



## THE BJRD HOUSES OF EYÜP SULTAN



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Illustration 1. Pigeons in Eyüp.

Eyüp Sultan is one of the areas of Istanbul that is rich in examples of Turkish art in many different fields. The tombs and cemeteries that have made the area famous are well known, but alongside the mosques, masjids, prayer platforms, soup kitchens, madrasas (theological schools), boys' schools, libraries, fountain houses, schools for children kiosks built for the distribution of free drinking water, public baths, dwellings and other edifices, the area is also ornamented with a miniature form of architecture that is dedicated to providing shelter for birds. These tiny structures are a special feature of this area of Istanbul and have attracted the interest of artists and scientists, from the arch formed examples that date from the 16th century, through the birdhouses dating from the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 19th century, with their forms resembling architectural models and their three-dimensional aesthetic forms, and have given Eyüp Sultan a special and important place among the neighborhoods of Istanbul. In other words, these small structures, which are an expression of man's love of nature, are in the nature of architectural documents and are a source of information about the history of architecture and frontal decoration, materials and techniques, enlightening us about some lost architectural forms and filling in some of the gaps in the history of architecture. Similar circumstances can be noted in the water cups and drinking spouts for birds that decorate the Kırım Mehmet Paşa Fountain and others like it.

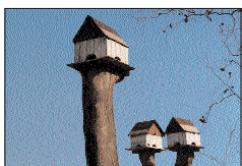
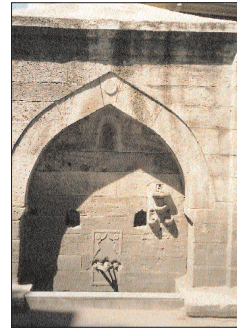


Illustration 4. Birdhouses in the Feshane Park.



Illustrations 2-3. The Eyüpsultan Süleyman Subaşı Public Fountain decorated with water dishes for birds that are made in the shape of a drinking fountain.

Eyüp Sultan's mosques, soup kitchens, schools and tombs and, by offering an overview of these structures that adorn the neighborhood, help to ensure their place in the history of architecture. By this means we will also demonstrate the love for animals of the residents of the Eyüp Sultan district, who have carried on the architectural tradition by continuing today as they have in the past to both build and protect examples of wooden, multi-storey portable authentic and original birdhouses, whose Ottoman Empire Period examples are now lost to us, but which date from the beginning of the 20th century.



Illustrations 5-6. Movable birdhouses decorating the Eyüp Municipal Cultural Center, and a detail of the birdhouse.



Illustration 7 - 8 - 9. Birdhouses adorning the mosque.

The first example is the Eyüp Sultan Mosque. One side of the structure faces Zal Paşa Caddesi and Fahri Korutürk Caddesi, and another faces the island formed by the intersection of Beybaba Sokak and Boyacı Sokak's Bostan İskelesi. Another side faces the Eski Hamam Sokak; the Eyüp Sultan Square is located at the front of the mosque. The complex of buildings adjacent to the mosque was constructed by Fatih, Mehmet the Conqueror, in 862 (1459 AD), but during the reign of Ahmet III (1602-1617 AD), the minarets were torn down and rebuilt. During the reign of Mahmut I, in 1136 (1723 AD), the sacred trust of the Prophet Mohammed's footprints were moved to the Tomb; when the structure was damaged during the earthquake of 1766 AD, it was torn down and rebuilt. During this renovation, which took place in 1212 (1798 AD), the minarets were preserved.<sup>1</sup> The repairs to the mosque and the birdhouses that adorn the rebuilt structures lead us



Illustration 11. Birdhouses resembling hollows, on the mihrap side of the Zal Mahmut Paşa Mosque.

to believe that they were constructed during the period of Selim III.

Fourteen birdhouses made of sandstone, formed as hollows and annexes, can be found on the mosque.<sup>2</sup> The first example is above the projection of the prayer niche indicating the direction of Mecca. Facing southeast, this rounded center of the arch forms a hollow situated under the eaves.

The first of the birdhouses on the eastern side is in the shape of a hunting lodge crowning a portal. The two-storey house is set on a single-footed bracket made of marble and has a vaulted roof. The lodge, with its rounded lines and exterior projection, is lighted by rectangular windows on the first storey, and two raised arches and a round arched window on the second storey.

The second, third and fourth examples decorate a pedestal on the southeastern side. Two of them are above one another and the other at a lower level; the first of the upper two is formed by a rectangular balcony covered with vaulted openings. The third example is on the other side of the pedestal and is in the shape of a projecting window covered, again, with vaulted openings. Between the two bases, the area is decorated with raised marble arches. Below these is the fourth example; between two raised arches carved out of the



Illustration 10. Birdhouse on the west side.

1. Baha, Tanman, "Eyüpsultan Külliyesi," *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Kültür Bakanlığı Tarih Vakfı, İstanbul, 1994, vol. 3, p. 237.
2. H. Örcün Barışta, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Dönemi İstanbul'undan Kuşevleri*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Osmanlı Dizisi, Sanat Eserleri Dizisi / 306, 2000, pp. 93-99.

Illustration 12. Detail of the hollow built on a pedestal.



Illustration 13. Detail of birdhouse decorating the Mihrişah Sultan İmareti.



3. Doğan Kuban, "Zal Mahmut Paşa Cami," *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Kültür Bakanlığı Tarih Vakfı, İstanbul, 1994, vol. 76, p. 542.

4. Barışta, pp. 178-179.

5. Mehmet Mermi, Haskan, *Eyüpsultan Tarihi*, Eyüpsultan Belediyesi, İstanbul, 1996, p. 334.

6. Barışta, pp. 178-179.

material of the wall is a rectangular projection covered with arches, which gives the appearance of a reviewing pavilion. The fifth birdhouse, which was below this one, has been broken.

There are six birdhouses that decorate the outside face of the eastern wing of the portico like an annexed structure in the form of five cavities and a three-walled vaulted antechamber open at the front. Of the small hollowed shapes, the entrance openings consist of two raised arches, one broken arch and one rounded arch, and one of them has a triangular pediment. On the base, one can also see a rectangular-shaped hollow.

One of the birdhouses on the western side of the mosque is under the molding on top of the support beam. This birdhouse in the form of a hollow has an entrance shaped like a raised arch.

Illustrations 14-15. Birdhouse decorating the Şah Sultan Sıbyan Mektebi and detail of the birdhouse.



Without doubt, the most interesting of the birdhouses is on the outside face of the wall of the west facing outer courtyard, under the sovereign's kiosk or what is now used as rooms for the imam and *muezzin*, built in the form of a multi-storey caravanserai. Rising from a marble base, projecting perpendicularly, the rectangular face of the first two stories of the caravanserai are bordered by columns. The structure is connected to the wall by similar columns at either side, and there is an entry system at its center. The 21 compartments of this construction are lighted by windows in the shape of raised arches. The structure is covered by an additional vault whose interior serves the function of a roof.

The second of the mosques is the Zal Mahmut Pasha Mosque. This building, situated on an island in the center of Defterdar Caddesi, is recognized as the work of Mimar Sinan, and dates from the 16th century.<sup>3</sup> On the footing to the east side of the mosque's prayer niche has been carved a hollow-shaped birdhouse<sup>4</sup> and carved out of the stone wall next to the other footing are three other hollows. Two of them have rounded entrances similar to broken arches. There are also birdhouses in the form of hollows decorating the building.

The third structure is the Mihrişah Sultan İmareti (soup kitchen). Located at the corner of Bostan İskelesi Sokak and Türbe Çıkmaz Sokak, it was constructed in 1209 (1794 AD).<sup>5</sup>

The courtyard of the soup kitchen is in the shape of a "U"; on the outside face of the eastern wing of the surrounding arcade is a birdhouse situated on a console under the eaves. Designed as a two-storey house, it is covered by a *beşik* (cradle) roof. The entrances to the birdhouse are shaped like raised arches, of which there are two on the first storey and one on the second storey.<sup>6</sup>

The fourth building is the Şah Sultan Sıbyan Mektebi (school for chil-

dren). Located on Feshane Caddesi next to the Zal Mahmut Paşa Mosque, it was constructed in 1215 (1800 AD).<sup>7</sup> It is one part of the complex of tomb, fountain, free drinking water distribution system and enclosed graveyard built at the behest of Şah Sultan.

The birdhouse that crowns the drinking fountain in front of the school is in the form of an elaborately decorated pavilion. Mounted on a single-footed console, the left and center sections of the structure consist of three storeys and the right-hand section consists of two storeys; the center of the façade projects outward. There is an entrance on the right side of the pavilion, while the left side is completely enclosed.<sup>8</sup>

The fifth structure is the Feridun Paşa Türbesi. Located on Beybaba Sokak, the building was originally constructed in 1583 and was restored in 1945.<sup>9</sup>

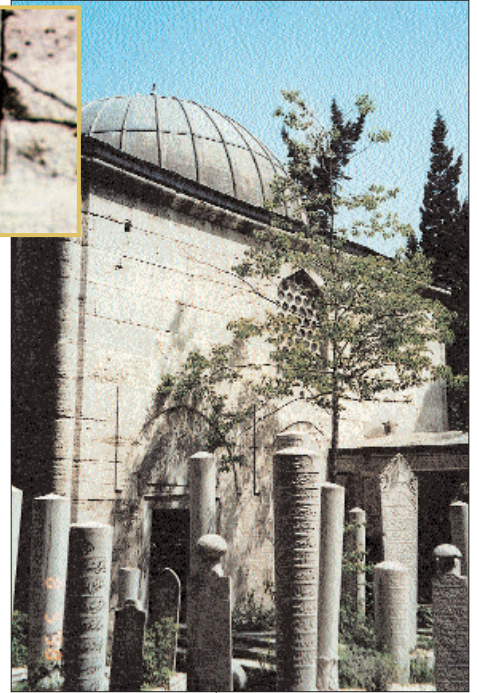
On this tomb there are two birdhouses, both carved from stone in the form of hollows. The first of these is on the right-hand corner of the façade of the building while the other is at the

side. Both have entrances in the shape of semi-arches.<sup>10</sup>

The sixth building is the Vezir Mir-i Miran Mehmet Paşa Türbesi, located on the block between Cami Kebir Caddesi and Beybaba Sokak and constructed in 997 (1589 AD).<sup>11</sup>

Above the tomb's portal facing Beybaba Sokak, a birdhouse with rounded arched compartments has been carved from the stone.<sup>12</sup>

Alongside the examples that we have briefly introduced above, we can see numerous other structures created for feeding birds and decorated with birds that have been preserved in Eyupsultan but have not survived in many other parts of Istanbul. The water cup portraying birds on the Kırım Mehmet Paşa Çeşmesi (fountain), the multiple small water cups decorating the Süleyman Subaşı Çeşmesi, the multi-storey portable wooden birdhouse crowning the Eyüp Sultan Municipal Cultural Center and the innovations of the Eyupsultan Mosque, the birdhouses with attics adorning the Seyh Davut Han, which was built after the Şah Sultan Sibyan Mektebi, all point to the special place of this type of structure in the history of architecture. On the other hand, the hollow shaped or arch formec birdhouses adorning some of Mimar Sinan's 16th century works and some birdhouses in other parts of Istanbul that can be dated to the late 18th and early 19th century, along with the similarities to certain examples outside of Istanbul, enable us to reach healthy conclusions about their materials, techniques, types, shapes and other aesthetic characteristics.



Illustrations 16-17. Birdhouse decorating the façade of the Feridun Paşa Tomb and detail.



Illustrations 18-19. Birdhouse adorning the portal of the Vezir Mir-i Miran Mehmet Paşa Tomb and detail.

7. Hale, Tokay, "Şah Sultan Külliyesi," *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Kültür Bakanlığı Tarih Vakfı, İstanbul, 1994, vol. 7, p. 127.

8. Barışta, pp. 221-222.

9. Haskan, p. 169.

10. Barışta, p. 229.

11. Haskan, p. 193.

12. Barışta, p. 236.