

# The Ottomans | The Visual Language of Power

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The power of the sultan, or of the regional rulers, was often proclaimed quite openly and obviously in visual form. Architecture was most useful towards this end; a grandiose building, dominating the neighbourhood or (even better) the city skyline, makes a bold statement of power. On a smaller scale, the power of the ruler could be announced explicitly in written form, such as by including his name or title in the decoration of a building or even a manuscript. The imperial tughra is perhaps the most memorable example of this aspect of the visual language of power.



**Name:**

Topkapı Palace

**Dynasty:**

Construction began in hegira 9th century / AD 15th century, during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II (his second reign: AH 855–86 / AD 1451–81); the last addition was made under Sultan Abdülmecid I ['Abd al-Majid] (r. AH 1255–77 / AD 1839–61) in hegira 13th century / AD 19th century Ottoman

**Details:**

Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

**Justification:**

For about 400 years the vast Ottoman Empire was administered from the Topkapı Palace. The palace was stoutly fortified and guarded within the magnificent city walls of Istanbul.

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**Name:**

Süleymaniye Complex

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 957–64 / AD 1550–7 Classical Ottoman

**Details:**

Süleymaniye, Istanbul, Türkiye

**Justification:**

Süleymaniye Mosque is one of the monuments to dominate the skyline of Istanbul.

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**Name:**

Şehzade Mosque

**Dynasty:**

hegira 1199 / AD 1784 Ottoman

**Details:**

Doğubeyazıt, Ankara, Türkiye

**Justification:**

The sultans were not the only individuals to build grandiose palaces that imitated the central power; governors over the regions also did so.

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**Name:**

Mosque of Muhammad Ali Pasha

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 1265 / AD 1848 Ottoman

**Details:**

Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

Muhammad 'Ali built this mosque overlooking Cairo as a symbol of his power.

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**Name:**

Kasbah (citadel)

**Dynasty:**

Between hegira 959 and 980 / AD 1552 and 1572; AH 1000 / AD 1591 Ottoman

**Details:**

Algiers, Algeria

**Justification:**

This imposing ensemble, a fortress, represented a very succinct reminder of the ruler's power.

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