⁴.

In the charter of the *madrasa* established in 1224 in Antalya by Mübâriz al-din Er-Tokus, while making reference to the teacher and students, no mention is made of the nature of the education offered.⁵ In the same way, in the charter of the Sivas Gök *Madrasa* established by Sâhib Atâ Fahreddin Ali in 1295, reference is made to "housing being provided for the *fakîhs*, experts in jurisprudence (*mütefakkîha*), scholars, and students in order that they may undertake the study of *fikih* and the complementary studies of canonical law (*ser'î*) and religious prescriptions (*dinî hükümlerî*)"⁶.

In the charter of the Karatay *Madrasa* established in Konya in 1251-52 by Vizier Jalâl al-din Karatay it is specified that it is imperative that teachers at the *madrasa* be qualified and suitably prepared in the study of the Ser'ât, Hadith, interpretation, legal theory and methodology (*usûl*), inheritance (*furû'*) and polemics (*hilâf*).⁷

It appears that there was no ranking of the pre-Ottoman *madrasas*; they achieved their fame based on the qualities of the teachers affiliated to them. Following the completion of their basic education, students who wished to specialize in a particular field of study would select instructors well known in that area, take lessons and obtain a license (*icâzet*) from them. It was the teacher who was the fundamental element in the license, a document that would indicate the nature of the study completed and the pedigree of the teachers issuing the degree, though not in the name of the *madrasa* where the education had taken place. In contrast, in the universities established in Europe in the twelfth century the diplomas issued to graduates would be issued in the name of the university where the student undertook his studies. In other words, in the *madrasa* it was the instructor and in the university the institution which was in the forefront. Large numbers of students were educated in this way in the *madrasas* and, under the instruction of famous scholars, came to constitute a new community of the learned in the Islamic world. While such scholarly activities were flourishing in the Ottoman Empire, one observes the persistence of similar activities in other Turkish states in Anatolia. For example, in Konya-Aksaray that was under the rule of the Karamanogulları, the teachings of Jamâl al-din al-Aksarâyî at the Zincirli *Madrasa* were very famous. In the same sense, when Molla Semseddin al-Fenârî had a falling out with Sultan Bâyezîd I, he was received with great respect by Karamanoglu, and it is of note that Bâyezîd insisted that al-Fenârî return to Bursa.⁸

The attraction of scholars from other countries to Anatolia and the tradition of sending students to other countries for their education continued during the Ottoman period. Such scholarly travel is an indicator of cultural dynamism. For example, Ekmeleddin al-Bâbertî who was born in Bayburt (d. 1384-85) first went to Aleppo, then to Cairo to study with Sayf al-din el-Isfahânî and then rose to the position of teacher at the

³ O. Turan, "Selcuklu Devri Vakfiyeleri- I," 197-235.

⁴ R. Yinanc, "Selcuklu *Medreselerinden Amasya Halifet Gazi Medresesi ve Vakıfları*," *VD* no. 15 (Ankara, 1982): 5-22.

⁵ O. Turan, "Selcuklu Devri Vakfiyeleri-II, Mübarizeddin Er-Tokus ve Vakfiyesi", *Bellekten* 11, no. 43 (1947): 415-429.

⁶ S. Bayram and A. Karabacak, "Sahib Ata Fahrudin Ali'nin Konya Imaret ve Sivas Gokmadrasa Vakıfları", *VD* no. 13 (1981): 31-70.

⁷ O. Turan, "Selcuklu Devri Vakfiyeleri-III," 79.

famous al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo instructing numerous students there. Among those students were such famous Ottoman scholars as Hacı Pasa (d. 1413 or 1417), Seyh Badr al-din (d. 1420) and Molla Fenârî (d. 1430-31).⁹ During the reign of Murâd II, Molla Yegân (d. 1436), one of the pupils of Ekmeleddin al-Bâbertî, met with Molla Gürânî in Cairo and brought him to the palace, presenting him to the sultan. The sultan treated Molla Gürânî with great respect and favour and appointed him as the teacher of Prince Mehmed (the Conqueror) when he was serving as the governor of Manisa.

***Madrasa* Education during the Early Ottoman Period**

The *madrasas* of the early Ottoman period can be considered as institutions continuing in the established educational tradition that had been practiced in such pre-Ottoman cities as Amasya, Konya, Kayseri, Karaman and Aksaray. Such scholarly activity in Anatolia was made possible by the contributions of scholars coming from the most important cultural centres of the time in Egypt, Syria, Iran and Turkestan.

The *madrasa* system inherited from the Seljuk Turks continued in existence augmented by the contributions of the Ottomans. The construction of a mosque and alongside it a *madrasa* had become a tradition in places conquered by the Ottomans, an integral part of their policy of conquest. This tradition was geared both to the provision of the necessary religious, scientific and educational services for the society and the state as well as for training administrative and legal personnel for the state administration. It was in this fashion that the Ottoman state was able to provide itself with educated personnel for its activities, individuals who were both knowledgeable in their areas of competence and at the same time able to perform their duties both in terms of the requirements of Islamic jurisprudence and customary practice. This tradition ensured that the central administration of the state was well founded and strong.

The first Ottoman *madrasa* was established in Iznik (Nicaea) by Orhan Gâzî. This ruler had a new *madrasa* building constructed there immediately after the conquest of the city (1330-31).¹⁰ After Orhan Bey had arranged to have a sufficient number of *vakıfs* attached to the *madrasa* to meet its financial needs, he appointed as teacher and trustee Mevlânâ Dâvud al-Kayserî (d. 1350-51) who had completed his education in Egypt. Great scholars of the period such as Dâvud al-Kayserî and his successors, Tâceddin al-Kürdî and Alâeddin Esved (d. 1393) all taught at this *madrasa*.¹¹

Until the time when the scholars educated at the Ottoman madrasas were in a position to be appointed as teachers, the first teachers at the Ottoman madrasas were either those who were born and raised in other parts of Anatolia, or those who were born in Anatolia and were educated in Islamic cultural centres such as Egypt, Iran and *Türkistan* (Turkestan) and then returned to Anatolia, or those who were born and educated outside of Anatolia and who later came to the Ottoman country. Of the 115 scholars who were determined to have received education in Anatolia or in other Islamic countries between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, the percentages according to countries or regions are as follows: Iran is in first place with 43.3 percent, Egypt is in second place with 23.4 percent, followed by Anatolia with 14.7 percent, Transoxiana with 8.6 percent, Syria with 7.8 percent and Iraq with 1.7 percent. During the same centuries, when the countries of the authors of the thirty-three textbooks taught on various subjects at the Ottoman madrasas

⁸ M. C. Baysun, "Osmanlı Devri Medreseleri," *IA*, 8: 71-75.

⁹ Ibn-i Hacer el-Eskalânî, *el-Dürer el-Kamine, fi Ayan el-ma'e el-Samine* (Haydarabad, 1972-1976), 4: 250.

¹⁰ Âsikpasazade, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman'dan, Âsikpasazâde Tarihi*, ed. Ali Bey (Istanbul, 1332): 42.

¹¹ M. Bilge, *İlk Osmanlı Medreseleri* (Istanbul, 1984), 64.

are examined, it is observed that various Islamic cultural centres were the source of the development of Ottoman education. According to a statistical research made on this subject Iran was still in first place with 39.3 percent. Egypt was in second place with 30.3 percent. It is observed that Transoxiana, Iraq, Khorezm and Fergana each had 6.06 percent and that Anatolia and Khorasan had 3.03 percent.¹²



Figure 1. Typical Window of Yesil Madrasa - Bursa

It appears as if the education offered in the *madrasas* was left entirely up to the initiative of the teachers appointed who would, following the tradition, be obliged to proceed within the framework of the conditions laid down by the *vâkîf* (the founders of the *vakîf*). For example, in the charter of the Iznik Orhan Bey *Madrasa*, other than the prescription that "instruction should be given on a daily basis to the students" there appears to be no other restrictive statement.¹³ In the charter of the Bursa Lala Sâhin Pasha *Madrasa*, founded in 1348, it is stated "the teacher should be very knowledgeable and articulate and must not miss any classes without a legitimate excuse other than on holidays." In addition to a specification by Murâd II in Edirne to the kind of lessons to be given at the Dâr al-Hadis Madrasa, it is also indicated that the

¹² M. H. Lekesiz, "Osmanlı İlimi Zihniyetinde Degisme (Tesekkül-Gelisme-Çözülme XV-XVII. Yüzyıllar)," (Master Thesis, Hacettepe University, Department of History, Ankara, 1989), 27-28, 65.

¹³ M. Bilge, *İlk Osmanlı Medreseleri*, 297-298.

instructors should be giving lessons in Hadith and complementary studies, but that in particular they should not be occupying themselves with philosophical studies in their classes.¹⁴ In the charter of the Akmadrasa established in 1415 by Karamanoglu Ali Bey in Nigde, it is stated that

*"this madrasa is devoted to fakîhs and mütefekkihas (jurists and students of jurisprudence) engaged in Islamic legal studies (ulûm-i ser'yye) and to married persons, bachelors, boarding students and day students who are engaged in literary studies required for religious studies and to teachers and tutors instructing according to the Hanefî and Shafî schools of law. The teacher should lecture every day on the subjects of fikh and legal theory and methodology (usûl-i fikh) as well as on matters pertaining to canonical law and other higher studies, whereas the tutor should go over the lessons with the students every day, engaging them in discussion..."*¹⁵

These statements are important in terms of bringing some clarity to the basic features of the traditional *madrasa* system prior to the Sahn-i Samân *madrasas* founded by Mehmed the Conqueror.



Figure 2. The Garden of Yesil Madrasa – Bursa

As is quite clear from the examples given above, education in Seljuk *madrasas* and those pre-dating Mehmed the Conqueror was pursued in terms of the traditions of the Nizâmiye *madrasas*. Their major goals were the teaching of religious studies and in particular fostering the study of *fikh*. However, the fact that hospitals were established alongside certain Seljuk *madrasas* and that sites for astronomical observation have been found next to others, gives us some indication that there was an interest in medicine and astronomy in those *madrasas*. Education in philosophy, mathematics and the natural sciences, which do not fit in the category of religious studies, was, during the Seljuk and pre-Mehmed II period, given in the homes of scholars or at hospitals following a tradition of great longevity. There is also some indication that some of these sciences were taught as extra curricular activities in Anatolian Seljuk *madrasas*.

From the beginning of the fourteenth century until the beginning of the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror there were a total of forty-two *madrasas* in the major cities: twenty-five in Bursa, thirteen in Edirne and four in Iznik.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 229-233, 303-304.

¹⁵ I. H. Uzuncarsili, "Nigde Karamanoglu Ali Bey Vakfiyesi," *VD* no. 2 (Ankara, 1942): 59-60.

During the same period we note the existence of forty *madrasas* in smaller cities.¹⁶ In short, the fact that between the years 1331-1451, during the period when higher education in the Ottoman Empire was in its initial stages, a total of eighty-two *madrasas* were founded, is an indication of just how rapidly the worlds of education and the sciences were developing in Ottoman society. This would mean that on an average at least two *madrasas* were being established every three years. As the numbers of *madrasas* grew in particular cities, a need began to arise to rank the institutions in relation to each other. The ranking of *madrasas* according to their status in the period prior to Mehmed II (the Conqueror) made more apparent the differences among those institutions.

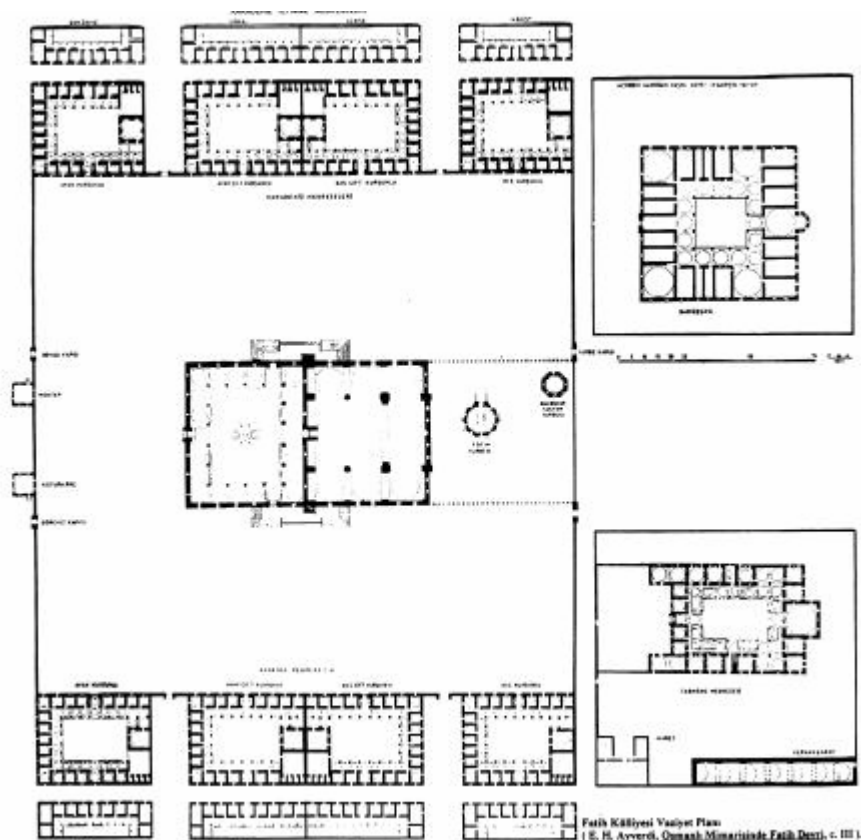


Figure 3. Fatih Mosque and the Complex of Sahn-i Semân Madrasas

Ranking of the *madrasas*

Following the conquest of Istanbul, Mehmed the Conqueror initiated a campaign of construction so as to give the city a new character. He also encouraged those around him to participate in this effort. As a result of these efforts numerous Byzantine buildings were transformed into mosques, *madrasas* and dervish lodges. In order to transform the new capital into a centre of learning (*dar al-ilm*) he had a mosque complex (*külliye*), which was later to take his name, constructed on the crest of one of the hills of Istanbul.

Within the complex he had *madrasas* built which could be considered as expressions of his centralized approach and policies in the areas of scholarship-science and education.

According to the charter prepared for the *madrasas* in the Fatih Mosque Complex, the Samâniye *madrasas* were composed of eight higher *madrasas* surrounding the Fatih Mosque and of eight smaller *madrasas* behind these known as "*Tetimme*." Thus there were a total of sixteen *madrasas* on both sides of the mosque. In addition to these, a "*Dar al-talim*" (primary school) was constructed on the side facing the western door. Furthermore, from the charter we learn that this complex was conceived as a total educational centre of the highest quality and that in this light, institutions such as a hospital, a library and a soup kitchen were established to provide food, drink, shelter and medical treatment.¹⁷

In certain contemporary studies undertaken up until quite recently it has been argued that the Samâniye *madrasas* constructed under Mehmed II's orders resembled European universities and that Ali Kuscu, Vizier Mahmûd Pasha and Molla Hüsrev developed a curriculum for the *Madrasa*. However, the most recent research on the subject has attempted to correct this mistaken impression about the Fatih *madrasas* and their resemblance to a modern university and the claims put forth about their supposed curricula.



Figure 4. Arial View of the Fatih Mosque Complex and Sahn-i Semân Madrasas

A new era in Ottoman education was initiated with the establishment of the Fatih *madrasas* and the hierarchical structure of the *madrasas* was reorganized. Indeed, it has been generally accepted in historical studies of the *madrasa* since Uzuncarsılı that, based on information provided by Âlî, the academic levels of the *madrasas* were determined during the reign of Mehmed II according to the salaries paid to the teacher heading the institution and in terms of the basic required textbook in use at the school.¹⁸ Based on the information provided by Âlî, it seems that there had been a number of traditions and customary rules (generally referred to as *Kanûn*) governing education since the time of Bâyezîd I, that a number of these continued to be implemented until the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror and that they were then collated and restructured within a single framework during that period.¹⁹

¹⁶ M. Bilge, *İlk Osmanlı Medreseleri*, 65-207; C. Baltacı, *XV.-XVI. Asırlar Osmanlı Medreseleri* (İstanbul, 1976), 20-21.

¹⁷ E. Ihsanoglu, "Osmanlı Medrese Tarihçiliğinin İlk Safhası (1916-1965)-Kesif ve Tasarlama Dönemi-", *Belleten* 64, no 240 (Agustos 2000): 541-582.

¹⁸ I.H. Uzuncarsılı, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin İlmîye Teskilatı*, 2nd ed. (Ankara, 1984), 11-12.

¹⁹ Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî, *Kühûl-Ahbar*, İstanbul University Library (İÜMK), Turkish Manuscripts (TY) no. 5959, fol. no.

When we examine the charters of the *madrasas* from the period prior to Mehmed II we observe that by and large it is religious studies that are emphasized. By contrast, in the charter of the Fatih *madrasas* we encounter for the first time the requirement that teachers to be appointed to the *madrasas* must include both those who are knowledgeable both in religious studies and in the "rational" sciences, which included logic, philosophy and mathematics. Further, the charter indicates in literary language that the foundation of the *madrasas* rested on the rules of *hikmet* (wisdom, frequently used to refer to philosophy) and that they were established based on the rules of geometry, thus differentiating them from earlier *madrasas*. In our opinion, this is where one may find the influence of Ali Kuscü. The influence of Ali Kuscü, who came from Samarkand where he was associated with Ulug Bey and scientific circles largely concerned with mathematics and astronomy, can be seen in the requirement of the charter, which set the framework for these *madrasas*, that the rational sciences are to be taught along with religious studies. It is possible to observe this influence after the period of Mehmed II up until the time of the Süleymâniye *madrasas*.

In the Fatih *Teskilât Kanûnnâmesi* (legal code), we find in the section regarding the appointments of the teachers that the *madrasas* were ranked based on a hierarchy determined by the daily fees paid to the teachers. They began with those who received twenty *akces*, increasing in increments of five *akces* to those receiving twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, forty, forty-five and fifty *akces*. The teachers at the *Sahn madrasas*, that is those employed at the eighth highest-level *madrasas* at the Fatih complex, were considered the most distinguished of the *ulema* (learned men) and were positioned in front of the heads of *sancaks* (provincial districts) in terms of official protocol.²⁰ As the establishment, formation and the changes experienced over the centuries of this educational hierarchy have not been very thoroughly studied, more detailed and multifaceted studies will be required in order to achieve greater clarity with regard to the subject.

When one examines the organization of Ottoman *madrasas* one observes that the first three are referred to under the names of *Hâsiye-i Tecrid*, *Miftah* and *Telvih*. These names were taken from the titles of the main textbooks used in these *madrasas*. The *Hâsiye-i Tecrid madrasa* takes its name from the fact that the main textbook used there was a commentary written by Seyyid Serîf el-Gürgânî (d. 1413-14) based on a commentary by Shems al-din Mahmûd b. Ebu'l-Kasim al-Isfahânî (d. 1345-46) on a work titled *Tecrid al-Kalâm* by Nasîreddin al-Tûsî (d. 1273-74).²¹ *Madrasas* which used that particular piece of work, with commentaries written by Seyyid Serîf al-Gürgani and Sadeddin al-Taftazani (d. 1388-89), were known as *Miftah madrasas*. *Miftah* refers to a work by Yûsuf al-Sekkâkî (d. 1228-29) on the subjects of morphology, *nahv* and rhetoric. *Telvih* is the name of the commentary written by al-Taftazânî on the commentary titled *Tavzû't-Tenkîh* written by Sadrüsseria Ubeydullah el-Buhârî (d. 1346-47) on his own work on Islamic jurisprudence titled *Tenkîhü'l-Usûl*. This commentary was used as a textbook in *Telvih madrasas*.²²

Both the 40 *akce* and the *Haric* 50 *akce madrasas* were constructed by the pre-Ottoman Anatolian municipalities, rulers and their families, by viziers, *sancak beys* and *emirs*. The *Dâhil madrasas* are

85b-86b.

²⁰ A. Özcan, "Fatih'in Teskilat Kanunnamesi ve Nizâm-ı âlem için Kardes Katli Meselesi, " *IÜTD (Fatih Sultan Mehmed'e Hatıra Sayısı)*, no. 33 (Istanbul, 1982), 39.

²¹ Kâtib Çelebi, *Kesfû'z-Zunûn an Esâmi'l-Kütübi ve'l-Funûn*, 2 vols., ed. Serefeddin Yaltkaya and Kilisli Rifat Bilge (Istanbul, 1941-1943), 2: 1762-1768.

²²I. H. Uzuncarsılı, Osmanlı Devleti'nin İlmiye Teskilatı, 26-28.

madrasas constructed by the Ottoman sultans, the mothers of imperial princes and the daughters of the sultans. Following that one would come to the *Sahn-i Semân madrasas*, which had the highest educational level. *Tetimme madrasas* were of the same rank as *Dâhil madrasas* and because they prepared students for the *Sahn madrasas* were referred to as *Mûsıla-i Sahn* (preparatory to the *Sahn*).

In order to fit the *Uc Serefeli Madrasa* established in Edirne by Sultan Murâd II, which paid 100 akces into the new hierarchy, Mehmed II, had an additional *madrasa* constructed alongside it and had the 100 akces shared between two teachers. Thus the level of the *üc serefeli madrasa*, which was built by his father, was made equal to that of the *Sahn madrasas* that he had founded.²³ The Ayasofya *madrasa* remained the sole *madrasa* at the 60-akce levels during the period of Mehmed II.²⁴

The *madrasa* system established by Mehmed the Conqueror continued unchanged during the reign of Bâyezîd II. The only change was the rise to the 60-akce level of the Murâdiye *madrasa* in Bursa upon the appointment of Tokatlı Molla Lûtfi for a fee of 60 akces.²⁵

On the second of the seven hills upon which Istanbul was built Suleyman the Magnificent constructed the mosque complex that would constitute the apogee of Ottoman culture, art and education. The construction of this complex, which reflected the grandeur of the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent, and the genius of its chief architect Sinan (1550-1557) marked the initiation of a phase of important developments and innovations in Ottoman education. As can be seen in the attached drawing, various schools and *madrasas* were constructed around the mosque offering a variety of levels and specialized areas of education. A primary school and four *madrasas* referred to as *Sahn madrasas* were established there.

These consist of the first or "*madrasa-i ulâ*" (*evvel madrasa*); the second or "*sânî*" *madrasa* (*madrasa-i sânîye*); the third or "*sâlis*" *madrasa* (*madrasa-i sâlise*); and the fourth or "*râbi*" *madrasa* (*madrasa-i râbia*). In addition, there were specialized *madrasas*, the *Dârülhadis* (Hadith studies centre) and the *Dail Tib* for the study of medicine. There was also a hospital (*bîmarhâne*), a soup kitchen or *Dar al-ziyafe*, a convalescent home (*Tabhâne*) as well as a pharmacy (*Dar al-adviye*). This complex is a fine example of the development since the Fatih complex of the holistic way in which Ottoman mosque complexes dealt with human, religious, social and cultural services.

According to the charter, the daily fee paid to each of the head teachers at the four *madrasas* was sixty akces. The *Dâru'l-Hadis* teacher received fifty and the *Dâr al-tıbb* teacher twenty akces. These *madrasas* were thus now ranked at a higher level than the Fatih *Sahn madrasas*. Although the amount allocated for the *Dâru'l-Hadis* teacher in the charter prepared during the construction of the complex was lower than that of the other four *madrasas*, they were in fact paid 100 akces with the appointment of the first *Dârülhadis* teacher. That is why, from that period on, that *madrasa* was considered the highest ranked Ottoman *madrasa*. The *Dâru'l-Hadis* teacher was also considered the highest ranked teacher, and if he so desired he could be appointed to a *kadılık* (juridical-administrative district) known as a *mahrec mevleviyeti*.²⁶

²³ I. H. Uzuncarsılı, *İlmiye Teskilati*, 3; C. Baltacı, *XV.-XVI. Asırlar*, 450-458.

²⁴ Âlî, *Künhü'l-Ahbar*, 86a; C. Baltacı, *XV.-XVI. Asırlar*, 47.

²⁵ C. Baltacı, *XV.-XVI. Asırlar*, 47, 48; 163-165, 480.

²⁶ I. H. Uzuncarsılı, *İlmiye Teskilati*, 36-38; C. Baltacı, *XV.-XVI. Asırlar*, 601-606.

The fifteen students studying in the *Dârülhadis* and in the four *madrasas* and the eight students studying at the *Dâr al-tıbb* received two *akces* each while the tutors received five *akces* each as a daily fee. Those students resident in the rooms of the *madrasas* received lessons from their teachers four days a week and the soup kitchens provided them with two meals a day.

The Suleymaniye *madrasas* were able to maintain their superior status within the *madrasa* hierarchy throughout later periods. However, in those later periods certain changes in the ranking of the *madrasas* can be observed:²⁷

A Statistical Analysis of the Development of Ottoman *Madrasas*

In order to better understand the development of Ottoman scientific and educational life a statistical analysis has been undertaken of the works of Bilge and Baltacı. Their research deals with Ottoman *madrasas* constructed between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. It includes a compilation of information they were able to access pertaining to the period. This information is given in the tables presented below.

Table 1 - Ottoman *Madrasas* by Major Cities and Regions

	Fourteenth	Fifteenth	Sixteenth	<i>Madrasas</i> with Uncertain Dates	Total
Iznik	4				4
Bursa	19	11	6		36
Edirne	1 (<i>Dârüssifâ</i>)	20	10		31
Istanbul		23	113	6	142
Anatolia	12	31	32	13	88
Balkans	4	12	18	5	39
Syria			3		3
Hejaz			6		6
Yemen			1		1
Total	40	97	189	24	350

The first important point to emerge from an examination of the first three tables is the fact that the intensity of Ottoman *madrasa* construction paralleled the political and economic development and advance of the Ottoman Empire and that these developments reached their peak during the sixteenth century. Until the sixteenth century this development virtually proceeds in almost geometric proportions. Thus the number of *madrasas* in each century was double that of the previous century. The city, which had the largest number of madrasas, was the imperial capital, Istanbul. During the nineteenth century (prior to

²⁷ C. Izgi, *Osmanlı Medreselerinde İlim*. 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1997), 1 (Riyazî İlimler), 35-42.

1869) during the period when educational institutions of the modern type began to become more widespread, there were 166 active *madrasas* in Istanbul with 5369 students.²⁸

The fourth table was prepared based on information that Bilge and Baltacı provided on Ottoman *madrasas* in Rumelia and on Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi's four-volume study titled *Avrupa'da Osmanlı Mimari Eserleri* (Ottoman Works of Architecture in Europe)²⁹.

Table 2 - Distribution of *Madrasas* by Sultanic Reign

Orhan Gâzî (1326-1359)	10
Murâd I (1359-1389)	7
Bâyezîd I (1389-1402)	23
Chelebi Mehmed (1402-1421)	7
Murâd II (1421-1451)	38
Mehmed II (1451-1481)	30
Bâyezîd II (1481-1512)	33
Selîm I (1512-1520)	8
Süleymân I (1520-1566)	106
Selîm II (1566-1574)	17
Murâd III (1574-1595)	42
Mehmed III (1595-1603)	5
<i>Madrasas</i> with uncertain dates	24
Total	350

Table 3 - Type of *Madrasa* by Century

	Fourteenth	Fifteenth	Sixteenth	<i>Madrasas</i> with Uncertain Dates	Total
<i>Madrasa</i>	37	90	168	24	319
<i>Dârülhadîs</i>	2	2	13		17
<i>Dârülkurrâ</i>	--	3	11		14
<i>Dârüssifâ</i>	1	2	2		5
Total	40	97	194	24	355

However, because it has not been possible to determine the construction dates of all the *madrasas*, it has been necessary to take the period between the fourteenth and twentieth centuries into consideration as a whole. The examination of this table reveals the importance, which the Ottoman state placed throughout its history on *madrasa* construction in the region of Rumelia.

²⁸ M. Kütükoglu, "1869'da Faal İstanbul Medreseleri," *İÜTED*, 7-8 (1996-97): 277-392; *idem*, XX. *Asra Erisen İstanbul Medreseleri* (Ankara, 2000).

²⁹ E. H. Ayverdi, *Avrupa'da Osmanlı Mimari Eserleri*, 4 vols, (Istanbul, volume 3 is dated 1981, and the others are not dated).

Table 4 - Madrasas in Rumelia during the Ottoman Period

<i>Region</i>	<i>Madrasa</i>
Greece	189
Bulgaria	144
Albania	28
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro	105
Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia and Voyvodina	134
Romania	9
Hungary	56
Total	665

Curricula in Ottoman *Madrasas*

Though it is not possible to determine the curricula of the Ottoman *madrasas* in a clear and detailed manner from contemporary sources, one can, however, provide a basic though only partial outline of what was taught by means of an examination of the biographies of the teachers and scholars, their diplomas, the *vakif* charters and regulations pertaining to the *madrasas*.

From the start of their education to the very end a student at an Ottoman *madrasa* would be required to read a large number of books in a number of different fields of study. There are differences with regard to the subjects a student would study at the various *madrasas* from century to century, up until the founding of the *Dârü'l-hilâfeti'l-aliyye Madrasas* during the Second Constitutional period. It is possible to follow these changes by examining the education of Tasköprizâde Ahmed b. Isâmeddin who lived in the sixteenth century and the classes he later gave as a teacher as well as by examining the education of Kâtib Chelebi in the seventeenth century. In addition, one is able to obtain detailed information about the subject from a little-known source about *madrasa* education titled *Kevâkib-i Seb'a* (Seven Planets) written in the eighteenth century (1742) at the request of the French ambassador to Istanbul, Marquis de Villanueva. It is also possible to learn something about *madrasa* education and methods of instruction for that century from a book by the Italian Abbot Toderini titled *De La Littérature des Turcs*. For the nineteenth century it is possible to get quite a clear picture and conduct a detailed examination of the nature of *madrasa* education from the autobiography of Ahmed Cevdet Pasha.

It appears that the textbooks used for instruction at *madrasas* were, in the first instance, prepared so as to provide every Muslim individual with the knowledge required for religious and worldly matters. Clearly, the most fundamental goal of *madrasa* education was to ensure that Muslims be brought up as knowledgeable and morally correct individuals.

The legal code (*kanûnnâme*) pertaining to education prepared during the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent indicates that it is necessary to understand the mystery of creation, to establish a state which operates in an orderly fashion and to reveal the realities of the world in order to ensure the perpetuity of order in the world and the well-being of humanity, and that in order for all of these things to be realized it is essential that one must comprehend the universe created by God as well as learning the teachings of the prophets. To the extent that it can be clearly determined from the code written in the dense style used for official

documents during that period, the views of Ottoman administrators with regard to education indicate that the purpose of education in the first instance involves the pursuit of science and wisdom (*hikmet*) and then an explication of virtue, talent, religion and the *seriat*, in that order, as well as the development of human faculties and capacities. The sultan was held personally responsible for ensuring that all of this was carried out.

During the course of their education, the books a student would read were ordered as follows. The first three were morphology (*sarf*), syntax (*nahiv*) and logic (*mantik*). The last two were hadith and commentary on the Qur'an (*tefsir*). In between the first three studies and the last two, subjects such as elocution (*âdâb-i bahs*), preaching (*vaaz*), rhetoric (*belâgat*), study of philosophical theology (*kelâm*), philosophy (*hikmet*), jurisprudence (*fikih*), inheritance (*ferâiz*), tenets of faith (*akaid*) and legal theory and methodology (*usûl-i fikih*) were pursued. There would occasionally be differences in the presentation and ordering with respect to these studies.

Kevâkib-i Seb'a provides us with very valuable information about the manner in which students proceeded with their lessons. The work tells us that students had five classes a week and that each class consisted of a few lines (*satır*) which were examined. Further, it informs us that they studied eight or nine hours for each lesson the day before it was given, that on the following day each student would read passages from the text to the teacher in turn and that after the teacher presented his interpretation each student would present his perspective on the subject to the teacher and they would engage in a discussion. After having thoroughly analysed and researched the lesson, the students would return to their rooms and continue studying until they were once again in the presence of their teacher at the next day's lesson.

Mathematical sciences such as arithmetic, geometry, algebra and astronomy and natural sciences such as classical physics were taught in Ottoman *madrasas*. Most of the autobiographies examined indicate that these sciences were studied after divine philosophy (*hikmet*) and prior to the most esteemed subject of Commentary on the Qur'an (*tefsir*). *Kevâkib-i Seb'a* indicates, however, that these subjects were dealt with in a less formal manner in the Qur'anic theology (*kelâm*) class in the process of discussing such books as *Serhü'l-Mevâkif* and *Serhü'l-Makasid*:

"As much as books such as Serh-i Mevâkif and Serhü'l-Makasid pertain to theology (kelâm) they contain all of the auxiliary sciences, divine philosophy, astronomy, geometry and arithmetic. Geometry and arithmetic are easily apprehendable subjects, and because they do not require much deep thought are not studied as separate subjects. They are taken up along with the above-mentioned sciences. There is a book titled Eskâl-i Te'sis in geometry at the iktisar level that they would read. Following that, they would read Euclid with its proofs at the istiksa level. For arithmetic at the iktisar level there is Bahâiyye which they would read. Subsequently, they would report on Ramazan Efendi and Culli, which were close to the iktisad level. Because astronomy involves the use of the imaginative powers and supposition and is therefore more difficult than geometry, they study that later as a separate subject. It is offered at the appropriate level. It is common knowledge that scholars do not weary of the temperament of students and always give Tuesdays and Fridays off from classes in order to encourage them in their studies. Students use those two days for the preparation of materials they need and during the summertime they go off on trips and picnics. Even there they do not remain idle, but undertake discussions of arithmetic, geometry, astrolabes, rub' (quarter), land surveying, Indian, Coptic and Ethiopian arithmetic, parmak hisâbi

(*abacus*), mechanics and other such sciences which do not require independent lessons. During the winter, they engage in conversation, devote themselves to solving puzzles (*muammâ*) and riddles, to *mukadarat* (measuring and comparing), to history, poetry, prosody and to classical *dîvân* poetry. Some of them are occupied with the occult sciences, but the teachers do not allow them to follow such pursuits because such subjects occupy too much of their time".³⁰

From *De la Littérature des Turcs* written by Toderini, who was resident in Istanbul between October 1781 and May 1786, we learn that there were teachers instructing young children in geometry and that some time was allocated between rhetoric and philosophy lessons for this area of mathematics. He says that he visited the *Vâlîde Madrasa* twice and that he observed the students had assembled to listen to their geometry lesson and that they were using an Arabic translation of Euclid.

The Development and Decline of Ottoman *Madrasas*

The development of *madrasas*, the educational and scientific institutions of the Ottomans and in a more general sense, of scientific and cultural life, was greatly influenced by the impact of a strengthened central state authority and the resulting political stability and economic well-being it brought to the society, all of which encouraged the best scholars from the Islamic world to come and work in Istanbul. They were further strengthened by the establishment of wealthy *vakıfs*.

A number of Ottoman writers discuss the gradual decline of *madrasas* toward the end of the sixteenth century and start of the seventeenth century, a decline similar to that taking place in other state institutions. They are in agreement that toward the end of the sixteenth century the performance of *madrasas* began gradually to fall below earlier levels mainly due to falling teaching standards. Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî Efendi (1541-1599) attributes the decline of the *madrasas* to a decline in interest in scholarly studies, to the appearance of sons of senior members of the *ulema* (*mevâlizâde*) and their rapid rise in position to enter into scholarly careers via special connections, to the assignment of teachers and *kadîs* under the influence of bribes and to a poor differentiation then being made between real scholars and ignorant men as well as to a decline in the writing of scholarly works.³¹ Kâtib Çelebi attributes the decline to the elimination from the *madrasa* curriculum of the rational and mathematical sciences.³² Many Ottoman thinkers believed the decline of the *madrasa* system was due to such things as the overly large numbers of students trained and the irregularities in the way in which the teachers were ranked.

In order to better evaluate these "criticisms" from within and to have a clearer, more balanced understanding of the development of Ottoman *madrasas* these perspectives should be considered along with contemporary "observations" coming from outside the system. A number of European observers of Ottoman scholarly-scientific and educational affairs undertook some partial comparisons between Ottoman and contemporary European science and education. These comparisons provide us with the opportunity to better evaluate Ottoman education. The Italian nobleman Comte de Marsigli who lived for eleven months in Istanbul between the years 1679-1680 indicates that:

³⁰ C. Izgi, *Osmanlı Medreselerinde İlim*, 1 (Riyazî İlimler), 69-77.

³¹ I. H. Uzuncarsılı, *İlmiye Teskilatı*, 2nd ed., 67-71.

³² For Kâtib Çelebi's ideas with regard to the decline of the *madrasas* see Kâtib Çelebi, *Mizanü'l-Hakk fi İhtiyari'l-Ehakk* ed. O. Saik Gökyay, (Istanbul 1972); C. Baltacı, *XV.-XVI. Asırlar*, 61-71; S. Tekindag, "Medrese Dönemi," in *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında İstanbul Üniversitesi*, (Istanbul 1973), 20-21.

*"Education and instruction among the Turks in general takes place in a practical way based on doing exercises. That is why when many Christians state that the Turks are illiterate and do not understand the Qur'an, they have no foundation in truth. The reason we have accepted such baseless notions is attributable to our lack of knowledge of Oriental languages. In our universities the analysis and study of Oriental languages only began after the sciences had become more broadly developed. However, our forefathers did not pursue education in that area. As a result, we have come to believe a number of things that are lies and blatantly false, and this situation defames our sciences and the state of our knowledge. Our readers would be protected from misinformation if they were to know that in Istanbul and in other Ottoman cities as well as among the Persians and the Arabs there are virtually no men of learning and science who do not know three languages (Turkish, Arabic and Persian)."*³³

Comte de Marssigli did not hesitate to criticize the Turks on certain matters and in his analysis of the differences between science and education among the Ottomans and in Europe he also puts forth his views on education.

We note that the Italian Abbot Toderini had the opportunity to get to know the *madrasas* very well, possessed the same complimentary thoughts about Ottoman educational institutions as did Comte de Marsigli. Both of these individuals lived at a later time than the Ottoman scholars we have referred to above, they visited the empire and wrote about their observations of the Ottomans. It is important to make note of the following complimentary words Toderini has to say about Ottoman scholars:

*"What makes Ottoman scholars knowledgeable and reliable is the fact that there are no underdeveloped academic pursuits to be found among them and that they all know Arabic and Persian." Toderini, who attempted to examine all of the areas of scholarly activity among the Ottomans, had a number of very important observations to make about the madrasas, which he refers to as "academies", and about the courses of study they offered. Toderini examined the administration of the madrasas and the vakifs and noted "they are more advanced than those in all of the nations in Europe with respect to libéralité and grandeur."*³⁴

Ottoman intellectuals who had become aware of the problems facing the institutions in their own society were in search of solutions and registering their criticisms at the same time. On the other hand, as we have indicated with the examples given above, foreigners were very complimentary about Ottoman institutions and looked upon them with admiration. Engaging in a comparison of these two perspectives is surely an important vehicle for gaining an understanding of the problems facing Ottoman institutions.

The appropriate conditions for the development of science and scholarship in the Ottoman Empire began, with the seventeenth century onwards, to move gradually in the opposite direction. A number of factors had a negative impact on scholarly activities. Among these were the weakening of the central government, increasing economic instability, a decline in conquests, the continuous loss of territory, the flooding of Europe with American silver and the impact of that on Ottoman economic and social life, a decrease in the

³³ L. F. Marsigli, *Militare dell'Imperio Ottomano = L'Etat Militaire de l'Empire Ottoman* (Amsterdam 1732), 2 sections, (Graz, 1972), 1:39.

³⁴ A. Toderini, *De la Littérature des Turcs*, 3 vols., (Paris, 1789), 2: 1-2.

real income of the empire, the emergence of economic and social duress and the resulting state of economic and social decline. As the factors, which had in earlier times encouraged scholars to engage in their work, began to disappear, these individuals came to be replaced with those who had an overriding concern for subsistence.

The coincidence in the timing of the troubles facing both scholars and the *madrasas* and those confronting the Ottoman state apparatus and its institutions has been taken by some to mean that the former factor was the cause of the decline of the empire. However, as we have attempted to indicate above, the coincidence of the decline of the scholarly class with that of other state institutions can be attributed to various underlying political, economic and social factors.