

Western Influence in Ottoman Lands

The Ottoman Empire embraced not only what we know today as the Republic of Turkey but also a much wider geographic area comprising peoples of multi-ethnic origins, speaking a number of languages and from a diversity of religions. Within this variety, it was inevitable that Western influences should appear at different times and in a number of ways during the 18th and 19th centuries during a time that is known today as the Westernisation period of the Ottoman Empire. Up until the 19th century, the empire consisted of provinces ruled by beglerbegs and sanjaqs ruled by sanjaqbegs, appointed by the Sultans. Within this system, local communities, religious groups and waqfs facilitated some of the empire's business, which led to a synthesis of the Ottoman taste fused with local features in both the art and architecture. From the 19th century on, the Ottoman Empire began to adopt a centralised system of government for the sake of modernisation. Within the new centralised system, a tighter control over the provinces came about with construction of public and governmental buildings undertaken directly by the empire. In this way, whilst the first concretely Western-influenced architectural samples had already been erected in Istanbul and Anatolia in the 18th century, influences began to be seen from 19th century on in other regions. Another important factor of Western influence, which brought about some other substantial changes in the empire, was the improvement in direct relations between the major cities of the empire and Europe. During the period of Kavalal# Mehmed Ali Pasha, the Ottoman governor who established an autonomous state in Egypt for a while, a strong political and commercial relationship with Europe was established in the region. This relationship was strongly reflected in Istanbul seen in the influences brought by the Egyptian elite who resided there during the summertime. Although the western area of North Africa comprised three provinces: Trablusgarb (today known as Libya), Tunisia and Algeria, all of which regions had governors sent by Istanbul, the real authorities of those regions were the local rulers called deys who were known throughout Europe through direct contact. The change in the administrative and social system of the region helped to establish and accelerate the spread of Western culture within the Ottoman Empire.



Nuruosmaniye Mosque

Hegira 1169 / AD 1755

Ottoman

Çemberlita#, Istanbul, Türkiye



Mosque of Muhammad Ali Pasha

Hegira 1265 / AD 1848

Ottoman

Cairo, Egypt



Qur'an

Hegira Safar 1259 / AD March 1843

Ottoman

Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye