

Article

Topkapi Palace Harem Hospital

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ABSTRACT

Concubines Hospital is located in the northwest direction of Topkapi Palace, between the high stone walls bordering the Harem gardens and the Concubines' Office. The courtyard of the Concubines' Department, the last building of the Harem, is connected to the courtyard of the Concubines Hospital by a wide stone staircase called the forty-stairs, but actually consisting of fifty-four steps. On the southeast façade of the Hospital, there is the sloping road called the Great Embarkation, where the sultan entered the Harem on his horse, and the Shawl Gate. The Meyyit Gate, located on the south-west side of the building, is connected to the I. Courtyard. At the end of the porticoes, on the right and opening to the Has Stables from the second courtyard, is the Meyyit Gate. If there was a funeral in the palace, it would be removed from here. In addition, since the middle door was closed early, those who came to iftar during Ramadan nights were also sent off from this door.

Keywords: Topkapi Palace, Topkapi Palace Harem Buildings, Meyyit Gate



(Fig.1)-Concubines Hospital Meyyit Gate view , (Canbaz. M, 2009)



(Fig.2-3) Palace Great Boarding - Shawl Gate (www.aa.com.tr)

1. History of the Building

Concubines' Ward: A door next to the doors of the Women's Masters Office leads to the stairs called forty stairs. The fifth door next to it is the door of the concubines ward. The Concubines Ward is a place where about 25 concubines sleep together. It is a single-volume place with a large hearth, windows facing the stony stone, and a mezzanine supported by marble columns. When the concubines increased in the harem, new sections were created by combining the wooden partitions between the columns.

Here, novice concubines were staying on the lower floor, while more senior concubines were staying on the upper floors. Among the ten concubines was an old concubine. The beds they slept in during the day were rolled up, and at night they were laid to sleep. The fire burning in the big hearth at the bottom warmed the whole ward in winter. Novice concubines were supervised by concubines, concubines were supervised by journeymen, and foremen were supervised by masters so that order was maintained in the harem.

Forty stairs next to the Women's Masters Office lead down to the Harem Hospital. In fact, this Concubines Ward in the east of this stony, it is also called the Concubines Stonehouse. Next to the ward is the room of the Master of Patients. On the left of the stony, there is the Hospital Ward. Having a Hospital Bath and Hospital Kitchen here makes it a separate section. There is a laundry and a dead

wash room across the stone. Those who died in the harem were washed here and taken out from the dead gate at the back.(Fig.1-2-3)

Although the views on the construction chronology of the Palace in general are largely based on assumptions, the common opinion of the researchers working on the Topkapı Palace is; It is believed that the Concubines Hospital(Fig.4-5) was built after the Great Embarkation, which is thought to have been built in the 15th century. Mualla Anhegger, historian and architect, who managed the restorations of the harem for a while, especially the bath ward and woodshed, which was built at the level of the Şal Gate and turned the lower stony area of the Hospital into a courtyard, II. It is believed that it was built during the reign of Mahmud (1785-1839). In Sedat Hakkı Eldem's drawings, the Concubines Hospital was completely built in the XVIII century. and XIX. It is shown in the palace plan of the centuries. It is seen that the both researchers on dating are the same.

2. Architectural Features of the Building

Concubines Hospital consists of spaces that do not show a symmetrical formation around a regular rectangular courtyard. There is a large space at the end of the stairs that connects the Concubines Stone House on the lower floor of the courtyard. There is a hammam directly opposite the ward on the narrow side of this courtyard. This specified section is also a laundry and dead washing place.



(Fig.4-5) Harem Hospital interior (www.aa.com.tr)

The Meyyit gate, where the deceased were taken out, is also located here. The hospital, toilets, and kitchen are located on the long facade of the courtyard. The northwest façade of the courtyard is a single storey. The spaces on the northeast façade have two floors. The spaces on the second floor are mentioned in the sources as laundry room, pharmacy/drug warehouse and drug preparation sections. There is a fountain on the intermediate landing of the forty stairs and the doors opening to the warehouse, cellar, ward and rooms opening to the mezzanine floors. The place entered through a door on the middle landing on the left side of the forty stairs is the space that was

added later. It is called Horendegan Ward. These places, which are thought to belong to the mute servants called Horende, who do the cleaning, laundry and chores of the Harem, overlook a long corridor. However, after the abandonment of Topkapı Palace, some rooms were named as patients' foreman's room and hospital kitchen during the periods when the elderly and sick concubines stayed in the palace. Due to the absence of inscriptions in this part of the palace and the lack of detailed information about the functions of the buildings in the sources, it leads to the conclusion that these descriptions are generally based on assumptions.



(Fig.6) Wall tiles of concubines ward



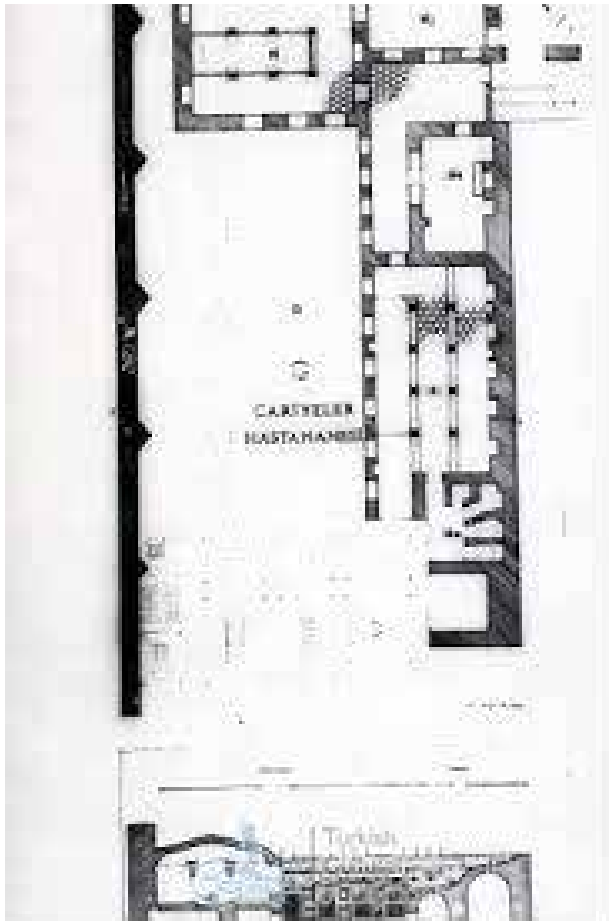
(Fig.7)Concubines yard

3. Construction System and Material

The Concubines Hospital was built with the traditional masonry technique. The courtyard façade of the ward section and the façade of the bath, which we see on the descent to the hospital from the completely stone, very wide forty-stairs section that connects with the Concubines Courtyard, has an alternating brick and stone masonry. The surface of the wall was left unplastered. The walls of concubines ward is covered with tiles (Fig.6-11-11a-14). The colonnades on the long two sides of the rectangular courtyard are supported by square columns. The arches and carrier feet that make up the porticoes are entirely made of cut stone.

The outer surfaces of the spaces behind the porticoes are again in alternating masonry. Mirrored tone and barrel vault were used as the covering system. Columns carrying the porticoes were connected with classical arches without column capitals. While hexagonal bricks are used on the ground indoors, the courtyard floor is completely covered with stone (Fig7-8).

The wooden door wings and the shutters of the windows, which are surrounded by stone jambs, are made with tables. Bite iron bars were also used on the windows. The roof system is covered with lead.



(Fig 8) Schematic plan of Harem Hospital
(Turkishculture.com)

Although there is not a symmetrical sense of space in the hospital structure, which is dominated by classical features, the porticoes formed with eight completely symmetrical columns and nine pointed arches on the two long facades of the courtyard add a sense of rhythm and order to the structure.



(Fig.9) Concubines ward



(Fig 10) A detail of concubines ward



(Fig11-11a) Wall tiles of concubines ward



(Fig 12) Wall tiles and timber doors of concubines ward



Fig (13) A cupboard cover in concubines ward

4-Conclusion

Although the rooms belonging to the concubines, who form another servant class of the Harem, are adjacent to those of the landlords, they do not allow them to see each other. This section is based on the hierarchy used for different purposes, as in the black aghas (Kara AĞALAR) section.

It consists of arranged rooms. Behind the porticoes on three sides of the Concubines Courtyard, it has an architectural organization to meet the needs of life, consisting

of haseki apartments, concubines ward(9-10-13), laundry, kitchen, cellar, Turkish bath, fountains and toilets. The current situation is designed in such a way that no one can enter the world left behind when the doors to the women's section of the Harem are closed. As a matter of fact, the architectural organization of the Harem, one door could not be opened without closing the other door. This architectural precaution taken must have facilitated the protection of the Harem, while moving it to a location that was difficult to enter for centuries.



(Fig14) Wall tiles of concubines ward

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