Between reality and stereotype: town views of the Balkans

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ABSTRACT: A content analysis of the Leiden Sketchbook (1577–85) addresses two major issues. First, how a stereotype of an Ottoman town was created by sixteenth-century travellers and second, how the social organization of space and integration of formerly Christian towns into the Ottoman system during the period of its greatest expansion was perceived. The comparison of visual sources with travelogues and historiography confirms the historicity and trustworthiness of the drawings. The drawings are revealing when interpreted in the context of the approach of historical anthropology: they illustrate the travelogues and testify to the sensual experience of their author.

In Central and Western Europe, the ‘image’ of the Ottoman town was created at the same time as the general ‘image’ of a Turk and Ottoman society. These ‘images’ or perceptions were formed on the basis of the experience of itinerant intellectuals familiar with urban life and with the organization of towns of early modern Europe. While journeying through the Ottoman Empire, they compared European stereotypes of the town with Ottoman reality. There were efforts to articulate reliable information in the later sixteenth century and their influence lasted until the seventeenth and, in some cases, even well into the eighteenth century. While Božidar Jezernik presented the Western perception of Ottoman towns from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, this article focuses on an earlier period and mainly on iconography.

The anonymous Leiden Sketchbook is one neglected source of representations of Ottoman towns. The unknown author’s drawings register the types of town characteristic of Ottoman society: fortresses ruined or rebuilt, old large administrative centres, small towns, and newly developed settlements. The twenty-six sketches represent a selection of places

1 This research was facilitated by a grant from the Charles University in Prague, a scholarship from Leiden University, and by the fellowship award of Mellon Foundation and the Institute for Humane Sciences in Vienna.
Figure 1: The itinerary of the author of the Leiden Skeckboek. The places depicted in numerical order from 1–26 are: Hainburg, Bratislava, Komárno, Esztergom, Visegrád and Nagymaros, Buda and Pest, Erdut, Vukovar, Bodin, Petrovaradin, Slankamen, Zemun, Belgrade, Nish, Pirot, Sofia, Plovdiv, Svilengrad, Edirne, Hafsa, Babaeski, Lüleburgaz, Çorlu, Silivri, Büyük Çekmece and Küçük Çekmece.
along one of the most important highways of the Ottoman Empire: the road connecting Vienna with Istanbul, the Ottoman capital, via Buda and Belgrade. This context becomes clear when the localities depicted in the drawings are set on the map (Figure 1). 4 Experience of the road between Vienna and Constantinople tended to form the outsider’s image of Ottoman society, and is therefore key to the analysis of the sketchbook. It was a route used predominantly by armies, Habsburg diplomats, and in periods of temporary truce, by merchants. European perception of Ottoman towns was constructed and developed in the course of journeys along this road. The section between Edirne and Constantinople was regal, connecting the most important centres of the Ottoman empire, and was therefore better equipped for the needs of travellers. 5 This particular road also followed the main direction of Ottoman expansion and its fortresses and towns had been of immense strategic value. They had either been destroyed, or resettled and incorporated into the Ottoman administrative and economic system. Settlements along this route were places of social communication. Passing through them, sixteenth-century travellers were witness to the most dynamic phase of change in Ottoman history, including change in local population structure, urban appearance and institutional structure. Thus the towns on the road functioned as instruments of transmission of information about cultural values.

The Ottomans conquered a territory in the European continent that had certain traditions of urban settlement, no matter how unbalanced or weak. The towns in this territory were incorporated into a new urban network that fitted the needs of Ottoman society. Just like Christian towns, their towns functioned as centres of administration, military force, commerce and crafts, but otherwise they differed profoundly. Ottoman cities reflected a specific social system based on religion and on the direct state control of the religious community. The defining concept was that of a religious community living together, its economic activities organized centrally and its social and cultural life organized on the basis of pious foundations. This Ottoman urban model was developed in the


Mediterranean and integrated old Arabic, or rather, Muslim and Byzantine traditional building technologies.  

A person taking the highway to Constantinople could observe the process of integration as well as of development and enlargement of the town network. The contents analysis presented in this article focuses only on the following representative types of towns: old capitals and administrative centres on the one hand, and new foundations stimulated by commercial traffic, such as by bridges, crossroads and by pious foundations, on the other. While the first type illustrates the process of integration, the second and third categories exemplify the import of a specific urban culture.

The analysis addresses three questions. First, whether a drawing can offer real information about towns and their society rather than just presenting an impression, and second, whether contemporary visitors actually perceived and understood these changes, or simply articulated an ‘image’ of town and contributed to the formation of a stereotype. The third and inevitable question is the issue of what the author of the Leiden Sketchbook included and what he omitted in terms of the choice of towns or localities included in his itinerary. The analysis of the drawings also makes it possible to discuss the role of the road in the integration of the conquered territory. The road and the towns along the road appear to be crucial in the transmission of the author’s immediate response to experiences on his journey.

For the purpose of content analysis, choice among the numerous authors of travelogues has been limited to those who were contemporaries of the author of the sketchbook and who travelled along this same highway. They were either professional diplomats or men in diplomatic entourage, and they included both Catholics and Protestants of various denominations from different areas of Europe. The travellers naturally tended to use misleading European terms for the phenomena they encountered, but in their own way they commented on the society they observed — social position, ethnicity, language, customs of inhabitants, diversity of rural and urban landscape. The language of travel accounts offers extensive possibilities for analysis, while the pictorial itinerary is limited to the perception of shapes and organization of space. The drawings of the itinerary capture the passage through the territory under Ottoman rule and the intensity of Ottomanization. Despite the relative

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7 Like Anton Vrančić or Ogier Ghiselin van Boesbeeck.

8 Agent of the Fugger’s bank, Hans Dernschwam; the pastor of David Ungnad of Sonneck, Stephan Gerlach; the pastor of Joachim Sinzendorf, Salomon Schweigger; and the pharmacist of Dr Bartolomeo Pezzen, Reinhold Lubenau – and occasionally several others of similar professional orientations.
scarce of comparative iconographic material, it is still possible to identify towns and buildings and therefore to assess the author’s perception of urban space. Changes in the urban space were profound and some of them were described by travellers. Most of the large building complexes are recorded in other types of evidence, and studied by historians of art and architecture. Research has shown numerous travel descriptions to be reliable sources of information. The commentaries of travellers, combined with the findings of contemporary historiography provide us with the basis for a more effective interpretation of the drawings. They justify the view that the author of the Leiden Sketchbook passed through all these towns in the late 1570s, after major changes had already taken place. The sketches correspond with the written testimonies and have the value of being spontaneous drawings in situ. Furthermore, the author drew his town views in the direction of his journey, usually from the north-west.

**Provincial capitals, administrative centres**

Along the route the travellers had to stop in seven administrative centres of the Ottoman Empire. These towns represented the type of large and populous towns which traditionally had a higher administrative and political role. Ottomans called this type of town şehir. Three towns used to be the capitals of medieval state formations: Buda, Belgrade and Sofia. Three others were regional administrative centres – first, Esztergom near the Ottoman–Hungarian border, second, Nish (an important crossroads in southern Serbia) and finally Plovdiv – the centre of the Thracian plain. The largest town among them was the alternative Ottoman capital and residence of the Sultans – Edirne. This account will focus only on the four ‘capitals’ (provincial capitals at that time).

Under Turkish rule, the provincial capitals had experienced a period of devastation and depopulation. Strategically located around the country, they became the seats of the Ottoman administration. Buda was turned into the centre of a vilayet, while Belgrade and Sofia became the residences of sandjaks. The Ottomans had first conquered Edirne, then Sofia, later Belgrade, and finally Buda. The travellers on the imperial road, however, arrived in the opposite direction first encountering the regions that had been conquered last. They therefore had a chance to observe successive stages of integration and Ottomanization. Although recently conquered, Buda and Belgrade had already an

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10 Only between 1577 and 1585 would all depicted constructions have been visible.

11 Turks conquered Edirne 1361, Sofia in 1382–85/86, Belgrade in 1521 and Buda in 1541.
Ottoman appearance. Commentaries stress this aspect of change by pointing both to destruction and to investment. While on the way to Constantinople, they compared the towns along the road with Christian towns and fortresses. Travellers believed that nothing could match Komáro in the strength of its fortifications, and although not themselves Hungarian, they regarded this Hungarian fortress as ours. Sofia and Edirne did not evoke comparisons. Later, as they acquired more experience of the Ottoman empire, they used Constantinople as the reference point for comparison.

Buda was the only town with a large and impressive former royal residence. As for Belgrade, observers had already commented on its low standard of building in pre-Turkish times, though its fortress was supposedly very strong. The Turks, aware of the strategic qualities of Belgrade, set out to fortify it again. The town represented a supply base, and was the most important stronghold in the north during the Hungarian campaigns, retaining this status even after Buda was conquered. Sofia and Edirne represent the type of large unfortified town in the interior of the country. There were no further wars in the interior of the peninsula in the sixteenth century and expansion continued to the north-west of the Danube. Sofia had already been the residence of the governor of the conquered provinces since the beginning of the fifteenth century and for the next 350 years it remained the seat of the highest provincial judicial and religious institutions. Edirne definitely possessed a quite exceptional position in the urban network. It was not just another stage town, but first of all the second capital of the Ottoman Empire. The largest and most active centre of the Balkans after Constantinople, and a winter residence of the Sultans, in the fifteenth century it surpassed Constantinople in size of population.

Buda was the first place where the travellers encountered a significantly different approach to urban life. They saw sumptuous Ottoman baths and an example of a temporary bridge-building, the pontoon
bridge over the Danube. These new public edifices had changed the skyline as well as the organization of space. The Ottomans had also turned churches into mosques or warehouses, and merchant houses into stables. To the eyes of Western visitors, the Turks did not care about comfort or elegance. They were scarcely even repairing the roofs to provide dry stables for their horses. Turkish dignitaries were fond of gardens and roomy houses, but compared with Boesbeeck’s Western stereotype, their accommodation lacked grandeur. Like many other travellers, Boesbeeck interpreted the open towns as unusually large suburbs.18 Especially in the case of Buda, the neglect of the old palaces of Hungarian nobility as well as other buildings was taken to be a typically Turkish attitude.19

The Leiden sketch provides evidence about Buda, Pest and Gelért Hill (Figure 2). The castle of Hungarian kings, transformed into the Pasha’s residence, overlooks the town and the river. Both Christian and Muslim symbols are present in its skyline – church towers and minarets with the domes of the mosques. Further clusters of domes belong to the baths at the foot of the Gelért Hill, and in the interior of the town. As the domed structures were used exclusively for public buildings, they meant change and investment wherever they appeared.20 The mosque and the türtbe (tomb) built by the order of Sokollü Mehmed Pasha are not depicted.21 Built around three mosques, Pest is presented as a small Ottoman town with simple ramparts. Although travellers noted that Pest, inhabited by Turks, Hungarians and Jews, had also a roofed bazaar and hot baths, they are missing from the sketch.

The author of the view of Belgrade (Figure 3) was drawing from above the confluence of the Sava and the Danube. The picture presents an Ottoman town partly hidden behind the fortress. The slope that ran down to the Danube, and frequently became a battlefield, remained free of any construction. From descriptions in the travelogues, and from the later account of the seventeenth-century Turkish traveller Çelebi, we would expect a quite populous town, with many palaces and gardens, and not just a large and well-fortified stronghold.22 By 1560 Belgrade was composed of sixteen Muslim mahalle (town districts) with more than 360 households, eleven Christian mahalle with ninety-three Christian households and one Jewish mahalle with five households.23 Travellers

21 Rumelian beylerbey and grand vizier since 1564, Sokollü Mehmed Pasha (1505/06–79), appears as important donator on this road.
22 E. Çelebi, Putopis. Odlomci o jugoslovenskim zemljama (Sarajevo, 1979), 70–80.
remarked on fifty households of merchants from Raguse (Dubrovnik). Their houses were considered to be rich and the best built. At the end of the 1570s, when the author of the drawing visited Belgrade, plague had dramatically decreased its population.

In the example of Belgrade, one sees how a traveller’s impressions depended on the season of the year as well as his personal preferences. Curious to see the town, Vrančić approached Belgrade in July 1553. In his account he emphasized its strategic value, and described the site, the fortress, the town itself, and the suburbs surrounded by gardens. While he perceived Belgrade as a lively place, full of people and commercial activity, his companion, Dernschwam, found the fortress of Belgrade abominable. Stephan Gerlach passed through the town in the summer of 1573, and thought it was pleasantly set in gardens. He preferred Belgrade to Buda, although saw neither as a match for Komárno in fortifications. Four years later, at the end of November 1577, Salomon Schweigger found the streets empty and dirty, with the houses poorly built of wood and mud. In the 1570s the travellers already noted new investment. Gerlach registered a large complex built by Sokollu Mehmed Pasha – bedestan (roofed bazaar), caravanserai and stables apart from another two or three well-built caravanserais with leaded roofs. This two-storey building offering a room with a fireplace to every traveller was close to the Ragusian shops and next to an impressive merchant district – carsi – for which Gerlach found a German term, gewerb-stadt. He described it as a long, wide street with arrays of workshops of craftsmen. The houses in general were miserable, low wooden huts covered with shingles.

In the interior of the peninsula the roads were being repaired, bridges constructed, the population resettled and the once devastated towns rebuilt. Trade between the Balkan regions, Serbia, and especially with towns on the Adriatic coast, was slowly recovering. In Soča a new carsi emerged on the site of the former fortress. To the eyes of a northerner, Soča was altogether an Ottoman town: it was large, populous, busy, untidy, badly built, but with carefully kept fountains and gardens.

24 Yerasimos, Les Voyageurs, 46.
26 Verantius, Iter Buda Hadrianopolim, anno 1553, exaratum ab Antonio Verantio Tunc Quinqueeclesienswi, max Agriensi episcopo, ac demum archiarcipiscopo Stigoniensi, regio in Hungaria locumtenenti, magno regni cancellaris atque S.R.E. Cardinali electo. Nunc primiris e Verantiano cartophilacio in lucern editum, in Fartis Alberto, Viaggio in Delmazia (Venice, 1774), XII–XIV.
27 S. Gerlach (ed.), Stephan Gerlachs des Aeltern Tage-Buch, etc. (Frankfurt a. Main, 1674), 15–17.
28 S. Schweigger, Eine Neue Reisbeschreibung auf Deutschland nach Constantinopel und Jerusalem, etc. (Nuremburg, 1608); see idem, Zum Hofe des Türkischen Sultans, ed. H. Stein (Leipzig, 1886), 41.
29 Gerlach, Tage-Buch, 15–17; Đurić-Zamolo, Beograd kao orijentalna saraf, 226.
31 Verantius, Iter Buda Hadrianopolim, XXX–XXI; Gerlach, Tage-Buch, 20; estimates of the population differed: 1572, -7,000, 1580, 15,000, see Yerasimos, Les Voyageurs, 49.
Figure 2: Buda and Pest

Figure 3: Belgrade

Figure 4: Sophia

Figure 5: Edirne
Figure 6: Svilengrad

Figure 7: Ponte Grando

Figure 8: Hafsa

Figure 9: Lüleburgaz
houses were low, made of wood and mud. The winding streets were unpaved, lacked pavements, and zigzagged meaninglessly, often following the course of a stream. They connected clusters of houses around mosques, individual mahalle, passed through ċarsi, and reached a bedesten.\textsuperscript{32} However, travellers also noted that besides Turks and Bulgarians, there were Hungarians, Sephardi Jews, Greeks, Armenians and about 150 Ragusans, who managed to support one Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{33} The travellers listed mosques, churches and synagogues, and commented with amazement on the range of goods offered at the market.

In the *Leiden Sketchbook* the traveller approached Sofia along the road and observed its panorama on the horizon (Figure 4). He had to cross a large stone bridge to enter the town.\textsuperscript{34} In reality Sofia is on a plain surrounded by mountains, but in the drawing, it is set on imaginary hills, which in a way emphasizes the dominant position of the mosque in the urban milieu and concentric urban hierarchy. The higher the location of each mosque, the higher is its minaret, and the more complicated is its structure, composed of a greater number of domed halls. In the sketch the mosques are already distributed at almost regular intervals, with the smallest on the periphery and the largest in the centre. Ottomanization is also symbolized by the graves in the outskirts.\textsuperscript{35} There are no signs of public institutions or any kind of large complexes in the panorama, but according to travellers these institutions existed by the end of the sixteenth century. Considerable construction was then taking place in Sofia. There were large caravanserais, many baths, a roofed bedestan, medreses (schools of Koran) and the large palace of beylerbey (provincial governor) in the centre, together with all the appropriate important institutions around it. Large projects were associated with the period when Sokollu Mehmed Pasha served as Roumelian beylerbey.

Edirne was quite impressive, with the mosque of Selim II in its centre. It boasted the sultan’s palace, where important diplomatic negotiations took place. Gerlach described his approach to the city by a good straight road on his return journey. He reported that the Selim Mosque complex was visible from a distance of half a mile, while the town was set in the midst of vineyards and fruit orchards. This was a great surprise for him, as he had seen only a few trees on his way from the Golden Horn. He did not consider Edirne large, but he noted that it had two parts. One was fortified by a wall and towers like Constantinople, and inhabited by Greeks, Turks and Jews. There he noted many mosques, which he called ‘Turkish churches’, merchant shops, and an abundance of fruit trees and gardens. The second, unfortified part appeared about three times as

\textsuperscript{32} Gutkind, *International History of City Development*, vol. 8, 80–1.
\textsuperscript{34} Zirojević, ‘Carigradski drum od Beograda do Sofije’, 40.
\textsuperscript{35} Cvetkova, *Les institutions ottomanes*, 81–3.
large as the other. Here, where the Turks had settled first, he observed a fine palace in the midst of a fruit orchard.\textsuperscript{36}

The author of the sketches, definitely overwhelmed, drew his impression of Edirne very carefully, paying attention to the decoration of the minarets, and to all the sickle moons on even the smallest mosque (Figure 5). He offered a panoramic approach view of the town built on small hills on the horizon. While he used a number of clichés, such as almost identical trees, an implausible regularity in the placing of the minarets, and schematic domes of mosques, he correctly identified the hierarchy of domes, with the largest and most ornate belonging to the most important mosque in the town, which was positioned at the highest point. This dominant feature was a symbol of power. While in the Christian town of Preßburg he distinguished the symbols of the three powers (regal, ecclesiastical and municipal, i.e. castle, church and town hall) in the town, in Edirne and other towns of the theocratic Ottoman society the secular and the sacred power fused. In the interior of their vast empire the Ottomans felt secure and did not feel it necessary to develop fortifications.

\textbf{The bridge as a town-forming element}

In Ottoman civil engineering bridges functioned as a powerful town-forming element. They were important for the transport of goods to the markets in large cities and, above all, for supplying insatiable Istanbul. Bridges facilitated contact, and were used by armies. At least before military campaigns, they would be repaired. No doubt other crossings were used as well. The art of bridge-building was highly valued. In general, two types of bridges were used: temporary and permanent. Temporary, pontoon bridges, were made of interconnected boats, to make it possible to open them for ship passage when necessary. Permanent bridges were made either of wood or stone. These, as a rule, became famous.

The largest and most prominent of all pontoon bridges was the one connecting Buda with Pest, built in 1566. No traveller would omit it from his account. Melchior Besolt, whose notes are rather scanty, wrote about it in detail. He described the bridge as six hundred paces long and composed of sixty-four boats.\textsuperscript{37} The author of the \textit{Leiden Sketchbook} drew it rather carefully.

There are many permanent bridges in the sketchbook. The first bridge to appear is the dilapidated wooden bridge over the Danube in Esztergom, and it is followed by others until we reach the bridges over

\textsuperscript{36} Gerlach, \textit{Tage-Buch}, 511–12.

\textsuperscript{37} M. Besolt, 'Reyss auf Constantinopol im 1584 Jar', in H. Lewenklaw von Amelbeurn, \textit{Neue Chronica Türkischer Nation von Türcken selbs beschrieben etc.} (Frankfurt a. Main, 1590), 519.
the inlets in Ponte Grando and Ponte Picoli, the two last stops before Istanbul. Once bridges were built, they had to be protected and repaired. Such duties were usually imposed on the population of the nearby settlements. At the foot of a bridge various types of Ottoman inns or hostels were built to serve the travellers: caravanserais, zaviye, hans and imarets. Ottoman officials ordered facilities to be built for travellers and this was also considered a pious deed. The institutions functioned on the basis of a vaqf – a donation or a bequest. Such investment usually stimulated the emergence of a settlement. Its further growth depended on specific local conditions. The royal road created particularly favourable conditions for foundations of this type.

Svilengrad on the river Maritza, the former Mustaphae Pons, was a settlement of this kind. In the middle of the sixteenth century it was a mere borough, a kasaba in Turkish terminology. Favourably located thirty kilometres away from Edirne, it was predestined to become a busy last stop before the capital. Typically, the growth of the settlement followed the construction of the bridge. First came dwellings for the builders, and later the settlement split into a Turkish part on the left and a Christian one on the right bank of the river. Mustafa Pasha, grand vizier to sultans Selim I and Süleyman the Magnificent, built his mosque, baths and caravanserai on the left bank. By 1564 there was already a second caravanserai built of stone and brick and an imaret (a soup kitchen). The kasaba was named after its founder, perhaps to underline its origin.

The story of this little town could serve as an illustration of Ottoman urban engineering: first, the selection of a place suitable for a bridge and then the development related to it, the deliberate consideration of local conditions and the distances to the next stop in both directions. The bridge was built over a ford where people were used to crossing the river. The success of the foundation, and the correctness of the choice of site were demonstrated by the fact that Mustaphae Pons became an important part of the road network. The structure itself is a valuable monument. Paved with large stone slabs, the 295-metre long stone bridge was supported by twenty piers reinforced by stone supports that were supposed to provide stronger resistance to water. The very centre of the bridge was decorated by a köşk – a small chapel, kiosk, which had no practical function.

The bridge had been frequently described by travellers since 1528. There is a detailed account of this exquisite construction, its size and structure by A. Vrančić (1554). He admired the excellent choice of site, but he classified the nearby kasaba as a mere village. Gerlach, on his return journey (1578), drew attention to the structure of the külliye, the material used for roofs (lead), the abundance of artisans and merchants,

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38 Zirojević, Carigradski drum od Beograda do Budima, 4–7.
39 Mustafa Pasha Köprüsisi was given its Bulgarian name Svilengrad in 1912.
40 Verantius, Iter Buda Hadrianopolim, XLV, XXXXI.
and the ethnic division of the settlement. According to some historians the construction of the bridge was attributed to Sinan, the author of the classical style of Ottoman architecture, and was probably completed in 1528/29. The attractiveness of this place is documented by the growth of the kasaba. The art historian Machiel Kiel considers the drawing of the mosque with pyramidal roof built at the end of the 1550s to be accurate. Just before this date, the first caravanserai was completed. In 1564 there was already a second caravanserai. The Leiden sketch documents the organization of space in the initial stage of the development of the borough (Figure 6). Its content corresponds to the reports of travellers, apart from the fact that the bridge was actually flat.

The most important bridge spanning an inlet on the last section of the road stood in Ponte Grando – Büyük Çekmece, a small town on the coast. The bridge became famous for its long and impressive structure. It was the result of a bequest from Sultan Süleyman, and carried out once again by Sinan. First he commissioned the caravanserai, imaret and mosque (1566-67), and the following year the bridge, as well as the complex of Sokollü Mehmed Pasha erected by a bay close to Istanbul. Another version of the story claims that the bridge is of Roman origin, repaired in the times of Mehmed the Conqueror and only reconstructed by Sinan. All authors agree, however, that the bridge spanning the bay on the main highway to Istanbul was an investment of major importance. To construct it in the place which was mostly marshland was a technically very demanding project. Sinan chose quite an exceptional strategy – he used the small islands to support the four little bridges linking the shores of islets. Although imperfect, the sketch shows a grasp of the principle of the construction. Godfrey Goodwin describes the still existing bridge as so wide and solid that two caravans could successfully cross it at the same time. The travellers, in agreement with the Leiden sketch, describe the town as a cluster of houses, two mosques and an inn (Figure 7).

Külliye as a town-forming element

This term has to be described in detail if its social role is to be grasped. A külliye was an extensive complex built in towns or in places along roads. It always functioned as a social institution providing service. Aptullah

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41 Gerlach, Tage-Buch, 514.
43 Yerasimos, Les Voyageurs, 53.
45 Çulpan, Türk ta köprüleri, 142–7.
46 Goodwin, Ottoman Architecture, 293.
Kuran argues that the külliye were a means to provide regulated support of the development of residential districts.\(^{47}\) Halil Inalcik highlights the traditional and historical motivation in urban development, for which the first capital Bursa and later Istanbul served as models.\(^{48}\) From this perspective, service complexes are interpreted as testimony to the Ottoman approach to urban space.

All buildings housing public institutions were arranged around the mosque in order to create an organized space within the disorganized area of the town. At first (in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), these were a mosque and a school of Koran – medres. The emergence and the subsequent development of an Ottoman architectural style is interpreted by historians as deriving from traditions created by the sultans in the first capital of Bursa, where a mosque together with a medres was donated to the public for the first time. Later a soup kitchen (imaret), a caravanserai and eventually baths (hamam), shops or a hospital were added to such complexes. They were founded as donations by important people and supported by a form of endowment or bequest - vaqf. This type of a complex formed an autonomous district, a town within a town, and represented a new concept developed by Ottoman Muslim society. This sprang from an initial basically negative attitude to towns, involving the notion that a pious foundation should serve as a counterbalance to and justification for the wealth and the worldliness of life in an urban environment. Külliye were founded on sites where such services were needed and would then attract population and stimulate urban growth.\(^{49}\) As residential districts grew in their neighbourhood, commercial foundations were created to support the new social institutions.\(^{50}\)

Complexes built in the second half of the sixteenth century along the royal road make it possible to study the development of Ottoman ideas on urbanism and the influence of Sinan on Ottoman architecture of the classical age. The Leiden Sketchbook presents several of these complexes. Üç Sefereli in Edirne (1447-48) represents the type of older Ottoman külliye composed only of a mosque and a medres; the already mentioned külliye in Mustaphae Pons, and also in Hafsa and Lüleburgaz represent younger, more complicated types of complexes along the royal road.\(^{51}\) They are portrayed in the sketches in considerable detail.

Hafsa was a kasaba and a külliye formed its urban core (Figure 8). It represented one of the important sixteenth-century foundations at a resting place. A spacious caravanserai was mentioned as early as 1530.

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\(^{48}\) Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, 144.


\(^{50}\) Ibid., 168.

The second large complex emerged in the early 1570s as a donation of Sokollü Mehmed Pasha. In 1580 a mosque, shops and baths were added, all roofed with lead.\textsuperscript{52} This *kasaba* emerged in the stabilized interior of the country. There was no fortress, and no fortifications. Hafsa lived off crafts, trades and the travellers for whom the immense *külliye* was built. With appeal to archaeological excavations, Machiel Kiel considers the drawing to have been an exact representation of all the parts of the completed complex: the *caravanserai*, the mosque, the arch above the main market street and the baths.

Luâleburgaz represented a busy commercial centre with a *külliye*, which was an important work of art. This was another stage town, located in a vast valley on the southern bank of a tributary of the river Egrene (Figure 9). Luâleburgaz corresponded to the type of large resting place of caravans.\textsuperscript{53} Unlike Hafsa or Mustaphae Pons, Luâleburgaz was an old Byzantine town, originally destroyed in the course of the Ottoman expansion, but resettled by Turks as early as the fifteenth century thanks to its favourable location. It had an annual fair, and in the spring, as many as 300 carriages from the surrounding region arrived for this occasion. The facilities in the town were unsatisfactory since a spacious *caravanserai* was lacking, and so Mehmed Sokollü Pasha founded one of the most impressive complexes here. Sinan was yet again the architect of the *külliye*, comprising a mosque, a *caravanserai*, a *tabhane* – hospital and shops. The *kasaba* had a mere 300 houses and no ramparts, although both Gerlach and before him Brocquiére reported the ruins of an old castle and fortifications. In the sixteenth century it was already a town with administrative and judicial functions, the seat of a *kadi*. The *külliye* was spacious, with the courtyard alone being some 30-40 metres long. Its layout was very specific.\textsuperscript{54} It served caravans throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the town remained rather small. With the exception of Edirne, this complex is considered to be one of the best examples of Ottoman architecture in the European part of Turkey.\textsuperscript{55} As in Hafsa, the author of the drawing applied a bird’s-eye view technique to depict the town. The contrast between the organized *külliye* and the disorganized residential districts is very clear. The main mosque was the dominant feature as a result of its height and the decoration of the front facade. The open market street links a symmetrically structured *caravanserai* and an identically structured court. A domed passage to the mosque is the central element of the symmetrically balanced *külliye*.\textsuperscript{56}

Part of the complex was a *medres* located around a courtyard.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} Goodwin, *Ottoman Architecture*, 295.
\textsuperscript{55} Kiel, ‘Luâleburgaz’, 816.
\textsuperscript{56} Kuran, ‘Form and function’, 132–9; Vögt-Göknil, ‘Spatial order’, 168–73.
\textsuperscript{57} Goodwin, *Sinan*, 54.
mosque was compact, with a garden and a pool and a small domed library. There was also a double bath for travellers.58

**Towns included – towns omitted**

The author of the sketchbook drew all the obligatory stopping places, and practically all the important fortresses and large important towns with political functions.59 He also included old famous places and even small towns offering services to travellers. Whether by intention or by accident, however, the itinerary omits a number of castles and settlements some of which were considered towns, or more often boroughs or villages, in contemporary travelogues. The author did not, for instance, include Tolna and Mohacs, or Illok, Yagodna, Smederevo, and Tatar Pazardzhik – but that may merely be because he was travelling too fast to draw them. He did not depict one new type of settlement – a *palanka*, newly located borough fortified by stockades, which was usually supposed to protect the road. It is surprising that several towns in the interior of the peninsula, so small and unimportant that they did not have their own entries in the dictionaries or topographic descriptions of the period, have their own ‘portrait’ in the sketchbook. In large and famous collections produced either in Italy, Germany or the Low Countries, the towns of this region feature only occasionally, as do the small Serbian towns and practically all settlements in Rumelia and Thracia, with the exception of Edirne and Constantinople. This context considered, the author displayed systematic interest in the imperial route.

**Depicting multiculturality**

As the Ottoman state grew through the conquest of regions which differed in ethnicity, language and religion, the people in the conquered regions were not obliged to convert to Islam. Sephardi Jews driven out of Spain were invited to settle in Ottoman towns. Merchants from Dubrovnik or Armenia as well as groups of gypsies settled there. The urban environment was multicultural, but as the major agent of identification was religion, members of religious communities usually lived close to their respective mosques, orthodox churches or synagogues. In other words, they lived alongside each other rather than together. Many monasteries were outside the town boundaries, and in any case they

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59 The obligatory stops were identical, occasional resting places varied: see Yerasimos, *Les Voyageurs*, 47.
were forbidden to have towers higher than the height of mosques. In the end, they were hardly visible on the skyline of a town. What today we define as the multicultural situation should be observed or represented in architecture and in the organization of space. The travel accounts register these communities, and so one might expect a drawing to display towers of churches, roofs of synagogues, minarets and domes of mosques and, indeed, a comparison of sketches of towns in the Christian areas, both in the regions recently conquered and in those already integrated, indicates that the author acknowledged their diversity. It is only in the interior of the Balkans that this is not the case since here it was difficult to find edifices that would testify to diversity as they did not rise above ordinary private housing. Only closer observation reveals, here and there, shapes which did not belong to the Ottoman religious or secular architecture. The author of the Leiden sketches knew about them and did not wish to suppress this information. It was easier for him to study small localities than the large towns.

**Conclusion**

Stereotype is generally understood as an application of a ready-made simplified cliché not necessarily based on the authentic experience. The analysis of drawings and of travelogues points to a different possible manner of stereotype formation. The stereotype of the Ottoman town emerged as a result of coping with the pressures and circumstances of travel and sojourn in an alien country.

Most probably the sketches resulted from a brief visit by an artist who was a member of an ambassador’s entourage and had limited time to produce his drawings. The author, who definitely came from some distant region of Christian Europe, was unaccustomed to seeing quite a different type of organization of urban space. His previous experience of integrated urban space was of crucial importance: it was his background for analysis and comparison. An Ottoman town appeared to him disorganized, and poorly built. He missed the square with town hall, elaborate architecture, palaces and fortifications. Residential houses appeared very simple from the outside and contrasted in size and shape with public institutions. The author basically drew what he saw, probably without arriving at a deeper understanding of the essence of the Ottoman urban model. He probably did not realize that there was a certain system in the arrangement of space.

This was the first pressure: difficulties in perceiving the organization of space. These were not unique to sixteenth-century travellers. Every

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society has its own manner of defining space. The aspects which to the eye of a northerner looked like an absence of organization and system, are interpreted by historians of Ottoman architecture as a demonstration of an organized urban investment. They deny that Ottomans neglected the external appearance of their towns. On the contrary, with the help of a system of foundations, the Ottomans developed civil services and created a sophisticated and agreeable urban environment, but travellers did not notice these aspects. They usually rejected Ottoman towns in general, and private buildings particularly.

When the draughtsman had enough time and the place was not large, he drew the shapes of observed objects. In the end he produced a topographically accurate view. His views of small towns or settlements with specific functions tell us more about the system of organization of urban space and of town-forming elements. There the different structure of public institutions was easier to grasp. To portray them, the author used the bird’s-eye view technique. In those drawings he captured the internal structure of urban segments: the function of an organized core of the settlement with specific social functions performed by külliye. The contrast between plain dwellings and public institutions was impressive. At resting places of merchant caravans, crossroads, river fords or places of annual fairs such complexes were easier to observe. The author spontaneously noted the basic principle of Ottoman urbanism: the town was composed of segregated religious communities concentrated around the place of worship, creating the impression of a disorganized street network.

When he undertook a more complicated task, i.e. drawing a view of large, busy and populous towns, he ran into difficulties. There he used the panoramic drawing. This is very clear in the case of the four provincial capitals. His Sofia and Edirne are mainly an impression based on his stereotype of an Ottoman town. The panorama of Belgrade depicts the division of the space, while Buda is somewhere halfway between a ‘bird’s-eye view’ and a panorama.

The technique of a town view was undergoing innovation in the sixteenth century. The author of the Leiden Sketchbook was familiar with basic techniques. He also accepted the task of providing reliable information about distant regions, and presenting an artistic interpretation of urban landscape. The collection represents a Western interpretation of towns, created in the context of an early development of vedutti. The lack of time or absence of skills in creating topographic views exerted a pressure on him as well. His Turkish supervisor may also have disliked his activity.

The highway differed in a certain sense from the rest of the country. Being of great importance it was very busy, but at the same time avoided by the indigenous population as a rather unsafe and dangerous space where the powerful could harass the poor. Visitors often experienced the
road only once. The language barrier represented another pressure, since the traveller could be the victim of interpreters or informers.

These pressures contributed to the formation of simplified judgements and perceptions. Instead of topographic information an impression slipped into the picture. The advantage of the draughtsman over the traveller writing a diary, however, was that while observing a settled place he did not have to decide what it was that he saw. If he compared the observed settlement and its segments with an idea, or a stereotype of a town he had acquired through his previous experience, he did not have to give it a name.

Both the sixteenth-century travelogues and the iconography reflect the growth of fascination with Ottoman society and the Balkans. Publishers of town atlases, topographies and travelogues, authors of illustrated manuscripts were interested mainly in four areas: fortresses on the Ottoman–Habsburg or Hungarian border; towns and fortresses on Mediterranean islands; the route to the Holy Land; and the depiction of life in the capital city. The perception of Constantinople played an important role in this ‘image forming’ process. Representations of the rest of the country were based on the perceptions of towns, villages and the countryside surrounding major highways used by merchant caravans, pilgrims or diplomatic missions. The Leiden Sketchbook, focusing on towns along the imperial road, falls into the latter category of projects. The drawings were sketched on the way to Constantinople and were later elaborated from memory. They have to be understood as interpretations of what the author saw and wanted to make accessible to the viewer. Drawings as well as travel accounts were used as a database of ready-made stereotypes for those who used the literature of travel as referential background. The Leiden Sketchbook may also be interpreted as an illustration of the narrative sources, but it should not be forgotten that it was also a record of the direct sensual experience of one of the travellers, one of the Western observers.