

The bedesten “bezzâzistan”: a commercial building in the centre of the Ottoman city with a special reference to the bedestens in Greece

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the Ottoman bedestens in Greece, considering the analysis and interpretation of the related texts in the archives and historic references. Evliyâ Çelebi provides a wealth of data regarding the Ottoman bedestens, along with their functions, administrative system and staff. This information proves that the bedestens were semiofficial buildings and were subject to State control and management, reflecting the State’s commercial and economic policy.

This paper discusses the importance of the bedesten as a new architectural creation in the center of the Ottoman city, and its importance in reorganizing and distinguishing the layout of the core of some significant Ottoman cities. This results that the Ottoman cities were classified into cities including a bedesten and others without. The study shows the relation between the presence of the bedesten in a city and its commercial and economic value considering its site. This is obvious especially for cities located on the main commercial roads, especially along the Via Egnatia. Along which are the cities which have bedestens in Greece. The paper shows the numbers of Ottoman bedestens were found in Greece, and the surviving examples.

The study concludes that the Ottoman bedesten flourished from architecture and function point of view during the years of Sultan Mehmed II. This study proves that the present-day bedesten in the city of Serres is not the original one described by Evliyâ Çelebi, but it represents a later reconstruction. It also dated the bedesten of Larissa in the light of the endowment of the founder Hacı Ömer Bey the son of Hacı Turhan to the years before 889 H/ 1484 CE.